

## **Poetry as a Representation of Turkish Identity**

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### **Abstract**

Poetry is one of the most important art expression in understanding Turkish identity. The aim of this paper is to show that the growth and development of Turkish poetry is in line with the dynamic identity of the Turkish nation. The period of Turkish poetry began with the growth of oral poetry which depicted the heroic of Turkish ancestors who are migrants from the Central Asia. The period continued with the emergence and development of Islam carrying the influence of Arabic and Persian languages which embedded in Turkish poems and replaced the role of poetry from being a folklore to become the elite literature. The next period is the modern poetry which showed the alteration of reference of Turkish poetry from the East to the West. Thus, poetry reflects Turkish people's rhythm of expression.

**Keywords:** Poetry, Turkish identity, elite literature, modern poem.

### **Preface**

Poetry is one of the most important art expression form in understanding the identity of Turkey. Poetry is a medium of expression which is always used by Turkish people from time to time. Poetry is the most important type of literature compared to others. Poetry can also be used as a reflection of social life and culture of Turkish society. Until today, poetry still has a special place in Turkish community. According to Topdemir (2013:72), it is the poets who were the architects and founder of Turkish spiritual identity.

As Turkish poetry develops, in a dynamic way, identity is not only described in a static form, but also in a dynamic form. This article aims at showing how the development of poetry in Turkey can describe the development of Turkish people's identity. The Turkish identity in this article refers to the Turkish society which are now living in the territory of the Republic of Turkey. However, in fact, through poetry we understand that the journey of the Turkish people as a nation does not belong to one nation that lives in the territory of Turkey, but spreads across the area inside of the Altaic mountain from Mongolia in Central Asia through Hungary (East Europe). Turkic language or Türkçe is the main characteristic of these nations.

The encountering of Turkish culture with Indonesian culture could not be separated from the thick "blanket" of the Islam identity (Arab and also Persia) covering the culture of Turkish people which inherit the greatness of the Ottoman Empire. In general, Indonesian people view the Turks as Arabs or one of the variants. However, in the literature study of Arab in Indonesia which focusing on the works of Arabic people in the surrounding of the Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) place of birth, the literature works of Turkey were not part of their study. In addition, as a nation state, Turkey did not focus the development of its literature toward the East, but toward the West instead. Therefore, although the people of these two nations share a long history and friendship in terms of politics and culture, Indonesian people are not familiar with Turkish literature.

It is due to this reason that this article is written, to introduce Turkish literature, especially poetry, as the representation of the historical process of Turkish identity. The growth and development of Turkish people is reflected through the growth and development of its poetry. Poetry is a historical remaining which records the growth and development of Turkish society until today. Understanding the periodization of poetry means understanding that poetry, which is the work produced by the local cultural community, experience a layering and shifting. Changes, growth and development of a certain society are historical facts which are also experienced by Turkish culture.

## **Periodization and Development of Turkish Poetry**

According to Ural (2013:12), when discussing Turkish literature, especially poetry, not only are we discussing about literature in the Republic of Turkey, but also literature works produced by Turkish people with their various historical experience, especially those who live in the Central Asia and spread all over Khurasan, Iran, India, Azerbaijan, Egypt Syria and Iraq.

Turkish people living in Anatolia which is now part of Turkish territory historically have encountered with great civilizations, from Chinese, Greece, Rome, Arab and Persian, until modern Western civilization. Being a nation having nomadic ancestors in Central Asia and encountering with other nations have formed a cultural layering of Turkish people. This development is strongly recorded in Turkish poetry, which is mainly divided into 3 periodization, as follows:

1. Pre-Islam, until end of 11th Century
2. Islam period or classic period, from 13<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century, grouped into two period:
  - a. The Seljuk Dynasty period , from 13<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> century
  - b. The Ottoman Dynasty period, from 15<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century
3. Modern period, from the establishment of the modern Turkey in 1923 until today.

