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Yasemin Güleç

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Karagoz shadow plays as an artistic-pedagogical tool in teaching Islam

Yasemin Güleç 

Religious and moral education, University of Hacı bektaş veli, Nevşehir, Turkey

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article, which presents the subject with a descriptive method based on document analysis, was to reveal the importance of using shadow puppets in religious education classes as an artistic-pedagogical tool. Firstly, it was mentioned for what purposes shadow puppets were used in history. Secondly, this article discusses the historical stages of the Karagöz shadow puppet and the reasons for its use as a pedagogical tool. Thirdly, this article addresses the benefits of puppetry in teaching by proposing an art-based approach to religious education. Then it talks about the pre-service teachers' presentations with the Karagoz shadow play. Lastly, the article outlined how important it is for education and cultural transmission to keep shadow puppets alive in classrooms and online.

KEYWORDS

Teaching Islam; shadow puppets; Karagoz shadow plays; art-based religious education

Introduction

When there were no humans on Earth, a shadow existed. Since ancient times, shadows formed by the sun's beams and the movement of objects have fascinated humans (Özhan 2010, 13).

Taking advantage of the flickering light, humans embarked on a voyage to 'shadow theater' by reflecting the shadows of their hands and fingers in various ways, first on cave walls and later on room walls (Oral 2000, 15). Therefore, humanity discovered the technique of expression with shadows by utilising light and shadow movements, and this form of expression evolved into art (Özhan 2010, 13). Shadow play can be defined as 'a form of storytelling using two-dimensional figures which are manipulated in between a source of light and a surface'. (And 1977, 13; Jianping 2013, 2). One of the reasons the shadow puppet has endured through the years is the local and universal wisdom it contains (Arifin 2017, 99). Different cultures have adapted and utilised shadow plays in various ways. Some examples include 'Ying Xi (China), Chhaya Natak (India), Wayang Kulit (Indonesia and Malaysia), Sbek Thom (Cambodia), Nang Yai (Thailand), Khayal al-zill (Egypt), Karagoz (Turkey), Karagiozis (Greece), and Ombres Chinoises/Ombres Françaises (France and Western World)' (And 1977 –39; pp. 13; Jianping 2013, 2). Sbek Thom, Khmer Shadow Theater of Cambodia (2008), Wayang Puppet Theatre of Indonesia (2008), and Turkish Karagoz shadow theatre (2009) were designated as intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO (Jianping 2013, 9). The precise origin of the shadow play is unknown. It is seen that Asian nations have a richer heritage in shadow plays, and in this sense, information that the play emerged in Asia predominates (And 1977, 13–16).

The purposes of shadow theatre from past to present can be summarised as follows: 'healing grief, reassuring religion and ethical values religion, teaching social rules, channeling spirit into

matter, protecting from evil, emphasizing literary poetics, satirizing social stereotypes, experimenting with art, dividing matter from spirit, symbolizing lack of conscious action, entertaining, serving as an educational tool, being used as a form of therapy shadow, giving incentive to political critical thinking'. (Jianping 2013, 5–9).

Shadow puppetry is included as a source in Islam for two reasons: Islamic nations include Turkey and the Near East nations where shadow puppetry is practiced, and Islam has long maintained a presence in significant shadow puppetry nations like Java and Malaysia *sürdürmesidir* (And 1977, 81). There have been attempts in the past and present in various Islamic nations in Asia to employ shadow plays as an instructional tool. Shadow plays have endured for generations in Malaysia and Indonesia. Some rulers tried to ban shadow plays due to Islam's depiction prohibition (And 1977, 86–87). Indonesian people say that the nine saints used Wayang Kulit to spread Islam in Java by making shadow plays that fit their beliefs in the 16th century. However, it is not possible to say that they are successful in terms of content and target (And 1977, 88). In 2008, Kelantanian Dewan Bahasa's Pustaka debuted a new Wayang Kulit. According to reports, this shadow play had no magical elements, was built using Islamic principles, and told stories about everyday life and education (Ramli and Lugiman 2012, 354). According to Herawati and Syarif, Javanese Wayang puppets were influential in merging early Islamic teachings with local culture and life in Indonesia, especially in Java, Bali, and Lombok. According to Arifin, Wayang Kulit's focus on spirit worship and ritual in the past does not hinder it from being employed in Islamic teaching (Arifin 2017, 100). Arifin says Wayang Kulit has an amazing culture with many Islamic principles, and its language is not easily influenced by foreign languages. From this perspective, Arifin says it's not unexpected that Sunan Kalijaga employed Wayang Kulit as an Islamic education tool in Indonesia at the time (Arifin 2017, 108–113).

