

Warrior Values and Society¹

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War as one of the instruments of the political system, plays a functional role in producing and maintaining the legitimacy of construction of a society. The discursive field of war which is shaped by historical and mythological narratives in social memory is one of the dynamic dimensions of this process. ‘War as reality’ experienced by society in the historical process and ‘war as design’ built by society’s conceptions of today and shaped by the values attributed to war, play a role in the construction and continuity of this discursive field. Epic genre, which is a special category in mythology and is described as ‘narratives of the founding ancestors’ and ‘hero cult’, establish the basis for how a society assigns a meaning to war and how they legalize it. In this article, the way in which oral narratives produce a meaning for society as a political instrument will be discussed in the light of the Gallipoli campaign and of two narratives — *A Ballad of Çanakkale* and the *Hennaed Lamb* — that are associated with the Gallipoli campaign in social memory. However, in the present study, the Gallipoli campaign is not analysed from a historical perspective but, rather, with reference to why it is the subject of oral narratives. The analysis is based on fieldwork conducted in the city of Çanakkale, where the Gallipoli campaign battlefields are located.

Keywords: Anthropology of war, symbolic anthropology, hero cult, epic, Gallipoli campaign.

‘Where the blood flows, you need to go and construct a
reality for yourself’
Baudrillard (2008: 80)

Introduction

This article discusses the relationship between warrior and society drawing on epic narratives. The focus of the study is the Gallipoli campaign in the light of the folk song *A Ballad of Çanakkale*² and the *Hennaed Lamb*, whose narratives are associated with this event in Turkish social memory. The discussion is based on fieldwork conducted in the city of Çanakkale, which started in February 2019 and is ongoing.

While earlier anthropological research was based on tribal or village communities, today anthropologists deal with the reality that a significant portion of the world’s population lives in urban areas (Prato and Pardo 2013). Given the multi-layered structures of contemporary cities, anthropological fieldwork has an important place in urban studies. As Pardo and Prato argue, ‘Field research is, after all, an “art of the possible”, and in cities there are many possibilities’ (2018: 2). Prato’s (2015) analysis on ‘*urbs*, *polis* and *civitas*’ brings to a head the debate on ‘what constitute a city’ and the problematic of incommensurability in using different ‘definitions’ and ‘understanding’ (historically and geographically) of city. Although there are different definitions of ‘the city’, one of the main features of a city is that it is a cultural and

¹ I am grateful to the anonymous reviewers for *Urbanities* and to the Board for their comments and suggestions, which have significantly contributed to the final version of this article.

² Although *A Ballad of Çanakkale* is classified in the social memory as a folk song, there are debates about its origin, whether it is actually an anonymous folk song or a composition. For those who accept that it is anonymous, it is a matter of discussion to which region it belongs and who has authored it. These debates fall outside the concern of the presents article. Nonetheless, these discussions are important because they show the value of the song for society.

ethnic centre of interaction that offers important opportunities to understand the cultural and economic effects of its history on urban society. This is the case with the city of Çanakkale, one of the important fronts of the First World War. Given its economic, political and symbolic significance, it is the subject of numerous historical and sociological studies.

The Çanakkale province is located in northwest Anatolia. The city has a European side (the Gallipoli peninsula) and an Asian side (the historical region of Troad) and its coastlines border The Marmara and The Aegean seas. The province is crossed by the Dardanelles Strait (Çanakkale Boğazı), which connects the Sea of Marmara and the Aegean Sea. The city of Çanakkale has five ports, the largest are Kepez and Karabiga. Due to its geographical location, Çanakkale is defined as economically and politically strategic.

The history of the city dates back to approximately 3000 BC and its name is mentioned in historical records as *Hellespontos* and *Dardanelles*. There are around 200 ancient ruins in the city region, the most important of which are Troy, Assos, Parion, Alexandria Troas, Maydos and Priapos. In 1354, the region became part of the Ottoman Empire after the Cimpe Castle, which is located in today's Gallipoli, came under Ottoman rule. Today, Çanakkale is one of the 81 Turkish provinces.