### *Pre Islam Period (until 11th century)*

This period (until 11 century) is considered as the time of the emergence of Turkish poetry root consisting of the original treasury of Turkish oral literature. It is true that the expressions which were full or esthetical meanings were not mentioned as poetry. These esthetical expressions were present in Turkish society accompanied by music and generally conveyed in religious ceremonies. Therefore, in the beginning, Turkish poetry was oral literature. This oral literature was then transmitted from generation to generation through religious ceremonies by poets in this time, called “ozan”. These ozans conveyed the beautiful poetry stanza accompanied by Turkish traditional music, called saz.

Turkish oral literature can be traced back from 3000 up to 4000 Before Christ (BC), and developed until the beginning of 11<sup>th</sup> century, after Turkey accepted Islam (<http://www.turkedebiyati.org>). It was only around end of 7<sup>th</sup> to beginning of 8<sup>th</sup> century that the phenomenal Orhun inscription or monument (Orhun Abideleri) was discovered. The Orhun monument, located in the Goktürk Kingdom was the oldest inscription ever found. It was in this inscription that the first “türk” word was found, which explained the language and culture in the area. Orhun monument contained the first writing in Turkish language in the form of poetry, describing the nature, love and heroic stories (Ergin, 2003).

Pre-Islam period was marked by poetry with *heroic theme* (epoch) and freedom. Generally, the theme of poetry in this era described the nomadic tribes living in Asian steppes. Poems that were born in this era as folklore is an original treasure of Turkish oral literature. Poetry as an oral literature also depicted the characteristic of Turkish people who are brave, adventurous and tend to love mystical thing. It was this nomadic people who came from Central Asia and migrated to the West heading to Caucasia and Anatolia that was considered as the embryo of a nation later known as the Turks. The oral poetry bequeathed by Turkish

people in this initial period was the biggest contribution in preserving its original Turkish characteristic, before the arrival of external influence which then layered the identity of Turkish people.

Poetry of this era described how Turkish people viewed their world, life, feelings and thoughts. The theme that developed mostly in this era was nature, (*doğal*), love (*aşk*), heroism (*kahramanlık*), bravery (*cesaret*), horsery (*binicilik*), loving at horses (*at sevgisi*), military (*askerlik*), and death (*ölüm*). According to Halman (t.t.:231), humanism had been the characteristic of Turkish culture from the beginning until today. Before Turkish people settled down in Anatolia and converted their beliefs to Islam, Turkish people had possessed the humanistic value thanks to different changes they had gone through in a very long period. Anatolia which was located in areas of different changing powers often encountered with other nations, enabling them to build intercultural relationship with many people and culture, among others, China, Central Asia, Greece-Rome, Arab and Persia. Inter-nations encounter had also built strong self-confidence and respect toward other people, exceeding inter-institution relations. All of these characteristics were depicted in old Turkish poetry.

The development of poetry as folklore by using Turkish language had caused Turkish language to grow among its speakers. The language of this period was in fact considered as the original Turkish and was called The Old Turkish (Eski Türkçe). The following is an example of a Turkish old poetry which was discovered among the Uyghurs<sup>1</sup>, entitled “Bir Aşk Şiiri” (A Love Poetry).

Eski Türkçe	Türkiye Türkçesi	English
Yaruk tengriler yarlıkazun Yavaşım birle Yakışıpın adrılmalım Küçlüg biriştiler küç birzün Közi karam birle Külüşügin oluralım.	Nurlu tanrılar buyursun Yumuşak huylum ile Birleşip bir daha ayrılmayalım Güçlü peygamberler güç versin Kara gözlüm ile Gülüşerek yaşayalım.	Grow with the Light of God With a gentle attitude United and inseparable from me Strong prophets give strength With my black eye Live and laugh with me.

