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A Way of Symbolic Communication in the Anatolian Turkish Culture: Gift Presentation

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Presentation of gift indicates a two-sided relationship between the presenter and the presented and means conveying one's sincere, wholeheartedly feelings about the other one to whom gift is presented and the desire of that being remembered in the same way from the presented one, thus functioning as binding and strengthening social relations and ties between the both parties and contributing to the development of social harmony. Therefore presenting and receiving gift is a sort of communication way between the people, in another word a presentation of gift is in fact represent a clear sign of expression between the people who would like to communicate or want to communication to keep alive.

In this respect communication, which acts as a a sort of mechanism in forming and developing human relationships, represents a special kind of social behaviour in which common linguistic values, cultural symbols, social habits and customs form a common base.

The tradition of presenting gifts in relation with the various aspects of the Turkish cultural life has a long history dating as early as from shamanism. From time to time, the ancient Turks gave some presents as vowing offerings to the spirits of their ancestors, to the protective spirits of the universe called '*iyeler*' in Turkish and to the *Tengri*, the ancient God, in order to make them please and live in comfort, in turn to take consent of God for the acceptance of their will. These presentations in general were offered at rituals' conducted during the specific times of the year. These presentations are called '*tapıg*' or '*tapuğ*' in ancient Turkish, meaning worship (Esin 1979: 41-50; Eberhard 1996: 77, 86; İnan 1976: 46-54; Kalafat 1990: 95; Ögel 1991: 166). In *Divanu Lugat- İt- Turk*, the Greater Turkish Dictionary, these terms are used in terms of worship and

service, whereas the term of “*Tengri tapuğu*” is used in the meaning of worshipping to God (Kaşgarlı Mahmud 1985 I: 373). From these definitions it clearly appears that presentations of gifts to God, to the spirits and the “*iyeler*” during the rituals as vows forms a part of a willingly fulfilled mission to be accomplished in the Turkish cultural life.

Following the acceptance of Islamic religion, these presentations are defined with a new term, “*kurban*”, the sacrifice, in the Turkish world. However it should be noted that in the islamic religion “*kurban*” is offered only to God in the way of sacrificing a sheep, a goat, a cow or a camel during a religious festival celebrated by Muslims worldwide as a commemoration of Ibrahim's (Abraham's) willingness to sacrifice his son Ismael for Allah. But in the islamic-influenced Turkish culture, the meaning of “*kurban*” differs significantly. It refers to any sorts of offerings related to the occasions of birth and death, weddings, feasts given in honour of some one or in celebration of something, religious festives, visiting “*yatırs*”, tombs of leading holy men and fertility wishes for a good harvest. This implies that in the Turkish culture “*kurban*” refers to any sort of presentation comprising both sacrifice of an animal or any objects such as binding pieces of clothes to the branches of trees, offerings of food and beverages. Therefore “*kurban*” plays a significant role in the Turkish life and belief, and a sacrifice is given to mighty Allah or to his holy men whenever a personal wish wanted to be to come true. Indeed this is the essence of offering sacrifice which, in fact, intends to please mighty god or his holy representatives in the belief that his/ her personal wishes to be realized in turn.

At this point it should be noted that there is also a different type of voting offering, a common notion in many cultures, called “*adak*”, which forms a part of sacrifice which is offered to the god or protecting spirits as a promised gift provided that one's own wishes will come true or one's life will be protected from dangers. Although this statement basically appears to be a conditional wish, the act of “*adak*” is a self-oriented volunatious willing.

Among the ancient Turks the animals that were chosen for sacrifice or any blessed objects are expressed with the word of “*ıdhuk*”, literarely meaning to define anything to be let go or liberated, in other words anything that is intended to set free to please God.

