Fatherly Advice, A Fairytale from the Badia of Jordan: An analysis Using Propp's Model

Abdulateef Almarayeh, Mamdouh Ayed Alenazy*,

¹Santiago De Compostela University/Spain
²Al-Hussein Bin Talal University/Jordan

Corresponding Author: Mamdouh Ayed Alenazy, E-mail: m.alenazy@ahu.edu.jo

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

This study aims at investigating the Jordanian Bedouin folklore "Fatherly Advice", as the first of its kind regarding the Bedouin tales, to reveal its constructive elements narratively. Propp's narrative model is employed as a theoretical framework qualitatively study and a descriptive method application. The chosen tale has some of the constructive elements presented by Propp. The chosen tale has 19 of the constructive elements presented by Propp. However, these functions do not preserve the same order as suggested by Propp. This local class tale deals with ethics, morality, and wisdom. The research paper will be valuable for prospective researchers who wish to conduct research on cultural folklores in the context of the Jordanian Badia or any other similar contexts.

INTRODUCTION

The history of storytelling dates to the earlier human communities when people told tales and stories to each other either to pass the time or to entertain themselves. Some of the ancestors' tales passed from one generation to another and they have been preserved mainly in oral forms and sometimes in written forms. Undoubtedly, the plotted tale with chronological series is more exciting, understandable, and desired by the audience. In general, tales represent various values and manners for their audience in sequences that help them indulge in the story and lead them to imagine that they are in the positions of personas at emotional and intellectual stages, and sometimes the audience feels pity for them. To achieve this, taletellers normally try to add some supernatural elements to the tale's basic characters. In addition, the audience itself creates the identities about the tale's atmosphere, place, actions, characters; (Lloyd, 1995:59) claims that folklore "can provide the means of regular connection between "natural," everyday world and the "supernatural" realm, and the folklore of all sorts can also artfully express this connection." Most folklorists have also accepted these supernatural characteristics as integral elements of some tales. Fairytales, as narrative forms, have seven different 'spheres of action' or character types according to Propp (1968).[1] These character types are the following:

1. The villain who challenges the hero in some way to gain victory.
2. The dispatcher: the persona who makes the rascal's villainy apparent and puts the hero out.
3. The (magician) or the helper whose role is to assist the hero in the mission.
4. The princess or reward whom the hero earns during the tale. Yet, he is unable to wed her because of an illegal event, normally because of the villain. The hero's quest is usually completed when he meets/marries the princess, through overcoming the villain and ending in a "happily ever after" scene.
5. The donor who supplies the hero with some benefit objects, usually the magical one.
6. The hero or victim who corporates with the donor and marries the princess.
7. False hero whose role is to hide the actions of the hero, attributes them to himself, and often tries to wed the princess.

Bedouin literature is generally dependent on oral transmission; this has led to losing most of it due to the negligence

of the government, universities, and research centers. This study relies on a purely personal effort to investigate the information accuracy by reaching the most confident people, who are mostly aged, in the society to find out the tale's details. It examines the Bedouin tale Fatherly Advice, a tale which is elected because it is equally common in the Badia of Jordan. The study evaluates the format of the Bedouin folklore to the international criteria using the standards Propp's model. The examination of this tale is to determine of whether the chosen model is appropriate and applicable to the Bedouin tales. The study aims at bringing into light the probabilities of the application of Propp's model and highlighting the format of Bedouin fairytales in addition to specifying their attractive characteristics.

THE BADIA OF JORDAN

Jordan is a Middle Eastern country in an area called Levantine. Desert constitutes the majority of its land and has an extension towards the Arabian Peninsula including the country's southeastern portions, covering more than two-thirds of the Jordanian area. The desert inhabitants (or the desert dwellers) are the Bedouins whose lifestyle is simple; they spend most of their time searching for pastures and water rare sources. Therefore, they established no stable civilization as found in some parts of the country, such as the city of AL-Karak or the capital city of Amman.

The Jordanian Bedouins are Arabs, and their cultural background is part of Arabs and Muslims. Many of these Bedouins trace their origin to famous Arab tribes such as the Nabateans. In this context, Taylor (2001) clarifies that the Bedouin tribes are constantly migrating for several reasons. In the summer, they wander to the mountainous areas to avoid the summer heat, search for pasture for their herds, and the harvest season of grains such as wheat and barley. While in the winter, the tribes travel to the lowlands in search of warmth. Bedouins usually live in tents made of goat hair, which do not stand in front of harsh weather conditions such as snow and strong wind.

