

## The Temporal World -a shadow play- Court and Urban Shadow Plays of the 11<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> Centuries

### Geçici Dünya -bir gölge oyunu- 11. ve 14. yüzyıl Saray ve Şehir Gölge Oyunları

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**Abstract:** This article draws attention, through quotations cited from contemporary figures, to the importance of the shadow plays of the 10<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> c. and of the attention drawn to the significance of shadows in the temporal world that is provided by *Sura Al-Nahl* and *Sura Al-Furqan*. This is because the key point about the shadow play was and remains its form and the hierarchy of existence that is expressed through its form. The shadow play was and remains a visible expression of *tawheed*, as “*The mover of all was only One*”, as stated by al-Qadi al-Fadil to Salahad-Din Eyyub in the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

**Keywords:** Shadow of God, Shadow plays, Shadows, Tawheed

**Özet:** Güncel simalardan alıntılar yaparak 10. ve 14. yüzyıl gölge oyunlarını inceleyen bu makalede Nahl ve Furkan surelerinde yer alan geçici dünya kavramı aracılığıyla gölge oyunlarının önemine değinilmektedir. Gölge oyununun en önemli özelliği formu ve varlık olarak formundan kaynaklanan niteliklerdir. Gölge oyunu tevhidin görsel bir dışavurumudur. Tevhid, her şeyi hareket ettiren yalnızca tektir diyen 12. yüzyıl düşünürleri El-Kadi el-Fadıl ve Selahaddin Eyyubi`dir.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Allah`ın gölgesi, Gölge oyunu, Gölge, Tevhid

It seems possible that the spread of the shadow play in the Islamic world was in part due to the important references made to, and thereby the attention drawn to the significance of shadows in the temporal world that is provided by the *Sura Al-Nahl* and the *Sura Al-Furqan* in the Holy Koran:

“Do they not see how every object God created casts its shadows right and left, prostrating itself before Him (The Almighty) in all humility? To God bow all the creatures of the heavens and the earth, and the angels too” (Holy Koran Sura Al-Nahl, The Bee, 16:48; as echoed in Jelalad-Din Rumi’s verse, “Thou art the Sun, and all things follow Thee like shadows, sometimes to the left sometimes to the right”, W. C. Chittick, The Sufi Path of Love, The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi, 1983, 22).

and

“Do you not see how your Lord lengthens the shadows? Had it been His will He could have made them constant. But We make the sun their guide: little by little We shorten them” (Holy Koran Sura Al-Furqan, The Criterion, 25:45).

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The shadow indicating not only that the object that casts the shadow was created in the temporal world by the Almighty, the “Sun” that does not set (Holy Koran *Sura Al-An’am*, Cattle, 6:78-79), but by virtue of the form being cast on the ground as a silhouette, serving to remind of the prostration in prayer to the Almighty, not only of people, but of mountains, trees and plants, insects, animals and birds, as echoed in the poetry of Jelalad-Din Rumi (Arberry, 1977, 215, “*Nothing is there that does not proclaim His praise*”) and Yunus Emre (Schimmel, 1975, 331-332) amongst others, every temporal form wittingly or unwittingly thereby praises the Almighty.

Any object that casts a shadow from the sun or moon was evidence of temporal reality and it was precisely the absence of the depiction of shadows in Islamic miniature painting which prevented the charge being levelled at the miniature painters of imitating the work of the Almighty, as without shadows the depictions in painted miniatures of figures, people, creatures and landscapes cannot be said to accurately depict the temporal world. Furthermore, the land of pure shadows, “*the imaginal world*”, *alam al-khayal* (See for example Nasr 1987, 177 ff) or *al-falak al-atlas*, located beyond the realm of the visible planets in the spiritual cosmography of figures such as ibn Arabi (Burckhardt, 1977, 14-16), is the region that contains the shadow-less and true forms, the archetypes of those forms which exist in this transient world and the archetypes that exist in the imaginal world are forms which are not lit by the temporal sun but by the Divine Radiance and so are of pure colour without shadows, like those figures that are depicted in painted miniatures. Jelalad-Din Rumi writes of this imaginal world in his *Divan Shams-i Tabriz*:

*“Every form you see has its archetype in the placeless world (al-falak al-atlas);  
If the (temporal) form perished, no matter, since its original is everlasting.  
Every fair shape you have seen, every deep saying you have heard,  
Be not cast down that it perished; for that is not so”* (Nicholson, 1977, 47, XII).