However as a result of maturation and transformation of religious thoughts of the Turks resulting from the expansion of the islamic influence, the word “*idhuk*” came to be used in sense of the meaning of holy or blessed. Therefore any animal chosen for *adak* or sacrifice is regarded to be an *idhuk-animal*, a blessed one, and consequently it is freed in the sense that its hair or wool is not sheared, not used as a pack animal to carry goods in order not to subject any suffering pain from overburden, it is not kept for milking for consume; it is only kept for the sake of the *adak* for the owner’s wish (Kaşgarlı Mahmud 1985 I: 65; Inan 1976: 53).

In the Turkish culture, sacrifice of an animal for *adak* is a common custom and it is practised to express one’s gratitude to the God. when a wish or desire is attained at specific times or occasions such as when a wife gives birth to a son or at the time of circumcision feast of a son or at the times of realisation of marriages. For example in Erzurum, a large provincial town in eastern Anatolia, and its adjoining regions, it is customary to sacrifice a sheep when a mother gives birth to a baby boy and the meat of the sheep is distributed among the poor people (Bürhan 1971: 24). This custom is known as “*akike*” locally. It is interesting to point out here that, although *akike* is related with birth of a baby boy in eastern Anatolian culture, the same culture prevails among the some Turkish people in Iran who are followers of Caferî belief with a considerable difference; here only one sheep is sacrificed for a birth of a baby boy, whereas two sheep are sacrificed for a baby girl for the reason that baby girls are considered to be mothers of future when they are grown up and according to the Caferî’s belief that mothers are divinely respected and blessed human beings in the eyes of the God and therefore the Heaven is fully open to them.

In the Turkish mythology blood is regarded to be a blessed thing. Therefore in Anatolia the blood of sacrificed animal is drained into a clean hole or a pot in order to keep it clean, not to be stepped out, a practice which is also carried out in Turkmenistan. In Karapapahs, a Turkish clan living in northeastern Anatolia, Georgia and Azerbaijan, the blood of the animal sacrificed at the feast of sacrifice is regarded to have a power of healing and the children are expected to dip their fingers

into the fresh blood and smear it to their foreheads (Eröz 1980: 212; Kalafat 2005: 148, 52; Yılmaz 2005).

Smearing of blood on the forehead of a person is also common in Anatolian culture. For example a sheep is sacrificed at the treshhold of the door of the husband's house before the bride enters the new home and the bride is forced to jump over the fresh blood. The fresh blood of the sacrificed annimal is smeared both on the forebeads of the newly married couple. In some cases, (i.e. in central Anatolia) a glass, a plate or an earthenware water jug is broken immediately after the sacrifice but just before the bride entering the home. The sound that caused by breaking of these objects are expected to expel evil spirits and demons and even the envious feelings of other people around (Kalafat 2005: 62; Yılmaz 2005).

Apart from sacrificing an animal, there is also a common custom for presenting an *adak* which is known as "*saçı*", a presentation of objects which are believed to be of power for fertility. Milk, "*kımız*", a fermented mare's milk, various drinks and foods are considered as *saçı* and scattering of these with hand on the ground are known as an act of "*saçı yapmak*". Pieces of clothes that are tied to branches of mighty trees as well as to the head stones, iron railings or bars of the holy tombs are also considered as *saçı* (Eröz 1980: 212; İnan 1976: 47; Kalafat 1990: 96). *Saçı*, as it happens in the case of sacrifice of an animal, is offered not only for a part of prayers asked for realization of a wish or wishes but also for thanksgiving for God.

In ancient Turks sacrifice of animals and presentation of different objects, foods or drinks (*saçı*) are defined by two different words which are "*tayılga*" or "*hayılga*" and "*saçılga*" or "*çaçılga*" respectively. *Saçı* or alternatively "*saçılga*" or "*çaçılga*" is considered to be one of the most precious and blessed benefections which are earned by laborious force of the people of the clan. In nomads milk, *kımız*, butter; in farmers wheat, millet, wine; in trading clans money any other valuable object are offered as *saçı* (İnan 1976: 54). In the case of the fulfilment of the wish three to seven days of fast is accomplished or a Koran, the sacred book of the Muslims, a prayer beads or carpets are donated to the shrine of the holy person. To hand out candies or *halva* (a sweet made from cereals, pine nuts, sesame oil and honey), to light a candle or to plant a rose tree

at the holy shrines are also common practices (Abdülaziz Bey 2000: 360; Yılmaz 2005). The Caferî Turks visits the holy places every Thursdays and Fridays and ties a piece cloth, the colour of which is not important, for the fulfilment of their all sort of expectations including having a son, a healthier and longer life for their children and good marriages for their daughters. When the expectations have been fulfilled the piece of cloth is then untied (Kalafat 2005: 150).