#### *Islam Period (until 20<sup>th</sup> century)*

With the arrival and growth of Islam which has been carried and has been introduced as well as has been emphasized on two influential cultures in Islam, named Arab and Persia, Turkish language developed and mixed with Arabic and Persian languages. The arrival of Islam, as a teaching, obviously used a language as a medium of communication. As Islam grew in the societies which used Arabic, it was therefore natural that it influenced and became the main layer of Turkish people’s language. The presence of Persian language, on the other hand, showed that Islamic influence did not only come from Arab, but also from the Persians whose area we understand now as Iran.

The growth of Islam in Turkey was mainly represented by two nations that successfully established two great empires located in Anatolia, named the Seljuk Dynasty (between 11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century) and the Ottoman Dynasty (between 13<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup>). For this reason, the Islam Period is divided into two subperiods, namely: a) Seljuk Dynasty Period, and b) Ottoman Dynasty Period. In general, the love of God, the Creator, became the dominant theme during these two periods. The development of poetry in the era of the two Islamic dynasties is described in the following paragraphs.

<sup>1</sup>This people is considered as Turkish ancestors; the area which is now called Xinjiang, a province in the People’s Republic of Cina.

a) Seljuk Dynasty Period (11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century)

Oğuz tribe, being one of the Turkish tribes, found the Seljuk Dynasty in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, in Anatolia region (Asia Minor). Afterwards, the territory of Seljuk Dynasty spread in the surrounding Anatolia, to Mesopotamia (Iraq), Syria, Palestine up to most part of Iran.

In the first subperiod, the characteristic of poetry was in line with the characteristic of poetry before the arrival of Islam, which focused on love and mystic. Later, mysticism developed and became Islamic mysticism. Naturally and harmonically, the view of Turkish mystic met with the mystic carried by the proponent of Islamic Sect from Arab and particularly Persia. In this first Islam period, poetry as the folk's literature, shifted to literature in the Islamic education, where sect and sufism gained an important place in the development of Islam in Turkey, and using poetry as a didactic medium in Islamic teaching.

In line with the development of Islamic tarikat (sect) during the Selcuk Dynasty, poetry became a medium of expression for the Sufis and the students at the tarikat teaching centers. It was during this era that the tarikat groups also developed tarikat poetry, which was known later as "tekke poetry" (*tekke şiiiri*). In brief, until the 13<sup>th</sup> century, poetry shifted from folklore to arts developed by the "tekke" (tarikat teaching centre) groups.

A poet was also considered as a scholar or intellectual if he is fluent and a master in two languages: Arabic and Persian. A poet was a religious scholar, as well as an intellectual. A poet owned a high rank in a social life. No wonder, poets in Turkey during the beginning of Islam were better known as Islamic poets and accepted in the Islamic world.

One of the famous poets in this period, Jalaluddin Rumi (1207 M-1273 M) or also known as Meulana Rumi, was a Turkish poet who was renowned by the Arabs and the Persians, as many of his works were written in Arabic and Persian languages (although they have been translated to many languages today). Jalaludin Rumi whose complete name was Jalaluddin Muhammad bin Muhammad al-Balkhi al-Qunuwi was a great Sufi who was born on September 30, 1207 in Balkh (now in Afghanistan). His nickname, Rumi, referred to a region called Konya (now a Turkish territory), where he developed tasawuf teaching, whose area belongs to the Rome empire (called Rum). It was Konya who made Jalaluddin Rumi the heritage of Turkish people. It was Jalaludin Rumi's works which were written in two great languages: Arabic and Persian that made him a renowned figure in the Islamic world. The following is a poem of Jalaluddin Rumi, which has been translated by Bernard Lewis from Persian language.

I am not from east or west, not from land or sea,  
not from the shafts of nature  
nor from the spheres of the firmament,  
not of the earth, not of water, not of air, not of fire. ...

I am not from the world, not from beyond,  
not from heaven and not from hell. ...

My place is placeless, my trace is traceless,  
no body, no soul, I am from the soul of souls.  
I have chased out duality, lived the two worlds as one.