Before the year 633 AD, Jordan was under the rule of the Byzantine Empire. However, at a later stage, it became under the reign of Islam and the which the majority of its population, including Bedouins, adopted Islam rules as a way of life, which also enriched their knowledge of Arabic language either in prose or poetry.

Uzayzī (1990) states that Jordanian Badia is rich in its folklore. Everyday activities of people are narrated through Bedouin poetry, which is transmitted orally from one generation to the next. The Bedouin folklore has great popularity; Uzayzī highlights the fact that the feeling of love is deep-rooted in Badia culture in Jordan, as shown by many Bedouin TV series. The famous love stories of Wadha and Ibn Ajlan, Nimer Ibn Adwan, Alraha, and many others are narrated and recorded by some of the Jordanian authors and writers such as Alabadi (1987), Alrzaz (1994), and Nasrallah (2007) among many others.

In fact, Arab culture and rich knowledge offered developments in nearly all the disciplines of poetry, science, and philosophy (cf. Al-samerai'e 2007; Abdulhalim 2017). In other words, the positive model of Arabs, their culture and their knowledge are represented throughout their universal literature, such as Sinbad and The Arabian Nights stories. However, Arab culture is deformed in our present time which resulted in misconceptions and misunderstandings. Most of Hollywood films are presenting them as villains and terrorists. In raising such confusion, the media is also presenting wrong impressions to its followers (Al-Hazza, 2006:11-17). Ibn Khaldun (1377) observes that there is no cultural variation amongst Arab Bedouins who have equal faith. They are the same in their costumes, food, education opportunities, politics, and even every aspect of their life (cf. Alnaweii, 2009). Consequently, this tale (i.e. Fatherly Advice) is equally familiar in the above-mentioned areas as it is part of their culture.

In one way or another, all these tales teach honesty, ethics, and cultural manners. Away from any modern technology and media assistance, these tales were saved in the hearts of the local people and were passed from one generation to another. Before we delve into the discussion of Propp's Model and our analysis, we present our translation of the tale in the following section.

FATHERLY ADVICE

While lying in his tent, the old man who realized that his death neared decided to give his son *Thabet* the following three pieces of advice: "do not confide your secrets to a woman", "do not interact with a sheikh 'tribe leader'" and "do not marry any of your two sisters to a rich man".

Within a year, Thabet's father died. Thabet ignored his father's advice and he married one of his sisters to a rich man while the other sister was married to a poor man. Later, Thabet moved to a new place to neighbor the sheikh. He observed that the sheikh had an ostrich which he decided to steal and give to his poor mother as she did not have enough food to support herself. He informed his mother of the healing properties of the ostrich fat, and he insisted on his mother, whom he trusted, to keep this as a secret.

The sheikh discovered that his ostrich had been stolen. Therefore, he sought the help of a foreseer who was a clever woman. To help the sheikh, the foreseer claimed that her son is very ill, and she needed ostrich oil to cure him. After asking in the neighborhood about ostrich oil, she discovered that Thabet's mother had some; it became apparent that Thabet was the thief who stole the ostrich. As a result, Thabet's mother was imprisoned by the sheikh and Thabet was asked to bring ten camels as a ransom; the sheikh told Thabet that he would kill his mother if he did not return the ostrich or pay the ransom. Realizing the significance and truthfulness of his father's advice, Thabet felt sad. He, however, was able to think of a plan to save his mother.

He sheared one of his camel's hair, and then he poured some oil on the camel's skin to make it appear ill so he could gain sympathy from his relatives and friends. He decided first to visit his sister who was married to the rich man who shouted at him to keep the ill camel away to avoid infecting his own healthy camels.

Keeping his ill camel away from the other camels, Thabet returned to the rich man's tent and told him of his prob-

lem and asked for help. After listening to him, the rich man offered Thabet a skinny goat which he took along with the ill camel and headed to his other sister whose husband, the poor man, warmly welcomed him and asked him why he kept his camel away. Thabet explained to him that the camel was ill, but the poor man insisted on him to bring it closer without being afraid of getting his camel infected. He listened to Thabet and promised to help him despite his poverty; he asked the tribe for help and managed to offer Thabet ten camels.

After receiving the ten camels, Thabet drove them with the skinny goat to the tribe sheikh's tent, who was surprised and felt embarrassed; he, therefore, freed Thabet's mother and returned to him the ten camels. To repay the favor, Thabet put two bags of wheat on the back of the skinny goat and sent it back to his rich brother-in-law, and the ten camels were sent to the poor brother-in-law. Later, he convinced his sister married to the rich man to get divorced from him. Having realized the value of his father's advice, Thabet traveled with his mother and sister to a new place where they had the chance to start a new life.