In Turkish culture *saçı* tradition is also common practice before and after the pray for rain during the long dry (arid) seasons. For example in Kahramaraş, a provincial large town in southeastern Anatolia, if rain comes after the pray, then thanksgiving prayers are given again and an *aşüre*, a sweet dish representing fertility which is made up of a mixture of various dried fruits, wheats and beans, is prepared and distributed among the neighbours (Camuz 2004: 23).

The presentations noted above are the sort of presentations which are offered to those who are believed to be holding holy powers. Yet in the Turkish culture, to give and to receive presents as gifts as a part of various aspects of life are also common among the ordinary people. The statement in the *Divanü- Lügat- İt- Türk* which follows as “Be kind to your relatives, kinships and your neighbours. If they give you a gift, in turn, you prepare valuable things and present to them.” (Kaşgarlı Mahmud 1985 I: 109, 114, 182,385,408) clearly indicates the important role of giving and receiving gifts between the people in order to develop good and sincere relations. Among the ancient Turks it was customary to present rare horses and some other similar valuable objects to the respected governors or nobleman. These presents are called “*artut*”. However there are also presentations given by visitors to the host of the house. These presents are called “*belek*” which also means a gift which is sent from one place to another place (Türk Dil Kurumu 1988I: 173). In Turkish culture there is another word called “*bergüzar*”, which is borrowed from Persian and imply a gift for remembrance.

In the Turkish life exchange of presents starts with celebration of birth and continues till the end of life, commemorating various occasions such as festives of circumcision, weddings, mournings, etc.

For example the relatives, the neighbours and nearby friends come to visit the mother and the baby starting from the second day of the birth

onwards. The aim of the visits during the first week following the birth are intended to congratulate the birth and the mother, whereas the following visits during the second week and the following days are intended to inquire about the health of the mother and the baby. These visits are also of particular importance in terms of binding the relationships between the people. The visitors bring rich foods to the baby's home, such as rice pudding, pudding, cookies, baklavas, sweets, honey, boiled chicken, pastry, *pilaf*, boiled eggs with bread and a special kind of candy which is deep red in colour and is made of sugar mixed up with herbs such as cinnamon and clove. These are basically the sort of foods that make someone thirsty and force to drink plenty water. By presentation of these foods to the mother, it is intended to force her to drink plenty of water in order to help her to gain her strength and provide plentiful of milk to the baby. The more water she drinks, the more milk she will produce to feed the baby. In addition she is expected to eat more sweets after the pregnancy in order to bring up the baby with happiness. The visitors also bring clothes to the mother and the baby to meet the basic needs, among which "*yemeni*", a head scarf made of cotton adorned with patterns of colorful flowers or head scarf, towel, slippers, socks, baby clothes and toys are the most popular items presented as gifts (Örnek 1977: 160-162; Acıpayamlı 1961: 71). In some parts of the central Anatolia, there is a custom to prepare a special dowry, called "baby dowry", to meet the needs of the baby from the scratch, which include baby shoes, clothes and a bed since the baby comes into a new world fully naked and unprotected, and therefore the baby has got nothing to support himself or herself to cope with the difficulties of a new life. The richness of the dowry depends of the social status of the person or the family who prepares the dowry. In some cases the dowry is prepared by grandmother and the content of the dowry is shown to the invited relatives and the close friends on a special occasion held on the sixth or seventh day following the birth. At this occasion *mevlut* is recited to offer thanks to mighty God and to ask the mercy of God for a happy and healthy life of the baby. During this occasion the well-wishes, blessings and gifts of the invited people are also accepted and the clothes of the baby is decorated with quarter, half or whole golden liras presented as gifts by the invited ones who also give golden bracelets,

rings or ear rings as presents in order to give them support for coping the financial difficulties that they might come across sometime in future (Yılmaz 2005). In southeastern Anatolia an iron pot is presented to the baby as a gift in order to wish him or her to lead a powerful and mighty life as strong as an iron right from the very beginning, till to the end (Camuz 2004: 19).