(source: <http://poeticvoicesofthemuslimworld.org/>)

Jalaluddin Rumi's poems were collected within his spectacular works called "Masnawi", which contained deep tasawuf teaching. His other masterpiece "Ruba'iyat", or four line poem, contained his loving expression toward God. This poetry was produced in Jalaluddin Rumi's daily life who developed Mauliyah Tarikat/Mevlevi (known in the West as *The Whirling Dervishes*).

Other tarikat groups which were developed during the Seljuk Dynasty were, among others, Yesevi, Bektaşî, dan Alevi groups. The poets that were known in this era came from the sufi group, some of the greatest poets were Ahmet Yeşevi, Yunus Emre, Kaygusus Abdal, and many others.

The Yeşevilik tarikat group which was founded by Ahmet Yeşevi, was the first and largest tarekat which developed in the Turkistan territory between end of 11<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> century. During the era, this tarikat became influential in the emergence and development of other tarikats in Turkey. The following is one of Yeşevi's poetry which showed how oral language (poetry) had shifted to languages in dervish/darwis (tarikat followers) groups.

*Ne dillerse o olur dervişler sohbetinde  
Ne surlar ozahir olur dervişler sohbetinde*

Any language will turn to the language of the dervish  
Any secret will become clear in the language of the dervish<sup>2</sup>

In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the fame of Yeşevilik tarikat was later on replaced by the fame of Bektaşîlik group, under the charismatic Haji Bektaş Veli. In the year of 1516, this tarikat had even developed in the Palace of Ottoman Dynasty. Although it was the Seljuk Dynasty who brought Turkish poetry to the palace, however, in the process, it was the Ottoman Dynasty developing the "Palace Poetry". In this period, in line with the development of Islam, Turkish language was not only experiencing vocabulary enrichment from the Arabic and Persian languages, it was also shifting to the palace.

#### b) Ottoman Dynasty Period

Turkish language which developed by the palace society paid great respect toward Arabic and Persian languages. During the Ottoman era, Turkish language was written in Arabic letters and the influence of Arabic and Persian language was so strong. In this period, Turkish language, which was later on called Osmanlıca (Ottoman language) became the official language in the Turkish Ottoman Palace, while Persian language became the language of science in that era. Poets, who were also religious scholars and noblemen, gained a prestige rank in the palace and society.

As the center of literature development was located in the palace, therefore, the spoken Turkish language was greatly influenced by the Arabic and Persian language. Poetry that was developed in the Turkish Ottoman Palace had given a significant importance in the development of Turkish poetry in general. Divan Poetry was the name used for the forms of poetry developed in the palace.

The great influence of Arabic and Persian language toward Turkish language had slowly been considered as sinking the "people's language" of Turkey. Intellectual was greatly affected by the knowledge of the language of science developed in that time :Arabic and Persian language. The concern over the sinking of Turkish language in the society was clearly expressed by Aşık Paşain the following poetry.

*Türk diline kimseler bakmaz idi*      Nobody pays attention to Turkish language<sup>3</sup>  
*Türklere her giz gönül akmaz idi*      No girls were attracted by Turkish people  
*Türk dahi bilmez idi ol dilleri*      Unless Turkish people, no one knew this language  
*İnce yol ol ulu menzilleri*      This smooth road lies long ahead

<sup>2</sup>Tranlated by Ade Solihat, 25 Agustus 2015

<sup>3</sup>Translated: ade solihat, 25 Agustus 2015

Amid the active use of Arabic and Persian language among poets and intellectual muslims in the palace, YunusEmre, known as *Türk şiiirinin sönmeyen ışığı* (Turkish poet who do not put out the light of Turkish poetry). Although Yunus Emre's poems were considered as irregular based on the standard of Turkish literature which referred to Arabic and Persian language of the time, however, the simplicity in the use of Turkish language had turned his poems to people's poems. In the world of Turkish poets, Yunus Emre, who was said to have lived between the year 1241—1321 in Anatolia, was a sufi figure as well as a poet, and a defender of Turkish language in poetry. The simplicity of language used by Yunus Emre, clearly showed his commitment in preserving the simplicity and originality on Turkish language; while other poets in this period used the prevailing dominant languages, namely Arabic and Persian.