In 2018, the total population of the city was approximately 540,000. The local economy is dominated by agriculture, animal husbandry, industry and tourism. Çanakkale has a stable tourism industry that benefits from the local history and geography. According to 2016 data, the share of tourism in the urban economy is approximately 46%.³ Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, founded in 1992, has significantly affected the social and economic structure and population of the city.

The war, which is called 'the Gallipoli Campaign' in the literature, is dominant in the identity of the city, and tourism activities play an effective role in this. The battlefield was located in the Çanakkale region. In the Turkish language, the Gallipoli campaign is referred to as the 'Çanakkale War'; therefore, the war and the city have the same name. The war contributes both a commemorative value to the place where it took place and an expanded meaning to the city's identity. As Calvino says, a city consists of 'relationships between the measurements of its space and the events of its past' (1997: 9). In Çanakkale, the history of the Gallipoli campaign and the words linked to it stand out in the names of places, institutions, businesses, and so on. For example, the name of the University is Onsekiz Mart; literally, Eighteenth March. This date marks the end of the naval operations.⁴ Another example is the *Passage Hallio*, a touristic shopping centre known as the 'Aynalı Çarşı' (Mirror Bazaar), which was built in 1890 and is mentioned in *A Çanakkale Ballad*.

³Alamos Gold Inc report, 2019

https://s24.q4cdn.com/779615370/files/doc_downloads/project_info/EY_Alamos-Economic-Benefit_Final-Turkish.pdf; accessed October 2020.

⁴ The naval operation (19 February-18 March 1915) was the first phase of the Gallipoli campaign. It took place in the Dardanelles Strait. Today, the bastions are organized as open areas for visitors. The second stage of the Gallipoli campaign, the land operation (25 April 1915-9 January 1916), took place in the Gallipoli peninsula historical national park in the Çanakkale region.

On War

In *The Perfect Crime*, Jean Baudrillard notes that in the midst of war and destruction Bosnians ‘do not really believe in the distress which surrounds them. In the end, they find the whole unreal situation senseless, unintelligible’ (2008: 133-134), and interpret the war as ‘an almost hyperreal hell’ (ibid.: 134). The highly familiar expressions that describe events in a war are very similar in modern and ancient languages. People talk about massacres, butcheries, crimes, and they say that rivers run red with blood.

In the grand part of ‘history’, the world was ruled by professional soldiers who thought they were engaged in the greatest of all vocations. Thus, the idea that war was universal because war was inherent to human nature became a common opinion. However, it would be reductive to rely on biology alone in understanding human phenomena, for ‘The biologicalization of war causes its full social dimension to be put aside’ (Clastres 2017: 15).

The argument, that war is part of human nature, is supported by our aggression and violence. To explain war, one must first explain why aggressive reactions have become a special form of organized intergroup conflict. The origin of war, I concur, lies not in the genetic reality of humans, but in the social existence of society; the universality of war refers to culture, not nature (Clastres 2017: 16); or, as Marvin Harris forcefully pointed out, ‘how and when we become aggressive is controlled by our cultures rather than by our genes’ (Harris 1991: 54). Moreover, warfare is distinct from other kinds of hostile or violent behaviour because war is made by organized collectivities, rather than by single individuals (Harrison 1996: 561).

In the studies on the origin of war, hunting and war are often associated with each other because the same tools — such as spears, arrows and bows — are used in both activities. Indeed, until the 15th century, these instruments, among the earliest evidences of human culture, were basic warfare devices. The ‘primitive hunter man’ could also be a warrior. However, ‘the fact that the same arrow kills both a human being and a monkey, is not enough to put war and hunting in the same equation’ (Clastres 2017: 15). A key difference between warriors and hunters is that while hunters intend to kill animals, warriors are groups of human beings who intend to do the same thing to each other in the event of war (Canetti 1981: 99).