Custom of circumcision of a young boy, which is in general regarded as representing a transition from childhood to manhood in the Turkish culture, is a happy, joyfull and exciting event in the Turkish life. Presentation of gifts to the circumcised boy, to the members of his family and even in some cases to the guests themselves, as it happens in Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia, is a part of the long-lived tradition. Festive of circumsion is sometimes organized by a respected elder of the family or by someone close to the family. This is known "*kirvelik*", which means an act of a man as a sort of god father to a boy at his circumcision and the acting man is known as "*kirve*" (Kudat 1974: 7). Kirve meets the basic expenses of circumcision and also gives presents to the boy and to family and his relatives. It is also customary that the "*kirve*" receives presents from the father of the boy as well as a large tray of *baklava* and clothes from the members of the family for expressing their gratitude as a response for his valuable helps (Örnek 1977: 181; Camuz 2004: 19; Eğilmez 2005).

Giving and receving gifts also play an important role in the wedding and marriage ceremonies, Exchancing of presents follows immediately after agreeing to go ahead with marriage between two families. This is the first step of mariage between man and woman, which is known as giving promise. At this step golden bracelets and jewellery are presented to the future-bride and then *sherbet* is offered to the family members to celebrate the happiness of the future-bride and the groom, wishing them a very pleasant way of life as sweet as *sherbet* and a sweet home. In some parts of the central Anatolia, i.e. in the district of Beypazarı, the family of the future-bride prepares a sort of dowry which includes a pack of shirts, socks, head scarves, underwears, various clothes for making dresses to be presented to the future- groom and his parents to strength the given promise for the marriage.

The next step in the marriage is the engagement of the man and woman. This act is also marked by presenting jewelleries to the engaged couple and nicely prepared dowries are exchanged between the families of the bride and the groom on the following day of the engagement. The presentations provided by the brides family clearly carries out the message that “we have already given our daughter to you and we will definitely stand after our promise”. In turn, the presentations of the groom’s family clearly indicate that “we will also keep our promise and we will do our best for the success of the marriage” (Yılmaz 2005). In another provincial town in central Anatolia called Niğde, after a marriage promise is given, the family of the man visits the family of the future bride to present her a necklace consisting of a piece of string or red ribbon decorated with few most valuable golden coins called “*beşibiryerde*”, meaning the five-pieces in one. This is known as “gold attachment” and then afterwards the future-bride is called “bride girl”. In one of the following days immediately after the gold attachment, the family of the man buys candies, *helva*, and similar foods from the town and present them to the family of the bride, all arranged in large copper or brass trays (Öztürk 1973: 591). The exchange of presentations between the families is known as “*anayolu*- the mothers way” implying that the tradition is transformed in the same way from the past to the future, following the mothers’ routes.

A day or two days before the marriage womanfolks are gathered at the house of the bride’s parents to apply henna to the palms of the bride, just to say symbolically farewell and send her of from her parents home to start a new life. At the very beginning of this meeting the bride keeps her hands tightly closed before the application of henna and she appears not to be willing to open them unless she receives a gold coin or some money from her mother in law. By the implication of this behaviour it is meant that the bride would like to see the goodwill of the others and their openness towards her. All sorts of presentations, comprising jewelleries, clothes, household goods, gold and Money, given to the bride during, before or after the marriage ceremony and festive is regarded to be bearing the meanings of good wishes and the value that is given to the newly built home.