PROPP'S MODEL

Vladimir Propp's structural criticism correlates literary texts to a more general structure, which may be a remarkable genre, a scale of intertextual associations, a form of universal narrative structure, or a method of repeated patterns or themes (Barry, 2020:39-60). Consequently, structural presentation concentrates on varied texts, investigating how these texts join into an understandable system. This strategy permits readers to examine the text as an abstract structure.

In general, the goal of structuralism is what Todorov asserts that it is "not a description of a particular work, the designation of its meaning, but the establishment of general laws of which this particular text is the product" (1975:133). The structural analysis reveals the relationship that exists between the meaning and the form systems alike. Therefore, the study of persona types, narrative method, and the context in the Bedouin tale 'Fatherly Advice' helps the reader understand the traditional forms that develop into a meaningful system which identifies these tales.

Levi-Strauss (1955) doubts about the validity and the applicability to folklores because they have been conveyed orally make one of the criticisms of Propp's model, which is thought of as a model that ignores tone, style, and other linguistic characteristics. Strauss supports the structuralism rather than the narrative. Nonetheless, many researchers prefer the latter because it offers the freedom to the story/tale writer to create his/her own (Dundes,1997).

According to the Structuralist approach, the writer cannot afford a work creatively because of the strict structures' limitations. Vladimir Propp, an outstanding scholar of the Russian formalist club, has solved this problem. His "Morphology of the Folklore" offers a bright example of the traditional formalist method applied to the tales' structural analysis. The function of tales is basic in that it is about arranging rather than positing a set of structural rules. Propp presented his model in 1928, and he applied it to more than 100 Russian folklores. Propp (1968) and Falconer (2005)

state that there are 31 constructive elements in folklore. These elements are listed as follows:

Table 1. Propp's model: Thirty-one constructive elements of a folktale (cf. Propp, 1968)

Bartlett (1932) refers to the narrative elements (constructive elements) as the key for the structural component of memory. Bartlett justifies his opinion to some empirical tests that show actions and temporal associations in a given discourse are the base or scaffold (since there is no tale without actions, time, place, and characters) of any tale, story, and the like.

The question that arises here is: how does a model according to Russia's culture apply to different cultural folklores from other societies? Zhou (2013) replies that the constant values of the folktales are repetitive and have similar functions even in the civilizations that are far away from each other, either historically or spatially. Moreover, folklores involve issues, themes, and messages presented aesthetically and morally for readers and listeners alike. Due to the similarity in cultural values, such a model is applicable from one culture to another.

DATA ANALYSIS (NARRATIVE SITUATIONS)

According to Propp (1968), all the functions of the tale are well-knitted to create attention for readers and listeners alike. Although Propp presents thirty-one functions (cf. the table 1 above), it is not necessary that all the functions appear in a tale; a number of these functions are sometimes ignored or repeated in different stories and tales. In the tale Fatherly Advice, the following 19 functions are the most noticeable.

1. **Absentation** refers to the absence of a family member who leaves home. Certainly, this member is not the hero of the tale all the time; rather, it can be any other character. In Fatherly Advice, the father, who is the helper in fact, dies at the beginning of the story leaving behind his family facing their destiny. The hero 'Thabit' is introduced as the guardian of his mother and his two sisters after the death of his father.

2. **Interdiction** is addressed to the hero either to do an action or to avoid doing it. In our tale, the hero is prevented from neighboring any tribal leader (Sheikh), disclosing a secret to a woman, and marrying his sisters to rich men.

3. **Violation** is an action by which the function of interdiction is repealed. This is accompanied by the introduction of a new character, usually the villain. In this tale, Thabit violates his father's advice, which leads to the emergence of new villain characters such as the Sheikh and, at a later stage, his sister's rich husband. Also, this violation results in having his mother as a victim who must endure suffering.

4. **Trickery:** the villain, the shaikh at this stage, tries to deceive the victim (i.e. Thabet's mother) to get information about her belongings. The villain, who is usually persuasive, employed the foreseer to gain the victim's trust; emotional trickery is practiced by the foreseer who claims that she has an ill boy who is in need for a medicine. The villain now presses power, usually using

Table 1. Propp's model: Thirty-one constructive elements of a folktale (cf. Propp, 1968)

1. Absentation	2. Interdiction	3. Violation of interdiction
4. Reconnaissance	5. Delivery	6. Trickery
7. Complicity	8. Villainy	9. Mediation
10. Beginning counter action	11. Departure	12. First function of the donor
13. Hero's reaction	14. Receipt of a magical agent	15. Guidance
16. Struggle	17. Branding	18. Victory
19. Liquidation	20. Return	21. Pursuit
22. Rescue	23. Unrecognized arrival	24. Unfounded claims
25. Difficult task	26. Solution	27. Recognition
28. Exposure	29. Transfiguration	30. Punishment
31. Wedding		

information gained, to trick the hero or the victim in some way.