As also in his Mathnavi:

*Pure (transcendent) is the Builder (the Almighty) who in the unseen world (al-falak al-atlas) constructs castles of speech and beguiling talk. Know that speech is the sound of the door (coming) from the palace of mystery: consider whether it is the sound of opening or shutting. The sound of the door is perceptible, but the door (itself) is beyond perception* (Mathnavi, 1982, Bk. VI, v. 3480-83).

The shadow theatre has had a long history in the Islamic world, perhaps beginning in the 10<sup>th</sup> century in Baghdad (Schimmel, 1975, 278) seat of the Abbasid Caliphate or even earlier, presumably as a result of trade contacts with China and south-east Asia, and it continues today with for example performances of *Karagöz* and *Hacivad* in Turkey, with the shadow theatre reintroduced into Ottoman territory following Sultan Selim’s conquest of Mamluke Egypt in 1517 (And, 2004, 15-16) and the subsequent bringing of the shadow theatre and practitioners from Cairo to Istanbul, continuing to the present day with the performance of shadow plays in Turkey, Tunisia, Egypt and elsewhere. It seems the shadow theatre died out in Anatolia in the unsettled times of the 14<sup>th</sup> c., perhaps in part a consequence of the chaos in Anatolia under Mongol rule and the population loss caused by the plague pandemic beginning in Anatolia in 1346-7.

The shadow-play employed black cut out silhouette figures, only later in the 17<sup>th</sup> century under the Ottomans were the silhouette figures made of coloured camel skin (And, 2004, 24),

displayed from behind a thin screen-curtain, a veil, with the stick marionette silhouette figures-shadows lit from behind by a single lamp, and it has frequently been employed as a symbol, to describe the relationship of the phenomenal-temporal world to the Almighty, the Prime Mover; He who moves the shadow figures from behind the curtain of this world.

This understanding is also echoed for instance in the title given to the Caliph and to other rulers, to their being the “*Shadow of the Creator*” (A title recorded for example of the Atabeg Muzaffaru’d-Din Abu-Bakr b. Sad b. Zangi by Sadi in 1258; Eastwick, 1974, 15) or the “*Shadow of God on His earth*” (*Dhillu’llahi fi ardihi*, employed as a title also by Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna 998-1030. As similarly employed in reference to the ruler as for example by Usama ibn Munqidh in his Book of Contemplation, Trans. by P. M. Cobb 2008, 108, of Sultan Salad-Din Eyyub, “*The light of his justice dispels the darkness of the oppressor, and holds back the grasping arm of the warring transgressor. Through his triumphant governance may we rest in his protective shade,...*”) and is also echoed by Faridud-Din Attar (c. 1120-1220) in his *Manteq at-Tair* of 1177 where the temporal world is described as a shadow, “*the mysterious shadow of the Simurgh*”:

*“All appearance is nothing but the mysterious shadow of the Simurgh. If he had revealed his beauty to you, you would have recognized it in his shadow. Whether there were thirty birds, ‘Si-murgh’, or forty, you would only see his shadow... leave the shadow and you will discover the secret. With good fortune you will see the Sun in the shadow; but if you lose yourself in the shadow (lose yourself in the world), how will you achieve union with the Simurgh?”* (Attar, 1978<sup>2</sup>, 31-2).

At the court of Sultan Salad-Din Ayyub (1169-93) a shadow-play performance was watched by both the Sultan and by al-Qadi al-Fadil, with the Sultan’s Vizier explaining the meaning of the performance to the Sultan in these words:

*“What I have seen carries with it a weighty lesson; I have seen kingdoms come and go, and when the curtain was rolled up, lo! The mover of all was only One”* (Arnold, 1964, 15-16).

Al-Qadi al-Fadil’s remark means that the shadow play in the 12<sup>th</sup> century was regarded by some at least of the audience as carrying in its very form a religious meaning that is fundamental to Islam, the form of the shadow-play itself representing *tawheed*, Oneness or Unity, *At-Tauhid*, “*Say: He is Allah, the One! Allah, the eternally besought of all! He begatteth not nor was begotten. And there is none comparable unto Him*” (Holy Koran Sura *At-Tauhid*, The Unity, 112).