Among the Turks every ceremony, whether it is intended to celebrate a happy event or a sad occasion, is marked with a magnificent banquet which forms a forum for a sort of gathering of family members, relatives and close friends and provides means for a solidarity and support among the invited people. It is evident from historical archives that occasionally huge banquets were organized by the governing leaders or the rulers of the communities to show their solidarity for their people (Genç 1982: 175-183; İnan 1987: 645-648; Öztelli 1963:3080-3081). In the ancient greater dictionary of Turkish, *Divanü Lügat- İt Türk*, reference is made to “*kenç liyü*” which defines huge banquets with up to about two meters pile of rich foods, organized at the weddings of Khans or at festivals (Kaşgarlı Mahmud 1985 III: 438). A statement made in the book “*Kutadgu Bilig*”, which means Knowledge on Being Happy, refers that “two things make the respected gentlemen, “beys” highly honoured: his “*tuğ*” (a horse-tail representation of a sign of rank) placed at the door of his home and the banquet he gives” (Yusuf Has Hâcib 1991: 190). This statement not only directs attention to the significance of banquets but also clearly advise the rulers to organize rich banquets for their people for deserving their respect and solidarity. What is more interesting about banquets is that the visitors are also honoured by receiving presents from the host. This statement not only directs attention to the significance of banquets but also clearly advise the rulers to organize rich banquets to their people to deserve their respect and solidarity. What is more interesting about banquets is that the visitors are also honoured by receiving presents, mainly silk clothes or money from the host. These presents are given as a sort of token called “tooth fee” to make the people feel happy about the banquet (Yusuf Has Hâcib 1991:337).

A similar but somehow modified form of this tradition is also traced in some parts of Anatolia at present. In Manisa, a town in western Anatolian, close friends of the groom, about ten to fifteen people, come to the home of wedding to prepare a local dish called “*kariştirma*”, literally meaning a mixture which is made up of bread crumbs scrambled up with eggs which is cooked in olive oil at the final day of the wedding. This food is only served to the close friends of the groom who consume the food very fast as if they come out of a hunger. This is called “*yağmalama*”, the looting of the food, which is in fact is realised in order

to create a happy and joyful atmosphere at the wedding. While some of them having their food, the others leave the place to go to the room where the dowry of the bride is kept to loot a few simple items such as an hankerchief or a pair of socks which are easy to steal and keep in a pocket and then they return back to the looting of the food (Açıkgöz 1963: 3235). This act of stealing is performed in order to receive their tooth fee from the groom in their own way.

Another widespread tradition among the Turks related to wedding ceremonies is the presentation of gold coins or gold bracelets to the bride by the groom in order to get her permission letting him to see her face by removing her veil after the wedding. This presentaion is known as “yüz görümlüğü”.

In sufizm, face is considered to be a most precious, dignified and sacred part of the body since it is believed that it signifies the reflection of the divinely beauty of *Allah* in a symbollic way. In *Divan* Literature, in particularly in poetry, the beauty of the beloved one is emphatically expressed in terms of the beauty of the face. Face is regarded to be bright, shining with brilliance, like a moon-light in a dark night in the sky. Therefore the face of the beloved one is described as a moonlike, representing a divinely beauty (Pala 1995: 143). Therefore the face of the beloved one is regarded to be brightened with a divinely light. The lover never feels satisfied wacthing the face of the beloved. But the beloved one shows her face only very rarely. The lover is ready to give away everthing that he has in his possession in order not to miss one of this rare moments. In this respect “yüz görümlülüğü” is an indispensable part of the Turkish cultural heritage, the foundation of which derived from many different sources (Pala:1955: 143).

In the beliefs of the people the expressions of “the face” and “for the sake of the face” have an important place and they are used in different connotations. People belive that their prayers will be accepted if they pray while *ezan*, the call for *namaz*, is being recited. Therefore they end up the pray by stating “for the sake of the face of the *ezan*”. This expression is also used in different ways such as “for the sake of the face of the prophet Muhammed” or “for the sake of the face of the holly days”.