The simplicity of language, as the characteristic of Yunus Emre's poetry, had made his poetry powerful in the Turkish society who lived during his life time or Turkish contemporary society. His two masterpiece, Risalet-un Nushiyye and Divan, described his love toward Allah and his view about morality that should be owned by the society. Although he used simple Turkish, it was obvious that his works were affected by tasawuf character. Yunus Emre, who was the follower of Bektaşî tarikat and had stayed in the place where Wali Haji Bektaş educated his students, was considered as a respected sufi figure. To Turkish people, Yunus Emre's poetry contained the thoughts of this sufi on Turkish character synthesis and Islam. The following is one of Yunus Emre's poetry.

<i>gel gör beni aşk neyledi</i>	<i>come see what love has done to me</i>
<i>ben yürürüm ilden ile dost sorarım dilden gurbette halim kim bile gel gör beni aşk neyledi</i>	<i>I'am walking from land to land in all tongues I ask for the friend who knows my plight where love is come, see what love has done to me</i>
<i>ben yururum yane yane ask boyadı beni kane ne akilem ne divane gel gör beni aşk neyledi</i>	<i>I'm walking, my heart is burning! Love painted me blood red. left me neither sane nor mad come, see what Love did to me</i>
<i>gah eserim yeller gibi gah tozarım yollar gibi gah akarım seller gibi gel gör beni aşk neyledi</i>	<i>sometimes as the winds, I whirl at times as dust on the path, I drift sometimes as swift as a flood, come, see what Love has done to me</i>
<i>akarsulayın çağlarım dertli çigerim dağlarım Seyhim anuban ağlarım gel gör beni aşk neyledi</i>	<i>like the river rapids raging for eons, my worrisome heart wrecked on the rocky shore Master's away I'm withering come, see what Love has done to me</i>
<i>ya elim al kaldır beni ya vaslina erdir beni Cok aglattın guldur beni gel gör beni aşk neyledi</i>	<i>either grab my hand &amp; lift me or guide me to the Union make me smile now that I've cried a river come, see how Love has done me</i>
<i>ben yururum ilden ile Seyh anarım dilden dile gurbette halim kim bile gel gör beni aşk neyledi</i>	<i>I'am walking from land to land honoring my Master in all tongues my plight is unknown this far from home come, see what Love did to me</i>

<p><i>mecnun oluban yururum o yari duste gorurum uyanip melul olurum gel gör beni aşk neyledi</i></p> <p><i>miskin yunus bicareyim bastan ayaga yareyim dost ilinden avareyim gel gör beni aşk neyledi</i></p>	<p><i>like wandering Majnoon driven mad by Love, I see my beloved on the dust in the wind then, I wake and plunge into a gloom come, see what love did to me</i></p> <p><i>destitute Yunus, mystic of sorrow, wounded from head to toe. a wanderer in the Friends realm Come, see what Love has done to me</i></p>
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In line with the glory and success of the Turkish Ottoman Dynasty, the next Islam period showed the rapid growth and appreciation of literature as a high achievement of knowledge. Even some of Ottoman sultans were poets, supporters or poetry lovers during this time. Sultan Sulaiman Al-Kanuni, or better known as *Suleyman the Magnificent* was a poet with a pen name Muhibbi. Besides of his Al-Kanuni nick name, due to his ability of producing national laws, he was also a sultan whose love poetry became the heritage of Turkish people. The poetry of Sultan Sulaiman which depicted his feelings of love toward one of his favorite wives, became a legendary in love poetry genre.