War has become a way of life for a human civilization that has experienced fighting for centuries. Since the Bronze Age, which is considered to be the ‘institutional structure’ of defence and war, the changes in army structure and war technologies have been accelerating with a speed that extends to the humans who are involved in wars. These transformations extend, however, well beyond the tactical and the technological. Different models of social organization are reshaping war by producing new systems based on specific needs.

Wars continue to take place, because there are enemies and ‘the enemy always starts war’. ‘Rulers who want to unleash war know very well that they must procure or invent a first victim’ (Canetti 1981: 138). Put bluntly, the reason for war lies in the existence of the other. Society establishes its relationship with the other through the laws by which it defines and legitimizes itself and defines the other, who, on a political level, could be either an enemy or an ally. So, war acts as a tool inherent to the political relationships that a society establishes with other societies. There is an enemy because our relationship with the other can produce it. Eco (2012:

16) says that even the most docile human creates an enemy by transferring the image of a human subject to that of a natural or social force that is threatening and must be defeated; among others, capitalism, environmental pollution, poverty.

History, Epic and Heroism

Society and its warriors may appear to be separate entities, with the fighters forming a separate class in the state; but they are engaged in a relationship that shapes each other. In states where military service is a citizenship duty, the effects of this relationship are more visible, linking directly to key dynamics that are at the centre of the anthropological debate on legitimacy and legitimation (Pardo 2000, Pardo and Prato 2019). It is beyond the scope of the present article to address the theoretical complexity of this debate (Pardo and Prato eds 2019). Here, I will simply note that it is ‘the law’ of his/her own society that grants the warrior identity and legitimacy. ‘A warrior can design himself as a warrior only if society recognizes him [...] Society and warrior play a game whose rules are laid down by society’ (Clastres 1992: 218-9). However, an organized group of fighters risks being transformed into a ruling group that demands a constant state of war and decides on war itself. Society should control this situation against the warrior group’s desire for power. ‘Warrior values’ play a strong role in the bargaining between society and warriors. Thus, ‘the warrior becomes a man who puts his passion for warfare at the service of his desire for prestige’ (Clastres 1992: 227). The way to make the warrior impotent is to destroy it by making him constantly fight (Akal 1998: 200). The warrior’s desire to be a hero is inevitably linked to his desire to die. ‘Because the last exchange is infinite celebrity versus infinite being of death [...] the Warrior has been condemned to death by society’ (Clastres 1992: 237). The warrior will ‘live’ in war memorials, poems, songs, epics and the collective memory of his or her community.

Epic narratives describe the heroism of warriors. The general characteristics of heroes are that they live in a war atmosphere away from their homes and die, generally at a young age and on the battlefield (Belge 2006: 425). Epic narratives serve as a kind of temporality in social memory, lending historical credentials to the epic tradition; thus, ‘the information circulated through stories and shared by everyone’ enjoys a dominant historical character. As Hartog notes, ‘Historiography is a species born in a certain period; it is not common practice for the public’ (2005: 69). Moreover, as Cohen points out, ‘History is wonderfully malleable, whether in the hands of academic historians or of laymen. Even without the intention to distort, its recollection always rests upon interpretive reconstructions’ (2001: 101). Thus, memory not only fictionally modifies the past, but also organizes the experiences of the present and the future.

The Gallipoli Campaign: Today’s Celebrations and Debates

The Gallipoli campaign is considered to be one of the most important fronts of the First World War. This operation against the Ottoman army and its allies, the Germans, began on 19 February 1915 with the naval operations of the British and French fleets to cross the Dardanelles. On 18 March 1915, the campaign ended. On the morning of 25 April 1915, the

British, French and ANZAC (Australia and New Zealand Army Cooperation) troops launched ground operations. On 9 January 1916, the war ended with the withdrawal of this army. Hobsbawm (1994) describes the period between 1914 and the end of World War 2 as the Catastrophe Age. In this period the world economic crisis deepened with the collapse of the imperial era and the colonial systems. Fascism, authoritarian movements and regimes began to advance. Land losses, economic dilemmas and nationalist movements contributed to the process of the Ottoman Empire's collapse. In this scenario, the victory of Çanakkale constituted a hope, especially after the Balkan wars (1912-1913) and the consequent significant land losses.

