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## THE PROBLEM OF PLOT WITHIN THE PLOT (CONTAMINATION) IN AZERBAIJANI FAIRY TALES

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Applicant:　　　　**Durnisa Ramazan gizi  Safarova**

## ABSTRACT

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**Scientific Supervisor:** Doctor of Philosophy in Philology, Associate Professor
**Ilkin Fariz oglu Rustamzade**

**Official opponents:** Doctor of Philological Sciences, Professor
**Avtandil İsrafil oglu Mammadov**

Doctor of Philological Sciences, Professor
**Yegana Nahmatulla gizi Ismayilova**

Doctor of Philosophy in Philology, Associate Professor
**Hikmat Valeh oglu Guliyev**

Dissertation Council the ED 1.27 of Supreme Attestation Commission under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan operating at Folklore Institute of Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences

Chairman of the
Dissertation Council: Full Member of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences (ANAS), Doctor of Philological Sciences, Professor **Mukhtar Kazim oglu Imanov**

Scientific Secretary of the
Dissertation Council: Doctor of Philosophy in Philology, Associate Professor, **Afaq Khurram gizi Ramazanova**

Chairman of the
Scientific Seminar: Doctor of Philological Sciences, Professor, **Afzaladdin Daghbayi oglu Asgarov**

# GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STUDY

**The relevance and degree of scientific development of the topic.** The existence of fairy tales with complex compositions formed by the combination of several plots, where in the contemporary era the tradition of storytelling weakened but is still encountered in Azerbaijan, indicates the persistence of a strong tradition of storytelling in the past. The presence of this tradition is evidenced by the distinctive and individualistic style and fairy tale chosen by certain storytellers. The exploration of this tradition, which has evolved through the creativity of various narrators, has always remained relevant. The method of contamination is one of the approaches employed by skilled storytellers to create new fairy tales, expand existing ones, and add new colors and tones to them. Studying the creative processes applied to plots for the harmonious blending of different subjects within the same work sheds light on many unknown aspects of fairy tale creativity. Understanding the creativity involved in bringing together different plots, ensuring their compatibility, and exploring the unexplored facets of fairy tale creativity is of great importance.

Despite the fact that there is a history of more than 150 years of collecting fairy tales in Azerbaijan, the study of the methods employed by storytellers in narrating tales has only gained significance in recent years. Although researchers in Azerbaijani folklore studies, such as M.H.Tahmasib[1], R.Khalilov[2], O.Aliyev[3], A.Asgar[4] and others, have conducted studies on the compositional elements and characters of fairy tales, fairy tale creativity has been somewhat overlooked. Even in folklore textbooks written for higher education requirements, the creative abilities of storytellers have not been discussed. This significant

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[1] Tahmasib, M. Selected Works: [In 2 volumes] / M. Tahmasib. - Baku: Mutarjim, - Vol. 2. - 2010, - 488 p.

[2] Khalilov, R.Z. Characters of Heroes in Azerbaijani and Arabian Fairy Tales: (Experience of Historical-Typological Research) / Dissertation abstract for the degree of candidate of philological sciences / - Baku, 1989, - 27 p.

[3] Aliyev, O. Poetics of Azerbaijani Folktales / O. Aliyev. – Baku, Sada, - 2001, - 192 p.

[4] Asgar, A. Heroes in Azerbaijani Magical Fairy Tales / A.Asgar. - Baku: Science and education, - 2017, - 115 p.

aspect of fairy tale creativity, except for the research of Ilkin Rustamzade[5] and Atash Ahmadli[6], has not yet attracted systematic research attention in Azerbaijani folklore studies.

In Russian folklore studies, the situation is completely different. The concept of contamination was first addressed in A.N.Veselovsky's[7] work "On Fairy Tales". M.P. Shtokmar[8], in his research, introduced an entirely new approach to contamination, considering the combinations of plots as a creative phenomenon with certain regularities. This approach was further developed through the studies of N.M.Vedernikova[9], R.P.Matveyeva[10], and T.G.Ivanova[11]. Additionally, the nature of the contamination phenomenon was clarified, and its role in fairy tale creativity was extensively discussed in the research of V.P.Anikin[12] and N.I.Kravsov [13]. Furthermore, contaminations in non-fairytale texts and their creative features were explored by researchers such as

[5] Rustamzade, I. Plot Indicator of Azerbaijani Folktales: Based on Aarne-Thompson System / I. Rustamzade, - Baku: Science and education, - 2013, - 367 p.

[6] Ahmadli, A. Traditional Storytelling Art (Based on the Shirvan Folklore Environment) / A. Ahmadli. - Baku: Science and Education, - 2018, - 219 p.

[7] Veselovskiy, A.N. Collected Works: [In 16 volumes] / A.N. Veselovskiy. Moscow: Publishing House of the USSR Academy of Sciences, - Vol. 16: Articles on the Tale. - 1938. - p. 289-294

[8] Shtokmar, M.P. Studies in the Field of Russian Folk Versification / M.P. Shtokmar. - Moscow: Nauka, - 1952, - 422 p.

[9] Vedernikova, N.M. Contamination in the Fairy Tale // Philology. Collection of student and postgraduate works of the philological faculty of Moscow State University, - 1969, - p. 40-52; by the same author: Contamination as a creative technique in the fairy tale // Russian Folklore. - Leningrad, - 1972. - Issue 13, - p. 160-165.

[10] Matveyeva, R.P. Contamination as a Creative Process in Siberian Storytelling (Based on Fairy Tales) // Russian Folklore of Siberia. Elements of architecture: Collection of scientific works. - Novosibirsk, - 1990, - p. 73-93.

[11] Ivanova, T.G. On the Issue of Contamination in the Fairy Tale (Based on White Sea Tales) // Russian North: Problems of Ethnography and Folklore. - Leningrad, - 1981, - p. 233-247.

[12] Anikin, V.P. Folklore Theory. Lecture Course. 3rd ed. / V.P. Anikin. - Moscow: KDU, - 2007, - 432 p.

[13] Kravtsov, N.I. Historical Poetics of Folklore // Folklore. Poetic System - Moscow, - 1977, - p. 6-13

Z.D.Capua, M.M.Gurbanov, S.G.Lazutin, L.B.Kozlovseva, L.S.Toropova, and others. These studies provide an opportunity to understand the nature of this creative method and establish a theoretical basis for the systematic investigation of plot combinations in Azerbaijani folklore.

The object of the research consists of fairy tales passed down orally and then transcribed into written form. To observe the classical and contemporary aspects of contaminations, fairy tales are conditionally divided into two groups. The classical state of contaminations is traced based on the five-volume collection "Azerbaijani Fairy Tales," while the contemporary situation is followed through fairy tales collected by the Folklore Institute in recent years, especially from various regions. However, when necessary, references have been made to materials collected in the 1990s and fairy tales from the "Anthology of Azerbaijani Folklore" series.

The subject of the research is the plot combinations commonly encountered in fairy tales. While plot combinations are characteristic of various genres within folklore, to grasp the nature of this phenomenon, fairy tales, especially magical ones, provide a richer source of material. Therefore, the research subject is narrowed down to contaminations in fairy tales.