Ottoman Language/ Osmanlıca	Turkish Language/Türkçe
Celis-i halvetim, varım, habibim mah-ı tabanım Enisim, mahremim, varım, güzeller şahı sultanım	Benim birlikte olduğum, sevgilim, parıldayan ayım, Can dostum, en yakınım, güzellerin şahı sultanım.
Hayatım hasılıım, ömrüm, şarab-ı kevserim, adnım Baharım, behçetim, rüzum, nigarım verd-i handanım	Hayatımın, yaşamımın sebebi Cennetim, Kevser şarabım Baharım, sevincim, günlerimin anlamı, gönlüme nakşolmuş resim gibi sevgilim, benim gülen gülüm,
Neşatım, işretim, bezmim, çerağım, neyyirim, şem'im Turuncu u nar u narencim, benim şem'-i şebistanım	Sevinç kaynağım, içkimdeki lezzet, eğlenceli meclisim, nurlu parlak ışığım, meş'alem. Turuncum, narım, narencim, benim gecelerimin, visal odamın aydınlığı,
Nebatım, sükkerim, genc,m, cihan içinde bi-rencim Azizim, Yusuf'um varım, gönül Mısır'ındaki hanım	Nebatım, şekerim, hazinem, cihanda hiç örselenmemiş, el değmemiş sevgilim. Gönlümdeki Mısır'ın Sultanı, Hazret-i Yusuf'um, varlığımın anlamı,
Stanbulum, Karaman'im, diyar-ı milket-i Rum'um Bedahşan'im ve Kıpçağım ve Bağdad'im, Horasanım	İstanbul'um, Karaman'im, Bütün Anadolu ve Rum ülkesindeki diyara bedel sevgilim. Değerli lal madeninin çıktığı yer olan Bedahşan'im ve Kıpçağım, Bağdad'im, Horasan'im.
Saçı marım, kaşı yayım, gözü pür fitne, bimarım **ürsem boynuna kanım, meded he namüsülmanım	Güzel saçım, yay kaşım, gözleri ışıl ışıl fitneler koparan sevgilim, hastayım! Eğer ölürsem benim vebalim senin boynunadır, çünkü bana eza ederek kanıma sen girdin, bana imdad et, ey Müslüman olmayan güzel sevgilim.

<p>Kapında çünkü meddahım, seni medh ederim daim Yürek pür gam, gözüm pür nem, Muhibbi'yim hoş halim!</p>	<p>Kapında, devamlı olarak seni medh ederim, seni överim, sanki hep seni öğmek için görevlendirilmiş gibiyim. Yüreğim gam ile, gözlerim yaşlarla dolu, ben Muhibbi'yim, sevgi adamıyım, bana bir şeyler oldu, sarhoş gibiyim. Bir hoş hale geldim.</p>
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*Muhibbi (Kanuni Sultan Süleyman'ın mahlası)*

Two most famous poets in the Ottoman Dynasty were Fuzuli and Baki, who lived during the lifetime of Sultan Sulaiman. Sultan was a poet and protector of the palace's great poets. In short, in this Islam period, or also known as the classical period (13<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century), poetry became the literature expression of the mystic, sufistic, and exclusive. The penetration of Arabic and Persian languages with strong support from the palace and intellectuals had slowly closed the existence of languages developed by the common society, which was considered as the Old Turkish (Eski Türkçe). The world even discussed the works of Turkish literature under the studies of Islamic world literature or Arabic Literature. To current Turkish generation, poetry works written in Ottoman language (Osmanlıca) need to be translated to the current Turkish language, called *Türkiye Türkçesi*, as the above Sultan Sulaiman's poetry.

*Modern Period*

From the 20<sup>th</sup> century until today, the period is viewed as the era of the government of the Republic of Turkey. The development of poetry in Turkey during this period is marked by the revolutionary spirit and the emergence of nationalist activities. The loss of the Turkish with its alliance forces in the World War I (1914-1918), had caused mental and spiritual losses which in turn brought forward nationalist movement. During this period, the search for identity became the dominant theme of poetry. The development was in line with the effort to make Turkish language as the identity of this nation. The modernization of Turkish language was pioneered by the founder of the Republic of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal, showed some attempts to clear what is now called Turkish language from Arabic and Persian languages elements. What was called Osmanlıca, which was greatly influenced by Arabic and Persian vocabulary, was not considered as Turkish language, and therefore, a Turkish language having a peculiarity of Turkey needed to be created.