5. **Complicity:** 'the victim gives support to the enemy'. Thabet's mother unconsciously helps the enemy (the shaikh) by telling the foreseer that she has the ostrich fat; being deceived, she offered the fat to cure the purported ill son who needs a medicine.

6. **Villainy.** The villain, the sheikh at this level, causes harm to Thabit and his mother; he imprisons her and threaten skill her if a ransom is not paid. Another episode of villainy is represented by Thabit's rich brother-in law how refuses to help him secure the required ransom.

7. **Pursuit:** the hero becomes pursued at this stage; his mother is imprisoned, and he must find a way to free her. The only option available to him is to pay the ransom which will cost him time and effort.

8. **Beginning counteraction:** the hero realizes the problem and regrets breaching his father's will. He starts to examine ways to solve the issue by seeking help to secure the required ransom to free his mother. Accordingly, the next function arises.

9. **The Hero's reaction** is seen in his attempt to free his mother. He found this stage a suitable opportunity to verify the validity of his father third piece of advice, and to see how his brothers-in-law will respond to his request. The next function, his departure, is an expected result of his reaction.

10. **Departure:** The hero leaves the tribe, this time with a sense of mission. He begins his adventure to help his mother, taking into consideration his father's advice.

11. **Difficult Task:** A test is offered to the hero. In the present tale, the test takes the form of endurance or strength, and the ability to overcome difficulties. The hero is facing his first task to rescue his mother by bringing ten camels as a ransom within a specific period of time.

12. **Struggle:** being pursued, leaving home and trying to secure the ransom within a few days are all aspects of the hero's ongoing struggle which is further complicated by his rich brother-in-law's refusal to help.

13. **Provision or receipt of a magical agent:** although this function has great relation to the magical powers, our tale tends to be related to real life's actions where the hero acquires help offered by other character/s. Thabit acquires assistance from his sister's poor husband and his tribe (i.e. ten camels as a ransom). Thabit tries to gain the rich husband's sentiments by showing his inferior status and his single camel's weakness.

14. **Rescue:** Here, Thabit manages to secure the required ransom, thanks to his poor brother-in-law and his tribe. Thabit can now return to his tribe and save his mother. The payment of the ransom means that he is no longer pursued.

15. **The Return:** The hero returns after completing the task within the specified time, bringing the needed ransom.

16. **Solution:** after his return with the ransom, Thabit becomes in good terms with the sheikh who frees the detained mother.

17. **Recognition:** The hero proves himself as the one who is responsible. His effort to take care of his mother is highly appreciated. The Sheikh forgives Thabit and returns to him the ransom.

18. **Punishment:** It is usually the villain who suffers the results of his/her actions, maybe by the hero's revenge or the avenged victims. In our tale, the villain at two different levels is punished differently. First, the sheikh is exposed and in a way is embarrassed; Thabit's return, and his payment of the ransom downplay the sheikh's status in his tribe. Also, the rich man was forced to divorce Thabit's sister which is considered as a severe punishment.

19. **Transfiguration:** shifting to a new place to begin his/her life away from injustice and affliction are among the hero's procedures because of the lack of appreciation and support. Having validated the accuracy of his father's advice, Thabit decides to travel to a new tribe with his mother and divorced sister to start a new life which is free of struggles.

It is worth mentioning that Fatherly Advice shows slight alteration of the functions; these functions do not preserve the same order in table 1 above. In fact, this does not raise a problem. On the contrary, it provides support in favor of Propp's model; Propp (1968:23) asserts that "the presentation may have a reversed order, since it is easier to follow the development if the general bases are known to the reader beforehand." He adds "an absolute stability would seem to

be unconfirmed by the fact that the sequence of functions is not always the same". Our present tale seems to confirm this conclusion.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the fairytale Fatherly Advice revels that it adheres to the general standards of taletelling, and it has its own constructive elements; it utilizes 19 different functions which do not preserve the same order as proposed by Propp. However, this alteration is consistent with Propp's assumptions. Since Propp's functions do not cover all the characters' features and their extra functions in our tale, the following points should be taken into consideration about the mentioned characters and their sub-functions in Fatherly Advice.