**Purpose and Objectives of the Research.** The main purpose outlined in the dissertation is to demonstrate that contaminations are a creative phenomenon with specific regularities and to highlight their role in the formation and development of the Azerbaijani fairy tale repertoire.

To achieve this purpose, the following objectives have been set to:

− Analyze the research conducted in folklore studies on contamination, generalize the theoretical conclusions, and clarify the nature of contamination;

− Identify the causes of contamination and the factors that contribute to its occurrence;

− Determine the role of contamination in fairy tale creativity and the development of the tradition of storytelling;

− Reveal the facts that affirm the contamination as a creative phenomenon unique to the repertoire of skilled storytellers;

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‒ Foster a comprehensive understanding of national, international, and regional contaminations;

‒ Identify types and methods of contamination in Azerbaijani fairy tales;

‒ Investigate the contemporary status of contamination and reveal the reasons behind the weakening of plot combinations in fairy tales collected in recent years.

**Research Methods.** The realization of the objectives set in the dissertation relies on the analysis of practical material. The analysis focused on examining the plot combinations in fairy tales transcribed from oral tradition to written form, aiming to bring out their general regularities and creative aspects. Comparative and historical-comparative approaches were employed during the analysis. The plot combinations in Azerbaijani fairy tales were compared to those in eastern Slavic folk fairy tales using the comparative method to present an overall picture. When applicable, the function of contaminations in shaping the collection of fairy tales has been elucidated through a comparison with the folklore of the Belamorian and Eastern Siberian communities. For the study of plot combinations in fairy tales collected in recent years, the historical-comparative method was employed. These tales were compared with those transcribed in the past century, creating a comprehensive understanding of the contemporary status of plot combinations and explaining the reasons for the weakening of contaminations. The research drew on important figures in Russian folklore studies, including V.Y.Propp, B.P.Kerbelite, V.P.Anikin, M.P.Shtokmar, N.I.Kravsov, E.A.Tudarovskaya and others. The works of N.M.Vedernikova, R.P.Matveyeva, and T.G.Ivanova played a significant role in exploring the topic, and the theoretical ideas presented in these works were further developed through evidence drawn from Azerbaijani fairy tales.

**Key Arguments Presented in Defense:**

‒ Contamination takes on a creative form in the repertoire of skilled storytellers, serving the development of the main plot, contributing to revelation of characters, and, in the creativity of talented storytellers, adds a mechanical aspect that cannot be converted into a coherent work.

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– Although contamination methods initially emerge as individual creative phenomena, they are later adopted by other storytellers, becoming ingrained in tradition and passed down from generation to generation.

– Contamination represents the pinnacle of the tradition of storytelling during the period when fairy tales were actively shaping cultural life. The weakening of the tradition of storytelling parallels the diminishing influence of contaminations.

– Professional storytellers are not merely carriers but also creators of oral tradition. It is through their activities that the tradition of storytelling has flourished in Azerbaijan, enriched by new tales and contamination methods.

**Academic novelty of the research.** The following academic novelties have been achieved during the investigation of the topic:

– Theoretical ideas about contamination have been generalized, elucidating the nature of this creative phenomenon and its role in the development of the tradition of storytelling.

– Systematic analysis of contaminations in Azerbaijani fairy tales has been conducted for the first time, identifying the types and methods of contamination.

– The role of contaminations in the development of the tradition of storytelling has been elucidated, and the distinction between creative and mechanical contaminations has been explained.

– Evidence has been provided that contamination is not caused by memory disturbance and distortion of fairy tale material, but rather, contamination is solely a creative phenomenon in tales.

– Similarities and differences in contaminations in Azerbaijani and other fairy tales have been identified through comparative analysis.

– The reasons behind the weakening of plot contaminations in contemporary times have been clarified.

– The analysis of contaminations has revealed that professional storytellers are not just carriers but also creators of oral tradition, enriching the Azerbaijani fairy tale repertoire through their creativity.

**Theoretical and Practical Importance of the Research.** This research is the first systematic and comprehensive study devoted to

plot combinations in Azerbaijani fairy tales. It sheds light on the nature of plot contaminations, revealing them as a creative method unique to skilled storytellers, contributing to the development of the tradition of storytelling and the enrichment of the fairy tale repertoire.

The results of this research can be applied in the classification of fairy tale plots, the study of storytelling techniques, the examination of factors influencing storytelling and fairy tale creation, as well as in the investigation of contaminations in non-fairytale texts.

**Peer-reviewed evaluation of research results and application of the research.** The subject of the dissertation was approved by the decisions of the Scientific Council of the Institute of Folklore of ANAS dated November 24, 2014 (protocol No. 7) and the Scientific Research Council of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Scientific Council on Philology Problems dated December 15, 2016 (protocol No. 3). The main scientific provisions of the research, important scientific innovations, theoretical hypotheses, results, etc. it was reflected in the materials of international conferences, various thematic compilations and magazines.

**Name of organization where the dissertation was carried out.** The dissertation work was conducted at the Institute of Folklore of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences.

**Total volume of the research.** The dissertation consist of an "Introduction" (17 188 characters), I Chapter (86 804 characters), II Chapter (83 044 characters), III Chapter (67 615 characters), "Conclusion" (8 582 characters), totally (264 743) and list of references, appendices.

## THE MAIN CONTENT OF THE STUDY

In the **introduction**, the overall framework of the dissertation is presented, covering the relevance of the topic, the set objectives and tasks, the scientific novelty of the research, the degree of elaboration, and the practical and theoretical significance are substantiated. Additionally, it touches upon the main arguments presented for defense and peer-reviewed evaluation process of the dissertation.

Chapter I of the dissertation is titled "Theoretical Issues of the Contamination Phenomenon" and consists of two paragraphs. In the first paragraph, titled **"Contamination in Folklore",** the theoretical ideas about contamination in scientific literature are analyzed to clarify the nature of this creative phenomenon. It is emphasized that there is no unified opinion in folkloristics regarding the role of the contamination phenomenon in the development of folklore tradition. Each new work on the topic seems to complicate rather than clarify our understanding, making it challenging to comprehend the essence of the phenomenon. The ambiguities in interpretation stem from the various explanations given by researchers. The accepted linguistic meaning of "contamination" has been prevalent in folkloristics up to a certain period. Even in lectures prepared by V.P.Anikin for university students, contamination is explained as a violation of rules, ambiguity, and distortion[14].