Although the Seljuk and Ottoman Dynasty had expanded their territory spreading from Central Asia, South Asia, to Middle East and Caucasus, causing the territory of Turkey to be so large covering societies with multi ethnic, culture and languages, only the language which was spoken by the Turkish community in Anatolia region with Istanbul as the capital of Ottoman Dynasty, that was preserved as the language of literature. This language was later on known as Turkish language. In Turkish language terminology, it was specifically called *Türkiye Türkçesi* (Turkish language in Turkey), in order to differentiate it from the language before the birth of the republic, and the language being spoken by Turkish peoples in other Turkish countries, such as the languages in Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, etc,

Poetry as the form of expression, was used as a medium to build nationalism in Turkey. Ziya Gokalp (1876), was a journalist and a Turkish sociologist who developed nationalist ideas through poetry to support his nationalist propaganda. The principles of Turkish nationalism carried out by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk clearly adopted the ideas of Ziya Gokalp which headed toward *Turkification*, in a spirit to search for a Turkish identity and to release from the Turkish Ottoman identity which was very Islamic. During this era, the spirit in developing poetry was like "poetry court". Nationalist-oriented poets attempted to remove divan edebiyatı (Islamic classical literature with divan pattern), tekke edebiyatı (tarikat literature), and explored original Turkish language known to have developed before the arrival of Arabic and Persian languages which had influenced Turkish language. In addition, poets of this time enthusiastically adopted themes from France, which put forward freedom and rationality.



Famous poets during this period were Mehmet Ekip Ersoy (20 December 1873 – 27 December 1936) and Yahya Kemal (1884—1958). Both were renowned poets during the establishment of nationalism in Turkey. Their poems depicted attempts to support the nation which had been destroyed after the world war and the search for identity. The phenomenal 10-line poems of Mehmet Ekip Ersoy were later on decided to be the national anthem of Turkey “İstiklal Marsı”.

Together with Mehmet Ekip Ersoy, Yahya Kemal were regarded as poets of the modern era. Both rebuilt poetry as the expression of Turkish people. Poetry themes were created based on the society’s daily life. Like other poets, the two figures tried to bring back the function of poetry as the people’s art expression, instead of the elites. In addition to that, the themes which were centered on freedom and rationality, especially originated from France, had influence the works of poets of this time.

Although standing together equally with other poets who struggled for the establishment of the new Turkey and therefore in the position of fighting against the authority of the Turkish Ottoman which were weakening, Yahya Kemal, who was born from a noble Turkish family resided in Skopje of Macedonia, felt deep sadness due to the sinking of the Ottoman dynasty. Yahya Kemal’s poetry clearly depicted his longing for the glory achieved by the Turkish Ottoman.

To the new generation of Turkey, reading the poets of Yahya Kemal Beyatlı, for instance, was like reading the historical glory of Turkish people (Topdemir, 2013:73). Yahya Kemal, who was born on 2 December 1884 in Skopje (now the territory of Macedonia), in describing his sadness and longing for his childhood in Skopje, was a memory that could not come back, due to the loss of cultural glory which had united his homeland with Istanbul. The following is his poem on his desire and longing for Üsküp (Skopje) which was lost after the war and had left Turkey as separated countries.

#### *Kaybolan Şehir*

#### The Lost City<sup>4</sup>

*Üsküp ki Yıldırım Beyazıd Han diyârıdır,  
Evlâd-ı fâtiyhâna onun yâdigârıdır.  
Fîrûze kubbelerle bizim şehrimizdi o;  
Yalnız bizimdi, çehre ve rûhıyla bizdi o.  
Üsküp ki Şar dağında devâmıydı Bursa'nın*

Skopje was the city of Sultan Beyazıd Yıldırım  
The generation of Sultan Fatih was the heritage  
With pyrus dome, it was our city;  
To us it belonged, with our spirit and soul  
Bursa was the ancestor of the Shar mountain in  
Skopje

That was the story of Yahya Kemal, who was born and grew in Skopje, used to be a part of the Turkish Ottoman Dynasty, felt the deep lost on the Turkish Ottoman’s cultural life in Skopje that had separated from Istanbul, where he grew and mature. He became the decisive figure in the establishment of the new Turkey, which consequently brought about the losing of cities, including his homeland, Skopje. However, he could not cover his longing, memory and the deep lost which he expressed in his poetry lines.