After the general introduction to shadow puppets above, the main purpose of this article is to reveal the importance of using Karagöz shadow play in Islamic teaching. In this research, answers were sought to the following questions: i-Which features of Karagöz shadow play can be justified for its function in teaching religious and moral values in Islam? ii-What is the value of art-based learning in religious teaching? iii-How do shadow puppets aid religious teaching? iv-How can Karagoz be used in religious education classrooms? v- What can be done to keep Karagoz shadow plays alive in classrooms and online venues for education and cultural transfer?

This qualitative research uses the document analysis method (Morgan 2022, 64) to address these questions. Printed and electronic books and articles on the issue were analysed. In addition, the author's field observations support the topic. Document analysis is versatile. This study used a reflexive approach. This approach is founded on a qualitative paradigm. It stresses researcher individuality as a resource instead of a problem. The researcher uses his ideas and scientific knowledge to support the topic he is researching (Morgan 2022, 73)

Karagöz shadow play

It is seen that Karagöz, in general terms, went through mystical, political criticism, and humorous stages throughout the historical process. During the 13th and 14th centuries, mystical shadow performances evolved into social satire, highlighting the divide between intellectuals and commoners in the Ottoman Empire (Sivayuşgil 1941, 73). Karagoz became an instrument of social criticism during the stagnation and decline of the Ottoman Empire and continued to reflect on society. Karagoz, whose popularity reached the nineteenth century, lost its religious and critical structure and turned into a pure entertainment element in order to survive political pressure. After 1940, the entertainment element of Karagöz was pushed aside, and only educational games and promotions were included in the shows. Today, Karagoz shadow play is used in education and training as a sympathetic and humorous instrument (Günana 2016, 155).

Islamic religious and moral principles can be taught effectively with various puppets. However, this article will focus on teaching religion and values in Islam through Karagöz shadow puppets, the

most important remaining dramatic and magnificent art of traditional Turkish theatre. Karagöz, like other puppets, is educational. In addition, the fact that it has mystical, humorous, educational, and critical aspects may make it more effective than other puppets in religious education. We found only one theoretical work (Günana 2016) on Karagoz in religious education. However, there is no practice of designing, writing, and performing shadow plays in the education of religious instructors such as ours. In this way, it is anticipated that this study will contribute to the religious education literature.

During the preparation phase of the Karagoz shows, prospective instructors were given a two-hour presentation on the history and characteristics of the Karagoz culture. Following the presentation, considerations for composing texts were outlined. The plays could include supporting characters (And 1977 –292; pp. 290; Sivayuşgil 1941, 142–144). These characters should be chosen from traditional Karagöz and those suitable for today's societal system. In addition, it was stated that the inclusion of sexual content in traditional Karagöz as well as extraordinary topics such as demonism and witchcraft (Kılıç 2018, 11) would not be beneficial in terms of religious education. When writing the texts, conventional Karagöz 'introduction (mukaddime), conversation (muhavere), play (fasıl), ending (bitiş)' (And 1977, 272–288; Baltacıoğlu 1942, 14–17) portions were included. It was pointed out that certain ghazals that reveal the mystical aspect of the play should be included, and if necessary, simplified Turkish versions of the ghazals could be used. While designing these plays, we can say that the approach we recommend to teacher candidates is based on the combination of traditional and modern Karagöz. In this approach, the use of puppets as a pedagogical instrument for teaching religious and moral values in Islam, based on Quranic texts, is similar to the Karagoz plays used for all types of public education in community centres during the Republican era. In addition, it resembles traditional Karagoz plays in terms of its introduction, sections, contents, selection of secondary characters, and humorous application.

Ritualistic and mystical aspects of Karagoz shadow puppets

It is known that shadow play, which is used as an entertainment and learning tool, originates from a religious-moral, ritualistic need. Ancestor worship was performed on wooden carvings in primitive societies as a way of communicating with the supernatural and divine. However, gradually, these societies realised that the shadows of their ancestors were more suitable for this task than the image and directed their worship towards the shadow rather than the image (And 1977, 19). In this sense, shadow plays were used in rituals by different cultures to do things like talk to spirits from the past and find spiritual direction and protection (Jianping 2013, 4).