The researchers have divided into two groups regarding the phenomenon of contamination. One group of researchers considers the mechanical, while others the creative mergers as contamination. Advocates of the first group, including researchers such as N.M.Veselovski, V.P.Anikin, and N.I.Kravsov, perceive subject mergers as events indicating the genre's decline. Supporters of the second direction, such as N.M.Vedernikova, R.P.Matveyeva, T.G.Ivanova, E.A.Tudarovskaya, evaluate subject mergers as creative events and consider them complex literary techniques used by skilled

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[14] Anikin, V.P. Folklore Theory. Lecture Course. 3rd ed. / V.P. Anikin. - Moscow: KDU, - 2007, -p. 79.

professional storytellers. In our opinion, in both cases, we encounter the phenomenon of contamination. The difference lies in the fact that in the repertoire of experienced, professional storytellers, contaminations take on a creative form, serving the development of the main plot and revelation of characters. However, in the creativity of inexperienced, amateur storytellers, contamination occurs mechanically, without a meaningful transition from one plot to another, resulting in incomplete works. In terms of nature, these mergers do not differ from each other; both reflect different aspects of the same process. T.G.Ivanova's and T.V. Zuyeva's research also explains contamination in this way. T.G.Ivanova refers to any subject merger as contamination, as seen in her studies[15]. T.V.Zuyeva and B.P.Kirdan explain contamination in their textbook for university students, defining it as the combination of two or more independent works or their parts within the same work[16].

According to V.P.Anikin, who emphasizes three stages of folklore formation (initial stage), active life, decline, *the contamination phenomenon is characteristic of the first and third stages, occurring rarely during the second stage when folklore genres flourish, and texts lead an active life* [17]. In our opinion, the interpretation of contamination as a decline comes from a lack of understanding of its nature, treating it merely as a plot merger. In fact, contamination is a more complex process demanding creativity from the storyteller. If plot mergers were indeed a sign of the decline of folk fairy tales, it would be more prevalent in the modern era. However, the statistical analysis of plot mergers in folklore shows not an increase but a decrease in

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[15] Ivanova, T.G. On the Issue of Contamination in the Fairy Tale (Based on White Sea Tales) // Russian North: Problems of Ethnography and Folklore. - Leningrad, - 1981, - p. 233-247.
[16] Zuyeva, T.V., Kirdan, B.P. Russian Folklore: Textbook for Higher Educational Institutions / T.V. Zuyeva, B.P. Kirdan - Moscow: Flint, - 2002, -p. 400.
[17]Anikin, V.P. Folklore Theory. Lecture Course. 3rd ed. / V.P. Anikin. - Moscow: KDU, - 2007, -p. 88.

contaminations in modern times.[18] These facts indicate that subject or plot mergers have no connection with the decline of folk fairy tales; they are characteristic of periods when folk fairy tales are actively told, an integral part of cultural life. Therefore, T.G. Ivanova is justified in noting that contamination *is characteristic of the era when folklore is living its active life, escapes during the decline period of the folklore tradition*[19].

Therefore, contamination is the pinnacle point of fairy tale expression in folklore. It doesn't fragment the plot; on the contrary, it unites various plots around a single subject, within a unified system. One might ask, how is the artistic integrity of the folktale preserved and maintained? Each of the plots involved in contamination functions as integral and essential components of entireness. The folktale cannot be imagined without them. For example, the folktale "In search of profession" published in the first volume of the five-volume collection "Azerbaijani fairy tales" is composed of the combination of four plots. If any one of them is removed from the structure of the folktale, it becomes incomplete, leaving a partial impact. This is because the plots that constitute the folktale not only serve to expand the text but also have their own role and function within the folktale. For instance, *in the folktale ("In search of profession") the hero embarks on a journey to learn the art of turning iron into gold and, after many adventures, masters that art. During the journey, the hero acquires wealth and prosperity. However, he is so satisfied and satiated that he does not take any of them for himself; instead, he shares them with seemingly poor men he encounters along the way* [20]. Storyteller ensures the acquisition of fairy

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[18] For more information see: Safarova, D. Contemporary state of plot contaminations in Azerbaijani fairy tales// - Baku: Journal of Baku Engineering University, - 2018. - Volume 2, Number 1, - p. 23-32.

[19] Ivanova, T.G. On the Issue of Contamination in the Fairy Tale (Based on White Sea Tales) // Russian North: Problems of Ethnography and Folklore. - Leningrad, - 1981, - p. 246.

[20] Azerbaijani Folktales [in 5 volumes] / Compiled and edited by Hanafi Zeynallı. - Baku: Sherg-Gerb, - 2005, vol. 1. - p. 158.

tale wealth by incorporating the plots of "Tapagoz"("Cyclop") (TR[21] 1137) and "Girl and dervish" (TR 337*) into the structure of the fairy tale. Although each of these plots has its own unique course of events, the storyteller integrates them into the main idea of the fairy tale, serving the revelation of the main concept, better understanding of hero's role.

To maintain the integrity of the work, the beginning of the dependent plot undergoes significant changes, losing many of its components. The ending of the main plot is also altered; instead of being completed, it is left open, and the conclusion is reached only after contamination occurs. Additionally, to preserve the literary integrity of the work, the storyteller assigns additional functions to the dependent plot. For example, in independent variants of the plot "Dragon which cut off the water" (TR 300), if the hero marries the rescued girl after killing the dragon, such an ending is not encountered in contaminated variants. The hero, in return for his bravery, demands forty halves of mutton and forty mussuks of water from the king to emerge into the bright world. Thus, the demand of the main plot and the role played by the dependent plot, the function it performs, undergo changes, introducing new content and a new nature.

What is characteristic of contamination for the creativity of storytellers? Different explanations of the term contamination and the diversity of perspectives among researchers have led to a dualism in answering this question. Those who consider the combination of plots as a creative phenomenon, view it as the distortion of professional storytellers and traditional fairy tale plots. Those who see it as a mechanical combination consider it a conventional practice for amateur storytellers. When we consider the "operation" carried out on the plots during contamination, we see that the storytellers with a broad repertoire, a good understanding of the regularities of the fairy tale, and a tendency towards improvisation show interest in combining plots.

In the five-volume collection "Azerbaijani Folktales," six out of eight tales transcripted by Israfil Tagizadeh from Ganja and four out of

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[21] TR - Tompson-Rustamzade are shortened forms of surnames. This term refers to the catalog "Plot indicator of Azerbaijani Folktales" prepared by I.Rustamzade based on the Aarne-Tompson system.

five tales recorded by Ibrahim Gafar oglu, a resident of Ganja, and three out of six tales transcripted by Murad Gahraman oglu, are formed from plot combinations. The beauty of narration, the richness of literary description tools, and more than half of their repertoire being formed from plot combinations indicate that these storytellers are professional practitioners with a rich repertoire. In this regard, N.L. Brodsky, who explores the traces of professional storytellers in tales, is justified in stating: *"There are characteristic, unique traces in fairy tales that inevitably lead to the conclusion that tales are created in a professional environment"[22]*.

In the first chapter, the paragraph titled **"The role of contami-nations in the development of folktale tradition: creative and mechanical Contaminations"** discusses the role of plot combinations in the development of the folktale genre. It is noted that contamination has not only enriched the folktale repertoire but has also contributed to the development of tales in terms of form and content. By expanding the boundaries of tales, contamination has increased the possibilities of the genre, allowing for the development of the plot, deepening the main conflict, characterizing the personage, and presenting distinctive traits with more elaborate and interesting details. Thanks to contamination, the structure of tales has become more flexible, and tales reflecting various moments in the hero's life have emerged.