Today, the Gallipoli campaign exists not only in the history books but also in the social memory. Every year, the grandchildren of ANZAC soldiers visit the city of Çanakkale for the 'dawn ceremony'. Dawn ceremony, also known as Anzac Day, is held every year on 25 April by Australians and New Zealanders to honour the Anzac troops serving in the Gallipoli campaign. This ceremony is not only held in the Gallipoli where the operation takes place, but is also a national day in Australia and New Zealand. In my interviews with the participants in 2019, the group that came from Australia and New Zealand to attend the 'dawn ceremony' said that they saw this war as a step towards becoming a 'nation'. Today, the war has a strong influence among the citizens of the Republic of Turkey, and it has different meanings for different political sides. 'From both the official Turkish and popular perspectives, it is regarded not only as a magnificent victory but also as signifying the birth of the new Turkish nation' (Uyar 2016: 165). For the nationalist and Kemalist side, it is regarded as an 'anti-imperialist' struggle against the Western civilization and as the starting point for the 'National War of Independence'. For the Conservative and Islamist sides, it is a kind of Jihad war fought by Ottoman Muslims.

Every year in Turkey a celebration takes place on 18 March under the official name, '18th March Martyrs Memorial Day and Çanakkale Naval Victory'. This celebration is called 'Victory Day' among the people of Turkey and is the national victory day celebrated every year on 18 March. People celebrate the 'Çanakkale Victory' engaging in various activities in Turkey. The celebrations in the city of Çanakkale have a stronger influence and meaning because it is there that the war took place. For the people of Çanakkale, 'the torchlight procession' has special importance. A large number of people chanting slogans and carrying torches, Turkish flags and posters of Atatürk walk through the city streets.⁵ Today, the daytime ceremonies and nightly torchlight processions are marked by political differentiation. The most common sentence heard in Çanakkale is that Çanakkale people do not participate in the daytime ceremony. However, 'the high level of participation' in the night event shows the city's dominant political 'Atatürkist and Modern' vocation. The size of the torchlight procession is the main focus of media reports.

It is important that the area where the Gallipoli campaign took place, which has been preserved to the present day, continues to have its effect. The Çanakkale battlefields are important sites for tourism. The visits to the area are called Martyrs' Tours. They have turned into an activity that spans the whole year and enjoys the support of public institutions, such as

⁵ Atatürk was the leader of the War of Independence and founder of the Republic of Turkey.

municipalities, governorships, schools, and so on. The route reflects the political opinion of the visitors. The guides to the battlefield say that the visitors' political identity is evident during the tour and that visitors interfere with the description given in the guided tour. They say that some groups find 'the real history' boring, while others complain that Atatürk is not sufficiently mentioned. Interpretations of the war are mainly shaped by discussions on Turkism and Islamic ideology. Visitors from a wide range of fields, from academia to social media platforms, argue about whether the official descriptions are based on 'real history'.

A Ballad of Çanakkale (Çanakkale Türküsü) and the Hennaed Lamb

As *A Ballad of Çanakkale* starts, the supporters' discussions stop and they move on to an emotion intensive partnership. The main theme of the folk song is death. A young soldier witnesses and tells of 'death before death and the death of those who are not yet dead'. The lyrics⁶ begin with the soldier leaving his house to join the Gallipoli campaign: he says, '*mum I'm going against the enemy*', yet he is too young for the facts of death that he faces. The riff repeats, '*oh, my youth, alas!*'. Like him, other soldiers who fought together left their homes and their families behind '*some of us became engaged, some were married*'; the rest knew that death was certain. '*Mums and dads gave up hope, stopped sending letters*'. Death could happen at any moment. It comes with all its violence: '*they put me in a grave before I die*'. The last phrase is not from the soldier, because soldiers die heroically: '*The lion braves are lying here*'.