In the faith of the Turkish people to cover up the face is undertaken in order not to be faced with the feeling of any embarrassment and against

the evil eyes of the people. The khans of the Hazar Turks used to come out among their people with their faces covered up in order to keep their sacred faces from the glares of the ordinary people. The brides are also covering their faces in a similar manner: to keep their faces from evil eyes and for the reason of embarrassment. The bride unveils her face up to present it as a gift for the groom, provided that the groom in turn gives something valuable, such as an arable land, a jewellery or a house, to her as a price to see her face (Kalafat 2002: 187).

To build up a new home and a family isn't an easy task, both morally and financially, and therefore the bride and the groom shares the expenses of building a new home. The contribution of the partners differs in terms of the families social and economic status and the local customs of the regions. In general the groom's family meets the expenses of the marriage and buys furniture for the living room, whereas the brides' family contributes to the cost of the bedroom furniture and the kitchen wares. The bride also brings a dowry "*çeyiz*" when she leaves her fathers home and moves to the home of her husband. Dowry means brides' goods consisting of households, which include dresses, clothes, bedroom, living room and bathroom sets, kitchen equipment and all sorts of golden and silver jewellery. In some cases a dowry might include a few cattle or a herd, a land, an orchid, or a vineyard. However, in a strict sense, a dowry means various household goods, such as a carpet, a rug, clothes, handwoven pullovers, embroideries and lace works that was self made by herself and was kept in a dowry chest called "*sandık çeyizi*" (Kademoglu 1999: 32). Preparation of a dowry chest for a young girl to be married by her parents also forms a part of Islamic family law. According to the Islamic prudence, whether dowry is simply prepared by her parents or by her husband as a "*mehr*" stating a marriage settlement, when the dowry is handed over to the young girl or the wife, it promptly becomes her personal right and property.

Among the Turks some amount of money or household goods are given to the parents of the girl to be married as a substitute by the parents of the boy. This is known as "*bedel*", "*kalın*", "*başlık*" or "*ağırılık*" in Turkish. The payment of money or offering goods are basically intended as a sort of economic compensation to meet the work power of the young girl who leaves the parents' home for good. It is also intended to make

the woman strong against the man and then to provide an equilibrium between the sexes. This tradition also implies the symbolization of the status of the united families.

In the traditional culture of Turks it is also a custom to give present at the religious festives. The children are given some money, which is known as “*bayram harçlığı*”, meaning pocket money for festive, when they kiss hands of their elders as a sign of showing their respects. In some regions pocket money is handed packaged in a handkerchief which is folded in a triangular style (Yılmaz 2005). In this respect the religious festives may be regarded as an opportunity to show elders’ care for the children and let them feel how important they are. In religious festives mutual presentation of gifts among the elders are also common practices. For example in Van, an eastern Anatolian town, during the Ramadan festive brothers present clothes suitable for making dresses to their sisters as a “Ramadan Gift”. This may appear to be an act of awarding a prize for the fact that she fulfilled worship and accomplished fast in patience during the holy Ramadan month. It also implies an act of expression to show an economically depended sister to convey the message of how much she is loved and will be cared for ever (**Akbulut**).

Among the Turks, sending of youngsters to comply their military service or sending off people to the pilgrimage at the holly place Mecca or on their returns either from the military service or Mecca provides means to get together at a banquet and exchange of gifts. Among the ancient Turks it was a custom that the relatives of family used to bring gifts from places they visited if they had a profitable journey. It was also a custom to make a big feast with a banquet on an occasion for a relative who would depart for a long journey and return back. For the feast and the banquet, all the relatives and the close friends were invited and the gifts were presented to the person indicating that the person is allowed to go.