It is known that the plots of fairy tales are usually built around a single hero and reflect a specific moment in his life or way of life. In more complex fairy tale structures, however, tales portray not just one moment in the hero's life but various moments. For instance, in the tale "Jalayi-vatan"("Pilgrim") different plots depict the mother's attempt to kill her son by playing the same hand with ogre, the hero's escape from this danger with the help of his brother, his struggle with a dragon stopping the flow of water in another plot, and in a third plot, the hero being turned into stone by a witch and his brother saving him. Such tales that reflect various moments in the hero's life

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[22] Brodsky, N.P. Traces of professional storytellers in Russian folktales // Ethnographic Review. - Moscow: Book LXI, - 1904. № 2, - p. 2.

are precisely the novelties brought to the tradition of storytelling through plot combinations.

Contamination has also contributed to the development of fairy tales in terms of content, providing opportunities to continue the main theme, intensify events by creating new conflicts, and elaborate on certain characteristics and qualities of the main character. For example, the tale "Malik Mammad and Malik Ahmad" is composed of the combination of three plots. In the first plot, *Malik Mammad falls in love with a girl of seven brothers, fulfills the marriage task set by the girl's brothers with the help of his friend, and marries her (TR 516); in the second plot, he rescues the girl kidnapped by the ogre, strange people joins him on the way, and defeats the ogre to save the girl (TR 301); in the third plot, Malik Ahmad rescues Malik Mammad from the dangers awaiting him on the wedding night and turns into stone for revealing the secret (TR 525\*)*[23]. Although the main character of the tale is "Malik Mammad", the active character is Malik Ahmad. When the development of events in the main plot is not sufficient to reveal the character of Malik Ahmad, the narrator introduces additional plots into the fairy tale. While Malik Mammad fulfills the marriage tasks set by the seven villainous brothers to marry their sister, kills the White ogre and frees his friend's wife, Malik Ahmad learns about the dangers awaiting his friend on the wedding night and rescues him. As a result, the narrator successfully conveys the challenges and hardships Malik Ahmad repulses on his friend's path, more vividly.

In folklore, plot combinations are divided into two groups: creative and mechanical combinations. Creative contaminations arise from a subordinative relationship or the combination of plots around a central character. In combinations based on a subordinative relationship, the dependent plots are attached to the main plot. In such combinations, the main plot essentially forms the backbone of the fairy tale, and the fairy tale revolves around it. The storyteller shapes the fairy tale based on the main plot, determining its direction

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[23] Azerbaijani Folktales [In 5 volumes] / Compiled and edited by Hanafi Zeynallı. - Baku: East-West, - Vol. 1. - 2005. - p. 53.

of development and which subplots will contribute to it. In the second case, contamination occurs through the combination of plots around a single character. In this case, since there is no subordinative relationship between the plots, they maintain their integrity, and determining where one plot begins and another ends becomes relatively straightforward.

The role of the assistant is significant in the formation of creative contaminations. Despite the complex composition of tales consisting of separate subplots, only one assistant is used. The assistant obtained in the main plot is used in all subplots that make up the contamination. If different assistants are used, they are obtained through the execution of the same activity. For example, in the folktale "Uchtuk Kosa"("Three-hair beardless man") the father makes his will for his sons to keep watch over his grave for three days and give their sisters to the first match-makers. As a result of following his precept, two assistants are obtained, one of which is used in the main plot and the other in the dependent subplot[24]. In essence, the storyteller loads additional functions onto the assistant, using them to bring the subplots together and interconnect them. Therefore, N.M.Vedernikova writes: *"Maintaining the main characters (hero and his assistants) throughout the tale helps seamlessly integrate various works into a complete piece and creates a unique emotional and psychological atmosphere in the fairy tale."*[25].

Unlike creative contaminations, mechanical combinations carry a random character in the combination of plots, and there is no emphasis on the transition from one plot to another. Since there is no inherent connection between the plots, such combinations lack any role in the development of the main plot or the revelation of characters. These combinations do not play a role in the development of the literary tradition because they occur due to the forgetting of

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[24] Azerbaijani Folktales [In 5 volumes] / Compiled and edited by Hanafi Zeynallı. - Baku: East-West, - Vol. 1. - 2005. - p. 132

[25] Vedernikova, N.M. Contamination in the fairy tale // Philology. Collection of student and postgraduate works of the Faculty of Philology of Moscow State University, – 1969, – 47 p.

many details of the main plot and outward similarities. Such contaminations are observed in the repertoire of weak storytellers.[26]

The second chapter of the dissertation is titled **"Contaminations in Azerbaijani Folktales"** and consists of two paragraphs. The first paragraph, titled **"Uniqueness of contaminations in Azerbaijani folktales: international and national contaminations"** analyzes plot combinations in Azerbaijani fairy tales collected during the first half of the 20th century. In this chapter, 70 out of the analyzed 164 tales (43% of the analyzed tales) are found to be based on contamination.

Research indicates that contaminations are more widespread in regions where folklore is actively alive. Contaminations are most commonly found in tales collected from Ganja, Ali Bayramli (current city of Shirvan), Nakhchivan, and Fuzuli within the five-volume collection of "Azerbaijani Fairy Tales." The number of tales collected from these regions, the broadness of their diversity, and the richness of literary styles suggest the historical presence of a vibrant storytelling tradition in these regions.

Contaminations often occur between plots belonging to the same group. Representing the same hero type and sharing compositional similarities provide a fertile ground for such combinations. Among the 70 contaminations analyzed, 46 occurred between plots belonging to the same group, while only 24 occurred between plots belonging to different groups. It is also possible to observe contaminations between magical tales and tales about household and animals, religious and satirical tales with household tales, and heroic tales with magical tales. The combination of magical-heroic tales with heroic tales and satirical tales with household tales is particularly widespread, reflecting the closeness of these groups in terms of both hero type and composition. In Azerbaijani fairy tale tradition, contaminations consisting mainly of two plots are widespread, constituting more than half of the existing contaminations. For example, among the analyzed 70 plot combinations,

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[26] For more information see: Safarova, D. Creative and mechanical contaminations in folklore // International AGEAN conferences on social sciences and humanities – IX. – Izmir, Türkiye, – February 23-25, 2024, – p. 7

41 are composed of two plots, representing 58% of the tales formed based on contamination. Thirteen contaminations consist of three plots, ten consist of four plots, and six consist of five or more plots. Combinations of five or more plots are characteristic of animal and satirical tales, while other groups mainly exhibit combinations of two, three, and four plots. The tale "Bald-head and the merchant" involves the most plots, combining eight plots. The tale "Hillim and Gullulum" ("Hillim and Gullulum") (TR 1696+1681+1405A*+1396*+1643+1398*+1381*) consists of seven plots, and the tale "Wiles of fox" (TR 1B*+2+38A*+38B*+20) is formed by the combination of five plots.