This spiritual aspect of the shadow-play had been earlier mentioned by Omar Khayyam (c. 1048-1126), who also indicated through his use of this imagery of the shadow play in the following ruba’i that shadow-plays were performed frequently in 11<sup>th</sup> century Persia when rule by the Great Seljuks, with the “*Master of the Show*” being the term employed by Omar Khayyam in this ruba’i to describe the Almighty:

*“We are no other than a moving row,  
Of Magic Shadow-shapes that come and go,  
Round with the Sun-illuminated Lantern held,*

*In Midnight by the Master of the Show”* (Aminrazavi, 2007, 339. “*We are no other than a moving row, / Of Magic Shadow-shapes that come and go / Round with the Sun-illumin’d Lantern held / In midnight by the Master of the Show*”).

There are links between Omar’s ruba’i and the way the related puppet theatre was used by

Faridud-Din Attar, who made a Turkish puppet master the hero of his *Ushturname* (Ritter, 1978, 42), the master who leads the adept through the seven veils (The seven heavens as mentioned in the Holy Koran: *Sura Al-Mu'minun*, 23:17, *At-Talaq*, 65:12, *Al-Mulk*, 67:3, *Nuh*, 71:14, *An-Naba*, 78:15) and who eventually destroys all his puppets to free them from their outward form and return them to the “*box of Unity*” (Schimmel, 1975, 278), to the Light, repeating this same meaning of *tawheed* remarked upon by al-Qadi al-Fadil. In Attar’s *Ushturname* the puppet master extinguishes himself into the apparent void (“*As God is the creator of both presence and absence (and so is other than these)*”, Arberry, 1977, 206, “the Unconditional and Infinite with neither beginning nor end”, Arberry, 1977, 24).

The shadow play was also mentioned by the Andalusian Muhyid-Din ibn ‘Arabi (‘1165-1240’, Arnold, 1964, 15) in his *Futuh al-Makkiyya* and by the Cairene Umar ibn al-Farid (‘1181-1235’, Arnold, 1964, 15) in his *Ta’iyyat al-Kubra - Nazm as-suluk* or “*Order of the Progress*”:

*“Lo from behind the veil mysterious  
The forms of things are shown in every guise  
Of manifold appearance...  
Regard now what is this that lingers not  
Before thine eye and in a moment fades.  
All thou beholdest is the act of One  
In solitude, but closely veiled is He.  
Let him but lift the screen, no doubt remains:  
The forms are vanished, He alone is all;  
And thou, illumined, knowest by His light  
Thou find’st His actions in the senses’ night”* (Schimmel, 1975, 277 and R. A. Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*, 1921, 191, 260. The poem also refers to the ship (of the spirit), battles on land and sea, the Jinn – lions, birds and other monsters attacking their human prey, a fisherman netting fish, camels etc, see for example, And, 2004, 18).

Texts of three shadow plays dating from around 1248, *Tayfū’l-hayal*, *Acıb ve Garıb* and *El-Müteyyem* survive, written in verse and rhyming prose by Mehmet b. Danyal b. Yusuf (And, 2004, 17-18).

The players of the shadow theatre were themselves described by Jelalad-Din Rumi’s teacher Shams-i Tabriz (1185-1247):

*“Even the shadow-players who show images from behind the screen are better than they (the so-called “lovers” and “shaykhs” of these days). They all admit that they’re playing and they admit it’s not true. (They say) “We have to do it for the sake of bread”. Because of this admission they are better”* (Chittick, 2004, 232).

The above references to the shadow play would seem to deny M. And’s statement that the Turks only came to know the shadow theater in the sixteenth century (“*The Turks, before they came to know the shadow theater in the sixteenth century, had enjoyed a long-standing established puppet tradition*”, M. And, *Traditional Performances in Turkey*, 7-52 in, *The Traditional Turkish Theater*, 1999, 39).