There are opinions that Karagöz dances were performed in ancient times in India, China, and Java in the fourth century AD, and later among Turkish Mongols, Asian Turks, and Turkish tribes in Iran. This play, called 'shadow play', 'imagination play', or 'shadow of imagination', has a mystical content in all periods (Sevengil 1959, 73). Islamic Sufi thinking, a major theological and cultural force in Islamic civilisation since the 12th century, has also affected Karagöz performance (Smith 2004, 189). Sufism inspired literature, theatre, painting, music, and other arts throughout Ottoman civilisation (Oral 1996, 13). Meddah and Ortaoyunu also reflect Sufism. However, Karagöz's structure makes it more metaphysical. Karagöz, a product of a time when tradition connected religion, art, and spiritual thinking, has transcended entertainment with its mystical effect. Karagöz naturally combined theological thought with traditional entertainment (Oral 2012, 301). According to narratives about the play's creation, Şeyh Küşteri was its creator. This could also indicate Karagöz's Sufi inclination. In Karagöz, the dream-like depictions on the big screen are the lives lived by humanity. Şeyh Küşteri allegedly created the Karagöz play by combining mystical and humorous aspects for educational purposes (Babadoğan 2013, 39; Kılıç 2018, 5). There was also information that this imaginary curtain was played in a simple way in Turkmen tribes before Şeyh Küşteri (Oral 1977, 34–36).

Karagöz's piece incorporates mystical and ritualistic elements in its performance, pitch, and words. Unlike previous puppet plays, Karagoz Shadow Theater takes place in a dark environment. Night, a white curtain, and light provide the ritualistic elements of shadow theatre (Jianping 2013, 4).

'At first, the curtain is dark in the show, and there is no sound coming from backstage'. Then, from behind the curtain, a light lights the curtain. A life begins as the dark cloth curtain springs to life. On the screen, poems, music, and the shadows of multicoloured leather drawings of people and animals with moving parts are reflected. They communicate, laugh, cry, become furious, make friends, and fight" (Kılıç 2018, 4). In their imaginations about creation and the universe, humans have employed shadow play as a metaphor. Man has always sought to keep the light and truth, the mover and the speaker, buried beneath what is apparent by comparing himself to images residing in the world of imagination. The audience contemplates the divine reality hidden beneath these unreal images. At the same time, just like the karagöz performer who plays these images, he understands that God rules people in this way (And 1977, 29–30). The true world is in a beyond realm, according to the Sufi religion, which believes that this world is a reflection of the real world. A person cannot be happy unless he gives up on the world. Reaching God brings true serenity (Kılıç 2018, 3). It is said that Karagoz was developed to provide enjoyment and attainment of religious experience, based on the Sufi Islamic notion that man is a shadow controlled by his creator (Güler 2015, 729; Myrsiades and Myrsiades 1988, 2). When shadow plays first began to be performed in Islamic civilisations, it was argued that they were incompatible with Islam because depiction was forbidden. However, due to their popularity, Islamic authorities have legitimised them (Smith 2004, 192). Banning these games is not considered in both religious fatwas and moral and historical texts, as long as they have educational value. Religious authorities claimed that because the puppets had holes, the images could not be deemed alive or resembling a real entity, and hence puppet plays may be permitted (And 1977, 86; Martinovich 1933, 36).

Curtain ghazals whose content is based on religious themes and has an important position in the Sufi sense, transform into Karagoz a high-quality work of art (Güler 2015, 724). According to the shadow play tradition that has been passed down to us, Hacivat's first word was Bismillah, and his prostration was prostration. Some researchers believed that Hacivat's entrance onto the screen while singing 'Semai', saying 'Hay Hak', mentioning the name of Allah, and entering the curtain ghazal was a defence of Islam against bigotry. Some researchers also viewed this as a way to avoid embarrassing the audience during the performance (Kılıç 2018, 11). Although the muhavere (mutual dialogue) or fasils (the main play) portray the play as a comedy, the these ghazals read at the opening of the performance instruct the audience how to make sense of it. Curtain ghazals say that worldly existence is fleeting, like screen images, and that an eye with a lesson can see reality. These poems contain the mystical idea that the curtain is a scene of lies and that nothing will make sense when the light goes out (Şenödeyici 2013, 115).

Critical and humorous educational aspect

Karagoz shadow play emphasises entertainment, education, humour, and individual and social satire by melting the ritual and mystical elements of Asian shadow puppets in its own melting pot (And 1977, 78–80). These plays expressed the distortions in society by exaggerating people's weaknesses to make an example. With the material he collects about individual and social flaws, Karagoz plays teach moral lessons to its audience through satire and humour on the curtain of imagination (Akı 1989; Oral 1996). It is known that shadow play and Karagöz, which are known to have entered the Ottoman Empire in the 16th century, have been played in Anatolia since the 13th century, as understood from various manuscripts and travelogues of historians (And 1983, 82; Babadoğan 2013, 38).