Out of the analyzed 70 contaminations, only 34 have equivalents in the Comparative Index of Plots (CIP), and the majority of them are international contaminations. For example, the plot combinations 303+300, 402+400, 531+327B, 538*+532, 1380+1725, 1384+1540 are widespread both among East Slavic peoples and in Azerbaijan. While some contaminations are widely spread among East Slavic peoples, they might be encountered in only one or two texts in Azerbaijan. For instance, plot combinations like 302+555, 532+327B, 1384+1540, which are famous among East Slavic peoples, and the widely spread 327B+328 plot combination in Ukraine and Belarus, are noted in only one text in Azerbaijan. Contaminations that are characteristic for one people may not be culturally significant for another. For example, plot combinations 301+312D, 328+531, 432+400, 706+707, which are widely spread among East Slavic peoples, do not have equivalents in Azerbaijani tales. Conversely, plot combinations like 400+936, 465C+513A, 465C+554, 485+936, 514+410*, 559+653A++661*, 976A+925**+925***, which are prevalent in Azerbaijani oral tradition, are not found in East Slavic tales. In general, out of the 90 plot combinations characteristic for East Slavic peoples, only 17 have equivalents in Azerbaijani fairy tales, which is understandable. Each people has its unique storytelling tradition and repertoire. The absence of contaminations characteristic for one people in the tales of another ethnic group is natural because every storyteller creates within the framework of their own tradition.

A part of the plot combinations in the Azerbaijani fairy tale repertoire consists of international contaminations. International contaminations are so widely spread in the oral tradition that, at times, they make up more than half of the recorded variants. For example, the plot of "Dragon which cut off the water" (TR 300) has been recorded in 24 variants, with fourteen of them being contaminated with the plot of "Kidnapped three princesses" (TR 301). Plot combinations like "Trial of brides" (TR 402) + "Husband is searching for his lost wife" (TR 400) are found in 6 instances, "Stepmother and stepdaughter" (TR 480) + "Goychak Fatma" ("Pretty Fatma") (TR 510A) in 8 instances, and "Master and apprentice" (TR 950) + "Thief in dalliance with Azrael" (TR 1525G) in 10 tales. International contaminations in Azerbaijani oral tradition have further developed and enriched through additional plots. Examples of international contamination in Azerbaijan include the combination of "Kidnapped three princesses" (TR 301A) + "Dragon which cut off the water" (TR 300) and "Trial of brides" (TR 402) + "Husband is searching for his lost wife" (TR 402), extending the contamination chain with corresponding plots like "Ayghır Hasan" ("Stallion Hesen") (TR 2502*B) and "Gul and Sanavar" ("Flower and Senaver") (TR 449) in Azerbaijan.

Another part of the plot combinations consists of regional contaminations. Regional contaminations refer to combinations that are characteristic of a specific area, where the contamination method used in that region is only found there. For example, the tale "Tale of three sisters" from Nakhchivan, recorded by Baxshali Sultanov, starts with the plot of "Dervish and three sisters" (TR 311). *The dervish marries each of the three sisters in turn, proposes roasted meat of man, but the older sisters refuse to eat it, so the dervish nails them onto the wall by their hair. The younger sister feeds the cat with that meat, then prepares a şelf-moving chest and escapes from the dervish, marrying a prince. The dervish pursues her, tries to enter the palace, and wants to kill her. The girl pushes the dervish from behind, throwing him down the stairs, and the dogs tear the dervish apart*[27]. To

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[27] Azerbaijani Folktales [In 5 Volumes] / Compiled by Mammadhuseyn
Tahmasib. – Baku: Sherg-Gerb, – Vol. 2. – 2005. – p. 111

continue the tale, the storyteller takes an interesting approach to contaminate the next plot. The little girl makes a vow to Subhi-sadig, the child inside her womb, to be saved from the dervish. When the child is born, those whom the vow was made take the baby from the girl and endow it with extraordinary qualities: instead of a foot, it has a golden leg, flowers are poured from its mouth when speaking, and so on. After this, the tale continues with the plot of "Girl and bride escorting woman" (TR 533). We observe the same contamination method in the tale "Iynadan" ("Needle-case") transcribed from Sharur region[28]. This similarity indicates that each storyteller creates within the framework of their region-specific tradition, and depending on that, it is possible to encounter similar contaminations in their repertoires.

While contaminations are initially created as individual creative events by certain professional storytellers, they are later mastered by other performers and, through generations, become traditional. It should be noted that only a part of contaminations becomes traditional; the majority remains limited to the repertoire of a single storyteller, and their variants are not encountered widely. For example, the plot combination of "Trustworthy friend" (TR 516) + "Unveiling of secret" (TR 525*) + "Trial of friend" (TR 893) + "True friend" (TR 893A) is encountered in the repertoire of Ibrahim Gafar oglu from Ganja. The storyteller, dealing with the relationship between the prince and the bald-headed in the main plot, continued the fairy tale with TR 893 and 893A plots focusing on friendship, resulting in the creation of an original folktale example[29]. The absence of such combinations in the oral tradition is attributed to the complexity of contamination methods, limited knowledge of these methods by storytellers, and the rare use of contamination in stories due to its association with less common, infrequent plots.

A part of uncontaminated tales has entered the oral tradition through "Thousand and One Nights". An example of such tales is the

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[28] Anthology of Azerbaijani Folklore [In 23 Volumes] / Compiled by T. Farzaliyev, M. Gasimli. – Baku: Sabah, – Vol. 1: Nakhchivan Folklore. – 1994. – p. 125
[29] Azerbaijani Folktales [In 5 Volumes] / Compiled by Nuraddin Seyidov. – Baku: Sherg-Gerb, – Vol. 5. – 2005. – p. 43

folktale "Cobbler Mahammad" which is formed by combining the plots of "Lying Merchant" (TR 864*) and "The Ring Found in the plough" (TR 560*A)[30]. Due to correlation of most motifs, character names, imagery, and expressions with each other, referring to the traits relating to Arabian lifestyle, I.Rüstamzadə notes that this tale has origins in "Thousand and One Nights." However, as the researcher points out, such tales introduced through the book do not spread widely in the oral tradition; they become characteristic of the repertoire of a particular storyteller[31]. The folktale "Cobbler Mahammad" has two known variants, both published in the five-volume "Azerbaijani Fairy Tales" and the two-volume collection by Ahliman Axundov. In both variants, the folktale is contaminated with the plots 864*+560A as per the original. Additionally, the plots "Jewelry-seller Salim" (TR 485) + "Golden Mountain" (TR 936) + "Husband is searching for his lost wife" (TR 400), and "Ruby between the girl's hair" (TR 581) + "Sattar and Ulker" (TR 526****) are also contaminations introduced through the medium of "Thousand and One Nights."

The second paragraph of the second chapter, titled **"Types and Methods of Contamination in Azerbaijani Folktales"**, deals with the types and methods of contamination in folktales. It is mentioned that storytellers bring together not just any plots but those with certain thematic connections within the same work. This has led to the creation of various thematic groups of contaminations in Azerbaijani folktales, depending on their content and ideas. The thematic groups include: 1) Combinations of magical-heroic plots where there is a struggle against demonic creatures; 2) Combinations of plots dealt with the persecution of the innocent; 3) Combinations based on magical objects; 4) Combinations based on similarities in fairy tales.