This matter of the shadow-play of this temporal world is a characteristic and most important theme in the spiritual writings of the period and Jelalad-Din Rumi (1207-73) refers repeatedly to this matter of veiling and shadows in a variety of ways as the following quotations indicate:

*“His (the Almighty’s) veil-making=(creation of phenomena)”* (Mathnavi,

1982<sup>2</sup>, Bk. VI, v. 2883). *In the sense that the creation of phenomena, the veil, both conceals its Maker, Al-Baatin (The Hidden), but also the veil indicates because of its existence the existence of the Maker of this veiling Az-Zaahir (The Manifest). This process of both revealing through creation and concealing through the multiplicity of forms that has been created is echoed by the form of the shadow play and the shadow play thereby serves as a reminder of this veil-making. As Faridud-Din Attar writes: "If the veil which hides the mysteries from our eyes should fall, nothing would be left in the world. All visible forms would be reduced to nothing" (Attar, 1978<sup>2</sup>, 64). This is because all that you see, depicted on the screen-curtain of the shadow theater or in the theater of the world is the visible expression of the act of the One.*

*"The body (The physical form) is the shadow of the shadow of the shadow of the heart (Not the physical heart but the spiritual heart): how is the body worthy of the (lofty) rank of the heart?" (Mathnavi, 1982<sup>2</sup>, Bk. VI, v. 3307).*

*"How He has stretched out the shadows – that shadow is the body of the saints, who are the guides to the light of God's Sun." (Mathnavi, 1982<sup>2</sup>, Bk. I, v. 422-5. Not the physical sun that rises and sets but the light of the Almighty), God's Sun being His Light (Al-Noor).*

*"He (God) made that cryptic saying (uttered by the wise man 'Imadu'l-Mulk, that the handsome horse that belonged to the emir which the sultan wanted "had a head like an ox", to dissuade the sultan from taking the horse) a veil over the king's eye, a veil through which the moon appears to be black." The veil concealing the truth as the veil of the world conceals the Truth.*

*"The peerless God hath made all the six directions (the world: Meaning literally, East, South, West, North, Up and Down) a theatre for the display of his signs to the clairvoyant (The "clairvoyant" in this context being those aware that the phenomena of the temporal world, of the visible temporal world, is a sign indicating the Almighty), in order that, whatever animal or plant they look upon, they may feed on the meadows of Divine Beauty. Hence He said unto the company (of mystics), 'Where-soever ye turn, His Face is there' (Referring to Holy Koran Sura Al-Baqarah, The Cow, 2: 115, "To God belongs the East and West. Whichever way you turn there is the face of God. God is omnipresent and all-knowing")." (Mathnavi, 1982<sup>2</sup>, Bk. VI, v. 3640-42).*

*"You are your own shadow - become annihilated in the rays of the Sun! How long will you look at your shadow? Look also at His light!" (Chittick, 1983, 179).*

*"Form is the shadow, reality is the Sun, the shadowless light is only to be found when material forms are eliminated in the ruin. When not a brick is left (resting) on a brick there, no ugly shadow remains in the moonlight (Even) if the brick be of gold it must be torn away, since the removal of the bricks, is the price paid for inspiration and light" (Mathnavi, 1982<sup>2</sup>,*

Bk. VI, v. 4746 ff. Meaning, die to the illusion of physical phenomena, before physical death, to gain spiritual illumination. Sura *Al-An'am*, 6:122, "Can the dead man, whom We have raised to life and given a light to walk with among men, be compared to him who is in darkness from which he will never emerge" likewise the Prophetic Hadith "mutu qabla an tamutu", Die before you die).

*"Although the (bodily) house is full of pictures, demolish it: seek the treasure, and with the treasure put it (the house) into good repair.*

*'Tis a house filled with pictures of imagination and fancy, and these forms (ideas) are as a veil over the treasure of union (with God)"* (Mathnavi, 1982<sup>2</sup>, Bk. VI, v. 3424-25) ... *"Because of this veil, these thirsty ones who are (so) fond of the foam (illusory phenomena) have got out of reach of the Pure Water"* (Mathnavi, 1982<sup>2</sup>, Bk. VI, v. 3429).

*"The whole sum of pictured forms (phenomena) is a mere reflection in the water of the river: when you rub your eye, (you will perceive) that all of them are really He"* (Mathnavi, 1982<sup>2</sup>, Bk. VI, v. 3183).

*"We now see (the result of) everything that we gave (during our life) in the world: this material world is the veil, and that (spiritual) world is the vision"* (Mathnavi, 1982<sup>2</sup>, Bk. VI, v. 3530).