The meal that they had all together at the banquet on this occasion is called “*boşuğ aşısı*”, meaning “a meal for permission” (Kaşgarlı Mahmud 1985: 372). Similar tradition is followed up at present; the people who would go to the military service or pilgrimage are invited for a meticulously prepared dinner. Following the dinner, various gifts such as underwears, socks, cotton head scarves, or money are presented to the

person in order not to have any difficulties at their final destinations. On their return from the military service or pilgrimage, the families of these people sacrifice an animal to express their thanksgivings and invites relatives and neighbours to have a meal together. The invited people are mainly the ones who previously organized meals and presented gifts for the hosts. In the region of Van it is customary that a pilgrimage brings valuable gifts back to the members of the family. The other gifts which are brought to the other relatives and friends are placed on a large tray at the entrance of the house which is later collected freely by the visitors as they leave the house after completing their “well wishing” visits (Yılmaz 2005; Yoğurtçuoğlu 2005).

Recital of *Mevlūd*, which is a lengthy poem written for the honour of the birthday of Mohammed the prophet, is realized on a number of occasions such as following the birth, after the death, at the ceremony of circumcision, at the wedding, at the return from pilgrimage in order to present thanksgivings to the mighty God. *Mevlūd* recited immediately after the death or at a funeral ceremony held a year later carry out the messages that the spirits of our ancestors will always be kept in our memories. Forgiveness of God is also begged for the comfort of the souls of our ancestors. The dead person could be a young one. It is the same message that is intended to convey for God through the way of reciting *Mevlūd*.

It is not a common practice to take a present to the home of the mourners apart from the foods. As a sign of public spirit, social solidarity and sharing of grief the neighbours and the relatives of the deceased one bring foods and meals three times a day, covering for breakfast, lunch and dinner. In Sivas, a provincial town in eastern Anatolia, there is a specific custom which is known as “*yoklatma*” which defines visits realized with presenting gifts at the every stages of life. When such a visit is realized at the time of the death, the gifts mainly include money, soap for the purpose of washing up the clothes and the body of the dead person, face towel, cotton cloth, underwears, singlets, white or printed cloth, and linen and cotton fabric for making a dress. Here, washing up the clothes of the dead person with soap is considered to represent moral cleaning of the dead body. Washing up in the

“mourning hamam” is regarded as getting rid of the mourning. However to give soap as a present nowadays has become very declined.

In our present times the visitors bring different kinds of pastries, tea, sugar and sweets to the mourners home. In some parts of the country the presents are wrapped up in a white cotton cloth to indicate emphatically the whiteness which is believed to be having a magical power of helping mourners getting rid of their grief (Üçer 1977).

In Kahramanmaraş, a town in southeastern Anatolia, the whole family goes to cemetery to visit the deceased one at the first religious festive that comes after the dead. If the festive is then Ramadan festive, they give away candies to the other people at the cemetery (Camuz 2004: 22). In Tunceli, another town in eastern Anatolia, the family of the deceased gives a banquet at the cemetery a year after following the death. All relatives and friends of the dead person are invited to the banquet. It is believed that his spirit of the dead person will be pleased with it. This is the present day extension of a long known practice from our ancestors which originated long before the pre-islamic period and is known as “aş dökme”, “ölü aş dökme” or “büyük yağ” which was carried out to please the souls of their ancestors in turn to benefit from their good will (Kalafat 1990: 116).

It appears that in our cultural life presenting gifts to the “iyeler”, to the spirits, to the mighty God as well as to the each other are a common social practice, the roots of which is derived from the ancient Turkish beliefs, and is represented by a well formed pattern characterized by the traditions, by the form of presentations and by the time of presentations.

This work regards every presentation of gifts, whatsoever its aim or presentation style, as a symbolic way of expression of a communication form of wishes and every sort of feelings of people. The gifts presented to the “iyeler”, to the spirits, to the mighty God in terms of the various forms of presentations clearly indicate messages conveying an ardent desire intended to reach a better, more happier, more productive, more fruitful and more healthier life.

Though similar messages might be expressed through the mutual exchange of gift presentations between the people, the messages in this case are in a way much more likely inclined to aiming at strengthening of the ties of friendship, love and cooperation in a world where people

needs more and more an everlasting mutual support. In this sense a gift might be considered as a sign representing the warmth of feelings, friendliness and even the identity of a person.

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