The combination of plots about the innocent pursued is widespread in oral tradition. For example, combinations like 480+450+510A and 533+311 are encountered in 2 and 6 fairy tales,

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[30] Azerbaijani Folktales [In 5 Volumes] / Compiled by Hanafi Zeynallı. – Baku: Sherg-Gerb – Vol. 1. – 2005. – p. 63
[31] Rustamzade, I. Plot indicator of Azerbaijani Folktales: Based on the Aarne-Thompson System / I. Rustamzade. – Baku: Science and education – 2013. – p. 35

respectively. While this group is formed based on the combination of plots from "Dervish and three sisters" (TR 311), "Qız və yengə"("Girl and bride escorting woman") (TR 533), "Stepdaughter" (TR 480), "Aghsagha qız" ("Limping little girl") (TR 450), and "Goychak Fatma"("Pretty Fatma") (TR 510A) in the Azerbaijani folktale repertoire, Eastern Slavic peoples use CIP 480, 403A, 403B, 409 and 510A for the same purpose. Although similar thematic combinations are observed across different cultures, there are certain differences in them depending on the folklore repertoire and plot selection, particularly noting their characteristic nature for the female repertoire [32].

In Azerbaijani folk fairy tales, the combination of plots about magical objects is found in only five tales. One of them is formed from TR 560+566, and the remaining four from TR 566+567. These combinations are centered around the common theme of returning stolen magical items. For instance, in the folktale "Stone ring" created by combining the plots "Magic ring" (TR 560) and "Three magical items" (TR 566), the main plot revolves around the theft of a magical ring and its recovery with the help of a dog and a cat. The next plot deals with the theft of magical items inherited from the hero's father and their recovery with the assistance of an unusual apple[33]. The thematic closeness between these two plots, centered on the theft and recovery of magical items, allows the storyteller to merge them in a single folktale. This combination enables the development of the main plot with new nuances, colors, and a more engaging presentation for the listeners. According to T.G.Ivanova, *such combinations that intertwine adventure with social and domestic conflicts have attracted more interest from male audiences*[34].

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[32] Ivanova, T.G. On the Issue of Contamination in the Fairy Tale (Based on White Sea Tales) // Russian North: Problems of Ethnography and Folklore. - Leningrad, - 1981, - p. 238.

[33] Azerbaijani Folktales [In 5 Volumes] / Compiled by Ahliman Akhundov. – Baku: Sherg-Gerb, – Vol. 3. – 2005. – 62 p.

[34] Ivanova, T.G. On the Issue of Contamination in the Fairy Tale (Based on White Sea Tales) // Russian North: Problems of Ethnography and Folklore. - Leningrad, - 1981, - p. 238.

Folktales composed of the combination of plots related to magical-heroic themes are more prevalent in oral tradition compared to the other two groups. These tales primarily emphasize the fantastical content and the hero's bravery. Fairy tales like "Malikmammad" (301+300), "Jalayi-vatan"("Pilgrim") (590B*+300+303), and "Reyhan" (2502*B+301+300) focus on the hero's struggle against demonic creatures, forming the core content of the tale. Each plot in the contamination chain serves to highlight this struggle, contributing to its portrayal in a more elaborate manner. While tales belonging to the magical-heroic group are rarely encountered independently, the diversity and distinctiveness of combination types demonstrate storytellers' interesting efforts to expand this category of folktales through combinations.

Combining plots based on fate similarity the storyteller brings the characters together by highlighting the parallels between their stories and lives. In the folktale "Ungrateful girl" the main plot revolves around a girl complaining about her fate, while the dependent plot depicts a man expressing dissatisfaction with his destiny [35]. Similarly, in the folktale "Snake and girl" formed by combining the plots "Dragon girl" (TR 411) and "Searching for a lost husband" (TR 425), the main plot narrates the hero marrying a girl born from a dragon, and in the next plot, it is narrated how the hero gives his daughter to marry the boy born from a dragon[36].

The contamination methods represent the repertoire of creative techniques employed by the narrator to bring together different plots. These methods can be traditional or individual. While certain narrators create these methods, some of them become conventionalized through oral tradition, while others remain characteristic of specific narrators' creativity.

*The technique of directing the hero to learn some information* serves as a widespread contamination method in Azerbaijani storytelling tradition. During such contaminations, the execution of a certain

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[35] Azerbaijani Folktales: [In 5 Volumes] / Compiled by Ahliman Akhundov. – Baku: Sherg-gerb, – Vol. 4. – 2005. – p. 257
[36] Azerbaijani Folktales: [In 5 Volumes] / Compiled by Nuraddin Seyidov. – Baku: Sherg-Gerb, – Vol. 5. – 2005. – p. 231

activity in the main plot is linked to learning of specific story. For instance, in the folktale "What did Flower do to Senaver" the old woman turns her elder and middle brothers into stones, and she requests the young brother, who comes to save them, to learn the king Senaver's story. When the hero learns that story, the old woman resurrects his brothers[37]. These combinations contribute to unfolding of the main plot and development of events. It is through learning this specific information that the hero manages to revive his brothers and gain approval to carry his wife.

Depending on the purpose of the fairy tale, there are various types of contaminations that occur through *the storytelling method within the folktale*: 1. Fairy tales with didactic content are told to dissuade someone from a certain action or behavior; 2. Fairy tales are told to save time; 3. Fairy tales are told to portray a character; 4. Fairy tales are told to identify a thief.

The first type of contamination, related to didactic content, is found in folktales based on the plot of "Laughter of fishes" (TR 679*). In these tales, the use of plots such as "Innocent monkey" (TR 178A), "Innocent parrot") (TR 178C*), "Innocent golden bird" (TR 178D*) is observed. Although these plots are based on different subjects, they share a common feature: discussing the remorse of the character for their actions. The storyteller uses these plots, particularly in the fairy tale "Laughter of fishes" to dissuade the king from learning the reason behind the laughter of the fish.

*The fairy tale method of telling a tale to save time* is found in the folktale "Tutuquşu" ("Parrot") It is said in the tale that while the merchant was on a long journey, old woman persuaded his wife to marry the khan and wanted to take her with her. The parrot tries to entertain the merchant's wife with storytelling until the merchant returns from his journey (TR 1352A). The similarity and closeness of the variants found in the oral tradition to "Tutiname" suggest its incorporation into the oral tradition through books. The difference is only evident in the spoken story. While the parrot tells a new story

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[37] Azerbaijani Folktales: [In 5 Volumes] / Compiled by Mammadhuseyn Tahmasib. – Baku: Sherg-Gerb, – Vol. 2. – 2005. – p. 83

every night in the written text, in the oral tradition, the fairy tale continues by preserving it for the next day, extending the tale over several nights. The oral variants of this tale have been constructed based on the following combinations: 1352A+976B*; 1352A+566. This indicates that although the contamination method was borrowed from "Tutiname" each storyteller has shaped the spoken fairy tale according to their repertoire. Therefore, despite the similarity in the contamination method, the fairy tale part differs from one variant to another in the orally recorded versions of the tale.