*"Know that the form of the walls and roof of every dwelling-place is a shadow of the thought of the architect.*

*Even though in the seat of his thought there is no (material) stone and wood and brick.*

*Assuredly the Absolute Agent is formless: form is a tool in His hand.*

*Sometimes the Formless One graciously shows His face to the forms from the concealment (veil) of non-existence,*

*In order that every form may thereby be replenished with some perfection and beauty and power.*

*When, again, the Formless One graciously has hidden His face, they come to beg in (the realm of) colour and perfume.*

*If one form seeks perfection from another form, 'tis the quintessence of error"* (Mathnavi, 1982<sup>2</sup>, Bk. VI, v. 3740-3746. The last line meaning, to seek for perfection from amongst the forms of the temporal-phenomenal world is unbelief).

*"Even as the troops of Phantasy are at every moment arriving (and passing) on through the curtains of the heart. If (these) are not (sprung) from one (and the same) Plantation,*

*How are they coming to the heart on each others heels?"* (Mathnavi, 1982<sup>2</sup>, Bk. VI, v. 2780-1).

*"(But) as we have (enjoy) a bright period (of inward illumination) from those moons (the Prophets), we have no care for a shadow-figure"* (Mathnavi, 1982<sup>2</sup>, Bk. V, v. 3600).

*"Fate, does not become subject to the wishes of our hearts; being, is our capital in reaching nothingness... We have a nanny behind the curtains; In fact we have not come, this is our shadow"* (Gölpınarlı, 1982, 46).

Later in the 13<sup>th</sup> century the shadow-play is also referred to by Jelalad-Din Rumi's son and successor Sultan Veled (d. 1312), (Köprülü, 1992, 61, fn. 127).

### **The possible influence of the shadow play figures**

There may be a relationship between some of the depictions of the figures of the shadow puppet theatre, those cut-outs that are today termed “dragon”, *Burak*, “jinn” (Often bizarrely termed within an Islamic context “sphinx” and “harpy”, for example, K. Otto-Dorn “*Figural Reliefs on Seljuk Sacred Architecture in Anatolia*”, 103-149 in, *Kunst Des Orients*, XII 1978/9 -examples of the so-called “Siren” 136-9 and of the so-called “Sphinx” 140-42-, it seems however these are representations of the “jinn of the land” and “the jinn of the air” respectively. The sculpture of the Sphinx by the pyramids of Gizeh was known in the Arabic sources as, *Abul-Hawl*, meaning, the father of fear: ,Irwin, 1997, 89’, and had no meaningful connection with the Islamic motif, that is apart today from a passing resemblance, as until the 19<sup>th</sup> c. the body of the Great Sphinx was buried in sand up to its neck and so it could not have served as the model for these 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> c. sphinx-like depictions: Zivie-Coche, 2002, 16-22) as also the cut-out of the Wak-Wak tree (Koz, 2004, illustrations of the Wak-Wak tree, 11, of the Jinn, 320-1, Dragon 356, and Burak 358-9), with some of the figures depicted in miniatures illustrating 13<sup>th</sup> c. texts; as also to some painted depictions of these figures on 13<sup>th</sup> century Rum Seljuk palace tile-work (Illustrated in R. Arık 2000, dragon-serpent, “Jinn” tiles figs no.168, 170-2, 274; the winged lion with a human face, “Jinn of the land”, Figs no. 164a-168, 201 and no. 61 in the luster technique; “Jinn of the air”, crowned bird with a human face, Figs no. 157-164 and also with two fishes Fig no. 156) and perhaps also indicating the appearance of some 13<sup>th</sup> c. palace sculptural automata (T. M. P. Duggan (2009) 'Diplomatic Shock and Awe: Moving, Sometimes Speaking, Islamic Sculptures', *Al-Masaq*, 21: 3, 229-267, esp. 257-60). It is most remarkable how close some of the figures depicted in 13<sup>th</sup> c. copies of the *Maqamat* written by Abu Muhammed al-Qasim ibn Ali al-Hariri of Basra (1054-1122) are to some of the traditional shadow theatre cut-out figures used in performances today, almost as though these miniatures in fact copied the cut-out images that were made to illuminate shadow plays that were employed to relate stories from the *Maqamat*. If this was in fact the case, then perhaps a set of early 13<sup>th</sup> c. shadow play images exists in some of the miniatures illustrating the “Assemblies”, *Maqamat*, and, consequently, it can perhaps therefore be suggested that the origin of certain distinct and recognizable types of 13<sup>th</sup> c. manuscript illumination came from the copying of shadow theatre images, in particular those figures employed to illustrate the stories in the “Assemblies”, the *Maqamat* of al-Hariri (Eg the “*Schefer Hariri*” of 1236, painted in Baghdad by Yahya ibn Mahmud al-Wasiti, Bib. Nat. Paris, MS Arabe 5847, the miniature of the “*Eastern Isles*”, of the 39<sup>th</sup> *maqama*, fol. 121, includes depictions of jinn of the air and of the land and also of the wak-wak tree) including the jinn (Some of the jinn came under the Prophet Süleyman b. Daud's command, Holy Koran Sura 34, Saba: 12, “*And (We gave him) certain of the jinn who worked before him by permission of his Lord*”. A graphic description of the armies including the jinn at the Prophet Süleyman's command occurs in *The Extraordinary Tale of the City of Brass*, in the 341<sup>st</sup> Night of the 1001 Nights , “*When Süleyman learned the treatment which his envoy had undergone, he grew mightily indignant and at once assembled all his forces, of jinn, of men, of birds and of animals. To Asaf ibn Barakhya (Süleyman's Vizier) he gave command of his human soldiers; to Dimiryat, King of the Afarit (of the air), the leadership of all the forces of the jinn to the number of sixty millions and also of the troops of animals and birds of prey which he had assembled from the earth and sky and sea. Heading the combined force himself, Süleyman entered the lands of my master and drew his army up into battle array*”, *The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night*, Trans. J. C. Mardrus & P. Mathers, Vols. I-IV, 1996, Vol. II) and the Wak-Wak tree and also the cut-out like figures in the 13<sup>th</sup> c. miniatures painted to illustrate copies of *Kalila wa Dimna* (Eg. Topkapi Saray copy H.363, late 13<sup>th</sup> c.). Both the