The melody that gives structure to the ballad is devised in a way that strengthens the dramatic effect. The beginning of the melody makes leaps to high-pitched notes, then the pitch goes into a heavy descent without returning to the high sounds. The theme of the melody closes in lower-pitched sounds. The quick transition to higher sounds on the first notes shows the soldier's hope, the slow descent of the tune is to tell the loss of the soldier's hope.⁷

Death 'is the absolute limit of the human', says Eagleton (2010: 26). The war, inevitably involving death, brings out this limit even before the soldier leaves his home. The song establishes a connection among the soldiers who go to their deaths for the future of their society and become heroic. Through this bond, their heroism is reiterated among those living today. This effect increases in strength through other narratives in the collective memory: A historical

⁶ The Lyrics of *A Ballad of Çanakkale* read: 'In Çanakkale stands the Mirror Bazaar Mirror/ mam I'm going against the enemy; oh, my youth, alas! / In Çanakkale there's a cypress tree. / Some of us are engaged, some of us married; oh, my youth, alas! / In Çanakkale there's a broken jug. / Mothers and fathers abandoned hope/stopped sending letters; oh, my youth, alas! / Çanakkale's heights are shrouded with smoke. / The thirteenth division marched to war; oh, my youth, alas! / In Çanakkale the cannonballs landed. / Ah, our comrades fell wounded together; oh, my youth, alas! / Çanakkale's bridge is narrow, impassable. / Its waters have become blood red, not a cup can be drunk; oh, my youth, alas. / From Çanakkale I barely escaped / My lungs rotted from vomiting blood; oh, my youth, alas! / From Çanakkale I escaped, my head is safe / Doomsday came before I reached Anafarta; oh, my youth, alas / In Çanakkale they shot me. / They buried me before I died; oh, my youth, alas! / In Çanakkale are rows of willows / Brave lions rest beneath them; oh, my youth, alas'.

⁷ The melody of *A Çanakkale Ballad* is analysed by Dr Murat Kanca.

speech about the war given by Atatürk during the land wars describes strikingly the inevitability of war and death. He said, ‘I am not ordering you to attack, I am ordering you to die!’

Mehmet Akif Ersoy, who wrote the lyrics of the Turkish National Anthem, dedicated a poem to the ‘Çanakkale Martyrs’, describing the dreadful reality of war and death. The verses refer not only to the Gallipoli campaign, but also to other wars, with a strong emphasis on martyrdom. In a verse, the poet says that the martyrs of Çanakkale do not want graves because they will go to heaven where the Prophet Muhammad will be waiting for them with open arms. Martyrdom, which has an important place in the Islamic faith and Turkish culture, is considered sacred, and Muslim soldiers who die in the war will go directly to heaven. Today, ‘martyrdom tours’ are made as a kind of ‘pilgrimage’.⁸

The influence of the folk song not only blesses the martyrs but also glorifies their death, and symbolically makes those who sing folk songs into soldiers. The singer who identifies with the soldier who threw himself to death to protect his society becomes ready for war. Like the heroes of the past, she/he is ready to die for the ‘future’. Thus, as the song is sung the heroism-loaded past guarantees the future.

The story of the ‘*Hennaed Lamb*’, a widely told narration of the Gallipoli campaign, states that it is not only the soldiers who bravely desire to die. This is a remarkable example of the readiness for sacrifice in the society that send the military to war. The narrative is categorized as an event experienced in social memory. The story is as follows: A soldier with hennaed hair is asked by his commander why his hair is thus tinged. The soldier says that his mother applied the henna before he left to go to war but he does not know why. He asks the commander to write to his mother and find out. The mother answers (in some variants, the letter comes after the soldier is killed) that they applied henna to the sacrificial lamb, and sent the son to war to be sacrificed for the motherland. In some variants of this narrative, the mother’s answer includes three sacrificial aspects: henna is applied to a married girl, to sacrifice herself for her family; henna is applied to men who go to war, to sacrifice themselves for their homeland; henna is applied to animals, to be sacrificed to God. In Turkey, the ‘Henna tradition’ continues today; it is part of the wedding ceremony, of soldiers’ farewell ceremony and of the ritual animal sacrifice.