Telling stories for the purpose of revealing dumb girl's speech is encountered in tales based on the "Speechless Girl" (TR 559) plot. For this purpose, the storyteller utilizes narrative-puzzle type plots such as "Joiner, tailor, and alchemist" (TR 661*), "Most valuable gift" (TR 653A), "Who is merciful" (TR 976), "Whom will the girl marry?" (TR 976B*), "Mixed up head" (TR 976*A). Constructing these plots on a narrative-puzzle basis and posing a question at the end of the tale compels the girl to speak.

*For the purpose of identifying the thief, telling of story* is found in the "Lǝlin nağılı" ("Tale of ruby"). The brothers appeal to the king to find the thief who stole their inherited ruby. The king's daughter tells them a narrative-puzzle, and based on the given answer, identifies which one of them is the thief.

As mentioned earlier, it was noted that some contamination methods are characteristic of specific storytellers' creativity. The fairy tale "Ax-vax"("Howling") recorded in writing from the repertoire of Samad Samadov, a resident of Alibayramlı (modern-day Shirvan), *is characteristic of creating fairy tales by bringing together various characters to tell events that happened to them.* This tale, composed of the plots "Untrustworthy husband" (TR 896*) + "Wife kept in a chest") (TR 1426) + "Treacherous wife" (TR 986A) + "Hero in paradise" (TR 456) + "Prophet Suleyman's ring" (TR 560*B), discusses the events that happen to four different individuals. Although each of these individuals has separate fates and different pasts, a common feature unites them all: the fortieth room where they live and the events that happen to them there. After each character narrates their life story in

the tale, they say, "oh, what I've seen, alas, what I've seen", referring specifically to the events that happen to them in the fortieth room, pass away. By creating such a connection among the storyteller's characters, the pieces come together around a common theme, turning into a unified organism. Therefore, when reading this tale, composed of different plots, it is not perceived as independent pieces but rather comes to life in our minds as a unified organism. The complexity beyond the ordinary limits of the contamination method and the story-teller's use of a method unlike those found in Azerbaijani storytelling tradition have contributed to the creation of an original tale example.

The third chapter of the dissertation is titled "Contaminations in the Modern Context" and consists of two paragraphs. In the first paragraph, titled **"Contaminations in Recently Recorded Tales,"** an analysis has been conducted on nearly 600 tales collected from the Garabagh region, Saatli, and Tovuz districts. In these tales, 82 instances of plot combinations have been identified, accounting for 14 percent of the analyzed tales.

In contemporary times, 56 of the contaminations found in collected tales are composed of two plots, 18 of them involve three plots, and others formed by the combination of four or more plots. Contaminations consisting of two plots make up 68 percent of plot combinations. The number of combinations formed by three, four, and more plots has significantly decreased compared to previous periods. Contamination is a creative phenomenon that not only adds complexity to tales but also enriches them with epic breadth by developing events. Tales composed of combinations of four, five, or more plots are chosen for their large volume and numerous episodes. In the modern era where storytelling tradition struggles, it has become impossible to retain these tales in memory for an extended period, leading to the erasure of tales composed of four, five, or more plots from storytellers' memories. As a result, only tales with two or three plot combinations have survived to the present day.

The majority of contaminations in modern tales are also found in tales collected in the past century, with only 24 new contaminations identified. These new contaminations are selected not for their

complexity but for the originality in plot selection. The tale "Language of animals" collected from Garabagh is composed of the plots "Donkey and ox" (TR 207A) + "Ovchu Pirim" ("Hunter Pirim") (TR 670). *In this tale, the tired ox, upon the advice of the donkey, feigns illness, and the owner replaces the ox with the donkey. The donkey, exhausted from performing the ox's tasks, convinces the ox that if it doesn't recover, the owner will slaughter it. When the animals' owner hears their conversation, he laughs[38].* After providing this detail, the storyteller continues the story with the plot of the wife asking her husband why he was laughing, and the husband beating her with the advice of the animals and dissuading her from this thought.

In modern times, recorded contaminations are sometimes presented in an incomplete manner, where one of the parties involved in the contamination is forgotten, causing the storyteller to fail to fully deliver the plot, and the justifications may not be consistently coherent. As a result, traditional contaminations, when presented by contemporary storytellers, are deformed and appear in a distorted form. For example, the plot "Armudan bay"("Armudan bey") (TR 545B) is contaminated with the oral tradition, typically with the plot "Fox's debt" (TR 1149A). After fox takes the king's daughter to the hero, he decides to test her. After providing this justification, storytellers continue the fairy tale with the plot "Fox's debt". In the tale "Tozdu bayin naghılı" ("Tale of Tozdu bey") collected from Garabagh, the storyteller provides the episode where the fox, to test the hero, shams dead, and the hero grabs him by the tail and throws him aside. However, since the storyteller forgets the other episodes that make up the plot, he concludes the tale by saying, "Fox creates such a mess that he leaves the boy in miller's state," unable to follow through with the rest of the fairy tale.[39]

Forgetting of many episodes, departure of trilogy from fairy tale structures, and the lack of description and detail resulting in the simplification of fairy tales are frequently observed phenomena in the modern era. For example, in the fairy tale "Servant of paradise"

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[38] Garabagh: It's also a history in folklore [In 10 Volumes] / Compiled by: I.Rustamzade, Z.Farhadov. – Baku: Science and education, – Vol.1. – 2012,–p. 181
[39] Again there, p. 184

composed of the plots "Son-in-law lion" (TR 552C*) and "Future generation" (TR 807**), the man, while on his way to visit his daughter whom he gave in marriage, encounters unusual events: a crow eating carrion climbs a tree and recites Qur'an, instead of a dog the puppies in its belly were whining, and so on. While the classical variants of this plot consist of three episodes, in the variant recorded in Garabagh, only one episode is involved[40]. The departure of trilogies from fairy tale structures and the absence of description and detail result in the "Servant of paradise" fairy tale, formed by the combination of three plots, having a half-page volume.

In modern times, narrators of folktales not only forget episodes but sometimes also forget the plots that make up the combination. For example, the "Loghman" fairy tale collected from Garabagh is constructed from the combination of the plots "Loghman's early joy" (TR 1863*) + "Who will prepare a stronger poison" (TR 1863**). In the first plot, Logman is delighted to see the man he is chasing a man who is drinking water from a spring, thinking that the water will weigh him down and he will be able to easily catch him. However, when he learns that the man rubbed his body with warm sand after drinking water, he realizes that his joy was in vain, as the warm sand has already removed the water from his body[41]. It becomes clear from the narrator's words that the disciple was able to overcome Logman in two more issues, but since the narrator forgot those plots, only one of them is conveyed to us. As a result, the folktale composed of combinations of four plots has reached us in the form of a combination of only two plots today.