*Maqamat* and *Kalila wa Dimna* were popular with both the court and the people, and if this suggestion is correct, then the earlier images to *Kalila wa Dimna* were perhaps already standardized through the figures employed in the shadow theatre several centuries before these 13<sup>th</sup> c. manuscript illuminations were painted (The Hindu fables of Bidpai, were translated from Persian into Arabic and added to by ‘Abd Allah ibn al-Muqaffa (c.721-c.759) during the reign of the Abbasid Caliph al-Mansur (754-75) as *Kalilah wa Dimnah* and was widely read by the literate in 13<sup>th</sup> century Anatolia, stories which reveal a layering of levels of meaning, which was clearly understood, as Jelalad-Din Rumi remarks: “... *take the (essential) meaning of the story, O imbecile! Not like him who has heard (some) fables, and like the “sh” stuck to the (literal) shape of them. So that he would say, How should Kalila, having no language, hear words from Dimna who had no power of expression? And (even) if they knew each others’ accents, how should man understand it (their talk), (since it was) without any articulation?*”). This would explain some of the differences between the miniatures illustrating these two texts and the contemporary 13<sup>th</sup> century style of manuscript illuminations (Compare these miniatures with, for example the miniature illustrations to the 1228 copy of Dioscorides *Materia Medica*, Topkapi Saray A.2127 or those in al-Mubashshir b. Fatiq al-Qa’id’s *Mukhtar al-Hikam wa Mahasin al-Kalim* of 1200-1250, Topkapi Saray A. 3206) that were employed for other texts.

The key point about the shadow play was and remains its form and the hierarchy of existence expressed through its form. It was and remains a visible expression of *tawheed*, as “*The mover of all was only One*”, as stated by al-Qadi al-Fadil in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, regardless of the particular text that is employed and the actions of the individual silhouette figures employed in any particular individual performance (Contra And 2004, 29-31, where the *form* of the shadow play and its relation to religious-mystical belief is ignored, while the importance of the plays performed as folk drama is emphasized and, with the exception of the ghazels recited at the start of the performance, he writes, “*No trace of mysticism has ever been found in any accounts of Karagöz plays*”). However, the very *form* of the shadow theater, when combined with the introductory mystical ghazel, establishes the context within which the individual play is performed. It is also the case that the plays performed were often sexually explicit, but then accounts of the most explicit and perverse sexual exploits have been employed to stress a religious-mystical form, meaning and text, as is made repeatedly evident for example in any reading of the text of Jelalad-Din Rumi’s *Mathnavi*). The form of the shadow play can further be seen as representing the relationship between the figures of this temporal world, the shadows on the screen, and the true figures, those without a shadow that lie behind the screen of the world, in the imaginal world.



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