Thus, the prestige gained through the heroism of the soldiers who died in Çanakkale is once again strengthened, as their death becomes a sacrifice. ‘A key function of mythologies of the sacrificial monster was to separate the sacredness of the cosmos from a perilous nether world — “a foreign, chaotic space, peopled inhabited by ghosts, demons, foreigners”’ (Kearney 2003: 34). As the soldier’s pending death becomes a ‘sacrifice’, he is transformed into a sacred being even before he dies. This is based on the underlying ‘values’ that he will be sacrificed for both the social world and the supernatural. So, the duty of the soldier goes beyond the fighting; he or she becomes the guardian of the holy, and is sacrificed for it. In this way, both the war and the status of the soldier are placed on a legitimate ground by religion and social law.

⁸ Mollica’s remarkable essay based on fieldwork provides an important reading regarding the meaning of ‘the grandeur of martyrdom, of dying for a cause’ (2010: 192) for different cultural identities.

Moreover, gender roles are defined through the plural categories of sacrifice in the story to ensure the continuity of the social structure. A woman sacrifices herself for her family; a man sacrifices himself to protect society; a mother raises her children to sacrifice: all just like sacrificial lambs. The story describes a model of social organization that includes the mother who sends her children to war, the woman who marries and raises warriors, and the self-sacrificing warrior. This model has been reinforced by linking it to a violent reality like the Gallipoli campaign. The story has a pedagogical function: it is more than a reminder of the past; it also organizes the experience of the present and the future.

Conclusion

It is society that defines the warrior as a warrior. Society shapes its warriors according to a set of principles and controls their operations; it defines and approves who is a warrior and what actions are legitimate. Oral folk narratives are effective tools in containing and conveying information about warrior principles. Symbolic anthropological analysis of the narratives helps us to understand this process.

Current anthropological analysis (Pardo and Prato 2019) has highlighted the complex dynamics by which society builds its own legitimacy and reproduces itself through the relationship it establishes with its past. History and legends, we have seen, are functional to this process. Most important, legends reach more people in society. They are not questioned like history; people may or may not believe in legends, but they are definitely affected by them. In today's Turkish society, the Gallipoli campaign, which has priority in social memory, and the narratives of *A Ballad of Çanakkale* and the *Hennaed Lamb*, which the society relates to this war, provide examples for the analysis of the relationship between warriors and society. I have argued that, in line with relevant urban ethnography and anthropological debate (Prato 2015, Prato and Pardo 2013), our understanding of local life and dynamics greatly benefits from the empirical study of the reasons why these narratives are chosen, as well as their non-localness and the undisputed relationship of their narrators with the narratives. The present 'city identity' is, we have seen, strongly linked to the Gallipoli war, to the point that the commemorative festivities and rituals are important moments in the life of the city; in a sense, they mark its periodical, annual rhythm.

I have studied the narratives of *A Ballad of Çanakkale* and the *Hennaed Lamb* addressing the question of what society aims to do with them. Both narratives, we have seen, connect with a war that took place in the past, and in doing so they generate a kind of historical effect. However, symbolic analysis has shown that the effect is not limited to this, but is used to support the unquestioning acceptance of the information contained in the narratives. The narratives also provide guidelines for the present and a possible future, and they have a pedagogical function. Through the stories of the war's nameless warriors and their families, an explanation is given of what society expects from the warrior, and how the warrior is produced. In short, drawing on the strength of its bonds with the past, the narrative turns into an unquestionable truth.

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