In the modern era, not only traditional contaminations but also the majority of contamination methods have become obsolete. Specifically, the creation of familial relationships among characters, as seen in classical fairy tales, through the narration of instructive stories with moral content to deter a character from certain actions, is rarely encountered in contemporary fairy tales. The increased

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[40] Garabagh: It's also a history in folklore [In 10 Volumes] / Compiled by: I.Rustamzade, Z.Farhadov. – Baku: Science and education, – Vol.1. – 2012,–p. 217
[41] Again there, p. 264

frequency of such occurrences in recent fairy tales can be attributed to processes within the tradition of storytelling. The second paragraph of the section titled **"The factors causing the decline of contaminations"** deals with the weakening of contaminations due to certain factors. It is noted that folklore works are not immutable throughout their existence; they have always been related to realities and addressed to contemporaries. Therefore, societal changes in social and economic aspects have occasionally led certain examples to transition from the epic era, paving the way for new ones. Many examples have adapted to the demands of the era and time, acquiring new content and forms. For example, the disintegration of the Turkmen ethnos due to the appearance of the qizilbash, formed on the basis of a new belief, on the stage of history, caused the "Dede Gorgud" epics, in which the Oghuz warriors and Oghuz knights were praised, to leave the epic cycle, and their place were replaced by love epics reflecting Sufi philosophical views.[42]. A similar situation is observed in folktales. Previously, fairy tales, eagerly listened to by people of all age groups, have seen a narrowing audience in the present day. In modern times, fairy tales are primarily performed by elderly individuals, and their audience consists mainly of children and occasional listeners. The decline of folkloric gatherings and the disruption of the inheritance principle – to the stagnation of the process of transferring folklore from the older generation to the younger generation – have led to stagnation of this process, resulting in the removal of many examples from circulation.[43]

The oral heritage of the old world has maintained its vitality until that time, as the factors ensuring its survival still exist. Since the first half of the last century, social, economic, and cultural innovations in society have led to significant changes in rural life. B.N.Putilov writes in this regard: *"The folklore heritage is closely*

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[42] Asgar, A. Oghuzname creation / A.Asgar. – Baku: Science and education – 2013,– p.248

[43] Safarova, D. Contemporary state of plot contaminations in Azerbaijani fairy tales // - Baku: Journal of Baku Engineering University, - 2018. - Volume 2, Number 1, - p. 11.

*related to the type of economy and household. In rural life, the continuous and measured repetition of economic forms not only supported the archaic but also the multifaceted folklore tradition of the past. The radical changes in rural life associated with the transition to collectivization have naturally led many folklore traditions to fade away from active life. Currently, the gradual approximation of rural life to urban life has also influenced the fate of folklore"*[44]. S.Y.Neklyudov attributes this historical process to the second half of the 20th century. According to him, the intensive urbanization in the 1970s marked the accelerated disappearance of classical oral traditions. The urban culture, by increase of literacy, the emergence of gramophone records, and later the advent of cinemas began to erase traditional rural culture, expanding into larger residential areas. This not only radically changed the ethical and aesthetic values of the previous system but also, in essence, did not allow the rural folklore to continue to exist. As a result, a large number of texts and artifacts from traditional folk culture were turned into museum exhibits[45].

Indeed, in classical societies, folklore played a significant role in people's cultural lives and the organization of leisure time; it was an integral part of their cultural world. People used it as a source to obtain specific information about the past, history, and events when expressing their attitudes towards certain facts or incidents. The nights of storytelling, the gatherings, were an inseparable part of people's lives and a more rewarding form of organizing leisure time. Since the second half of the last century, modern entertainment tools such as radio, television, and cinemas have gradually replaced folk creativity, creating a diversity and change in the organization of leisure time. After the emergence of modern entertainment tools, traditional folkloric gatherings could not compete with them and gradually started to disappear from everyday life. Naturally, this

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[44] Putilov, B. Folkloric heritage of the Russian people and contemporary culture // Russian Folklore. – Moscow – Leningrad, – 1964, Issue 9. – p. 75

[45] Neklyudov, S.Y. Folklore and its studies: the twentieth century // Ecology of Culture. – Moscow, – 2006, № 2. – p. 121-127.

process did not proceed at the same pace in all regions. In urban and suburban areas, especially in regions where modernity had more influence, the transition occurred more quickly, and storytelling gatherings faded away sooner. However, in remote regions, especially in mountainous areas, they managed to preserve their existence until the end of the last century. Today, skilled storytellers can still be found in regions where strong storytelling traditions existed in the past, such as Saatli, Tovuz, Fuzuli, or in families that have maintained the tradition of storytelling.

Creative contamination is characteristic not only of individuals who have just started storytelling but also of experienced, well-seasoned storytellers in their respective fields, in other words, professional storytellers. The departure of professional storytellers from tradition marks the decline of contaminations. In the modern era, new subject variations are encountered, albeit rarely. These variations are not the complex combinations seen in classical fairytales but rather contaminations based on the apparent similarity and thematic proximity of the plots. Since these combinations are built on superficial resemblances, they cannot be turned into complete works, and the mechanical combination of different plots allows for preservation of their individual impact.

In the **Conclusion** section of the dissertation, the conclusions reached during the research period are generalized. It is noted that, in Soviet folkloristics, oral folk literature was considered a product of collective creativity, and the role of the storyteller in its formation and development was denied. The storyteller was viewed only as a transmitter of tradition, passing it from generation to generation. The analysis of the contamination phenomenon shows that the storyteller not only preserved oral tradition but also actively participated in the creation and development of this tradition. It is through the efforts of professional storytellers that the folklore tradition has been enriched with complex fairy tale compositions, expanding the structural possibilities of fairy tales.

**The main content of the dissertation has found its reflection in the following scientific works:**

1. Phenomenon of contamination in Azerbaijani fairy tales // IV International Scientific Conference of Young Researchers, - Baku, - 2016. - p. 1069-1072.

2. General view on the phenomenon of contamination in folklore studies // - Baku: Dada Gorgud, Scientific-Literary Collection, - 2016. № 2 (59). - p. 115-127.

3. Role of contaminations in the process of storytelling // - Baku: Studies on Azerbaijani Oral Folk Literature. - 2017. № 2 (51). - p. 133-143.

4. Specific contaminations in Azerbaijani tales // Kazakh National University named after al-Farabi philological series - Almaty,- 2017. № 2 (166), - p. 107-113.

5. Contemporary state of plot contaminations in Azerbaijani fairy tales // - Baku: Journal of Baku Engineering University, - 2018. - Volume 2, Number 1, - p. 23-32.

6. Weakening cause of plot contaminations in the modern era // III International Scientific Conference of Young Researchers, - Baku, -2019. - p.1150-1154.

7. Role of contaminations in the development of the fairy tale genre // - Baku: Philology and Art Studies. - 2019. № 2. - p. 220-226

8. Azerbaijani storytelling in the early 20th century (Based on fairy tales published by the Research and TETEBBO Society) // International Scientific Conference on "Contemporary Issues of Azerbaijani Science and Education" - Baku: Zardabi. - 2019. - p. 482-487

9. Creative and mechanical contaminations in folklore // International AGEAN conferences on social sciences and humanities – IX. – Izmir, Türkiye, – February 23-25, 2024, – p. 864-871

10. Professional storyteller's methods of creating fairy tales // World women studies conference – VII. – New Delhi, India, March 07-09, 2024, – p.773-781

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Address: AZ 1001, Baku city, 8-ji Kichik Gala Dongesi, 31, Folklore Institute of ANAS.

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