First, we know nothing about the character's names, especially the main characters who are the source of the vital actions in the tale except the hero's name. For example, we are not told the Sheikh's, the mother's, and the husbands' names. This may reflect the narrator's desire not to give some of his characters any classical, religious, or geographical background. This could be for political purposes as the narrator uses a political-tribal symbol to make his characters indirectly represent authority in a Bedouin society where the neighborhood relations are highly considered among tribes. One last hypothesis, this negligence of characters' names is to enrich a regional dimension of these characters and the tale.

Second, the minority of the characters in Fatherly advice have high political or social positions, as the Sheikh and the rich man characters represent. Seemingly and for many commoners who narrate these tales were, it was thought that those characters, despite their good luck they are the evilest. Nonetheless, the heroes in several tales belong to the common class.

Third, compared to villain characters, good characters are usually large in number. In many tales, the characters who are kind-hearted indirectly have functions in supporting villains either by uncovering secrets, guiding them to the hero's weak points, or being the source of the tale's hero's weakness.

Fourth, characters are usually represented as enjoying having sexual actions and planning to make it, especially women. In the Jordanian Bedouin tale, we never find any sex indications or rape actions. Even more, nothing in the tale shows the consequence of pre-sexual relationships.

Finally, happy endings are not always restricted only to marriage, wedding or rewarding. It could be seeking a peaceful, simple life with your family away from villains. Revenge is not a target for our hero as in many other tales.

END NOTES

1.   There is an eighth character type which is not normally available to fairytale teller. It is the princess's father who assigns the hero a duty, knows the fake hero, and marries his daughter (the princess) to the hero. Propp remarked that functionally the princess and the father cannot be simply distinguished.

REFERENCES

Alabadi, A. (1987). *jawlat w mushahadat fi rubu'e alardun*. dar alfikr lilnashr wal tawzie.

Al-Hazzá, T. C. (2006). Arab Children's Literature: An Update. *Book Links*, *15 (*3), 11.

Alnaweii, Atallah. (2009). alqiam albadawiat bayn althabat wa altaghir-drasat maydaniat ealaa eayinat min shabab madinati Qasr Alheyran. MA dissertation: University of Algiers.

Alrzaz, M. (1994). *alshazaya wa alfusayfisa'*. almuasasat alearabiat lildirasat walnashr.

Bartlett, F. C., & Bartlett, F. C. (1932). *Remembering: A study in experimental and social psychology*. Cambridge University Press.

Barry, P. (2020). Beginning theory: An introduction to literary and cultural theory. Manchester University Press.

Dundes, A. (1997). Binary opposition in myth: The Propp/Levi-Strauss debate in retrospect. *Western folklore*, 39-50.

Falconer, S. (2005). On the Evolving Transformation System Model Representation of Fairy Tales. Doctoral dissertation, University of New Brunswick.

Ibn Khaldoun, Abdurahman. (1377). Mogadimat Ibn Khaldoun. Maktabat Anoor. 4, 153-155.

Al-samerai'e, K. A.(2007). At'atheer Al-arabi fi Athqafat Alo'robiah bain Alqubool wa Arafid. *Surra man ra'a-Iraq*. 3 (5),140-153.

Lévi-Strauss, C. (1955). The structural study of myth. *The journal of American folklore*, *68*(270), 428-444.

Abdulhalim, N. (2017). Alhadarah alarabiea alislamiea wa tafau'laha ma'a alhadarat alinsaniea. *majalat al'amarah wa alfonoon wa ala'loom alinsaniea*. 2(8), 262-280.

Nasrallah, I. (2007). *Zaman alkhoyol albida'* (ist). Adar alarabia lila'loom.

Propp, V. (1968). Morphology of the Folktale. University of Texas Press.

Uzayzī, Rūkus, ibn Zā'id. (1990). Hikayat min Albadia. Dar alhamra: Beirut.

Taylor, J. (2001). Petra and the Lost Kingdom of the Nabataeans. London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd.

Timothy C. Lloyd (1995). Folklore, Food ways, and the Supernatural, in Out of the Ordinary: Folklore and the Supernatural, ed. Barbara Walker. Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press.

Todorov, T. (1975). The fantastic: A structural approach to a literary genre. Cornell University Press.

Zhou,C. (2013). A comparative study of folklore from Chinese culture and Western cultures. MA dissertation: University of Wisconsin-Superior.