The development of Turkish poetry later showed what was also felt by Turkish people in searching his nation identity. The new republic of Turkey which was established on modernization with Western orientation, was against the characteristics of Turkish society holding Islamic values. The clash of ideology was clearly recorded in many poetry that developed. The clash, search for self-identity, were dominant theme of poetry of that time.

<sup>4</sup> *Translated by Ade Solihat, 27 August 2015)*

## Poetry and Turkish Poets in the View of Indonesian Societies

In the development of Turkish history afterwards, the change of alphabetic letters in Turkish language from Arabic to Latin starting from 1928, had clearly “removed” Turkish poetry from the Arabic poetry studies. For this reason, many poetry studies in the Islamic world, especially in Indonesia, had not specifically discussed Turkish poetry. The discussion of Turkish poetry, especially love poetry of Jalaluddin Rumi or Meulana Rumi, was known better as Arabic or Persian poetry, or generally known as the poetry of Islam. This was due to the fact that Jalaluddin Rumi lived in the period where two great languages, Arabic and Persian, were the language of literature. In other words, discussing Jalaluddin Rumi, did not specifically mean discussing Turkish poets, because the great name of Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi was also a great name for Arabic and Persian poetry. However, there was no doubt that Jalaluddin Rumi, who contributed on his worldly known monumental and masterpiece of poetry collection “Mesnevi” had included Turkey in “World Literature Map”.

At the end of 2014 until end of August 2015 which has just passed, Indonesian people were presented by a television drama series “the Glorious Century” depicting how King Sulaiman was very good at making poetry, especially love poetry. Indonesian people then heard the poetry palace voiced in this tv drama. The drama also depicted the glory of Islam in Turkey and described how poetry became a medium of communication between Sultan and his wife; between Sultan as a father, and his children. The glorious century poetry pieces was well kept in the pieces of poetry palace.

During the last five years, there has been many attempts made by the Government of Turkey in Indonesia in introducing Turkish culture and language. One of the efforts was introducing Yunus Emre, whose name has been used as an institution giving scholarship to Indonesian and international students to continue their education in Turkey. The Turkish poet figure needs to be studied in order to understand his ideas and views on the synthesis of local Turkish values and the universal Islamic values.

There were many other Turkish poets besides Mehmet Ekip Ersoy and Yahya Kemal Beyatlı as mentioned above, among others, Orhan Veli Kanık (1914—(1950), with his poem “Istanbul’u Dinliyorum”(I’m listening to Istanbul), Nazim Hikmet (1902-1963), with his poem “Memleketim”(My hometown), Ahmet Necip Fâzıl Kısakürek (1904—1983), with his poem “Kitabe” and many more, who have been used as reference on the development of contemporary poetry in Turkey, but has not been known by Indonesian societies.

## Conclusion

The development of Turkish poetry has clearly demonstrated the formation of Turkish identity. Poetry is the representation of this nation which explains who they are, how they proceed to become the nation we currently know about. Today, the theme of Turkish poetry vary and focus on religiosity, divinity, freedom, rationality, and many others, with the influence of cultural layering they experience. The said theme, besides depicting clashes between the East and the West (Islam and Modernity), the theme has shifted and show the synthesis of Turkey, Islam (East) and Europe (West).

Understanding Turkish poetry is understanding the identity of this nation, which continuously struggles to build and represent its dynamic identity instead of its static identity. Hopefully, this article can inspire deeper and continuous study on Turkish poetry.

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