Karagoz was a representation of Ottoman Istanbul between the 16th and 19th centuries. These plays depicted Ottoman life, beliefs, and customs. So that the characters of various religious and ethnic origins in Turkish-Ottoman society were skilfully reflected on the screen. The play was loved for its 'free tribune' opposing dominating ideology. These plays reveal the agility of criticism as well as the maturity, tolerance, and understanding of criticism in Turkish society. Both the 'muhavere' and "fasl" sections of the play also show some religious activities and beliefs (Chasan 2020, 32–35).

Karagoz spread with the rise of coffeehouses in the Ottoman Empire from the 17th to 19th centuries (Babadoğan 2013, 63; Öztürk 2006, pp. 292–294). The Karagoz play, performed largely during Ramadan, drew political satire and sexual humour. Karagöz functioned as a weapon for criticising political corruption, a representative of the people who mocked the nobility and criticised the mistakes of the rulers (Hattox 1996; Öztürk 2006, p. 295).

Karagöz's sexually charged word plays (Martinovich 1933) are themselves revolutionary. However, Karagöz is not simple pornography; it is 'the symbolic reversal of common norms and behaviors through sexuality'" (Kırlı 2000, 170). Some claimed that such news must be fake because they believed that Karagöz was a completely mystical game (Öztürk 2006, p. 297). However, the majority of 19th-century reports about Karagöz indicate that this mysticism was limited to the curtain gazals at the beginning of the plays. According to And, the curtain ode, which determines the Sufi meaning of the play, was able to preserve the entire play, whose content often has nothing to do with Sufism, and provide immunity to Karagöz (And 1977, 86). In the late nineteenth century, political and sexual restrictions were placed on Karagöz play. The puppeteers began to talk more metaphorically about the content of the play. At the same time, palace puppeteers created scripts that were censored and approved by the elite (Öztürk 2006, pp. 298–299).

In 1923, the Republic of Turkey was established. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the new state, attempted to modernise Turkey under the one-party control of the Republican People's Party, which remained in power until 1945. During the early years of the Republic of Turkey (1923–1945), Turkish shadow theatre was exposed to top-down political pressure. The elite class, which formerly held competing and constrained moral values, largely adopted this form (Karpas 1991; Öztürk 2006, p. 299). In the early years of the Republic, ordinary coffeehouse audiences in the provinces, municipalities, districts, and villages of Anatolia were watching modern karagoz plays that incorporated both technical and content innovations. Even in Istanbul, where cinema, radio, and modern theatre were beginning to emerge and compete, people were still addicted to viewing Karagoz performances in coffeehouses. In the 1930s, the administration issued a decree to the police and police stations to oversee Karagoz performances. A further decree was issued in 1933 to reduce the working hours of coffeehouses. Although we lack descriptions of the actual demonstrations that led to the decrees, these restrictions demonstrate that Karagoz was still popular in coffeehouses and that its content was obscene and possibly political (Öztürk 2006, pp. 301–302).

After 1932, the government attempted to take the theatre under full control by purifying Karagöz of sexual and critical messages and filling it with its own ideology. Karagoz participated in the community centres established in 1932 in order to promote the government's ideology. Community centres were government-funded institutions that educated the public and adjusted them to new ideologies (Öztürk 2006, p. 303; Şimşek 2002). Taking into account the power of Karagoz at the time, some journalists asserted that the game could be a very effective propaganda instrument if it were under government control (Şimşek 2002). They emphasised that people adore Karagoz, that they believe every word that comes out of his mouth, and that Karagoz can therefore serve as an inspiration for anything. They recommended the use of Karagoz in all types of public education, including scientific and technical education (Talu 2013).

In the shadow plays that continue to be performed in People's Houses both the secondary characters and the main characters (Hacivat and Karagoz) have changed. Realistic Hacivat in the traditional shadow theatre of the Ottoman Empire is a well-educated, well-respected, and culturally aware Arabic speaker who strives to maintain the status quo at all times. Karagoz is a character who is uneducated, disdains conventional morality, understands only a portion of Arabic, and is eager for new ideas at all times. Hacivat has fallen behind the language revolution of the new Republic of Turkey in the modern game. The mission of maintaining the linguistic status quo has recently been assigned to Karagoz. As part of its revolution, the new state adopted Karagoz and his language while rejecting Hacivat's Arabic. Karagoz's efforts to have Hacivat speak Turkish purified and modernised by the language revolution are successful by the conclusion of the play, and Hacivat himself joins the language revolution. Additionally, in the

play, figures that refer to the Ottoman social structure and values, such as Opium Addict (Addict), Womaniser (Çelebi), Drunk (Tuzsuz Deli Bekir), Woman (Zenne), representative ethnic types (Greek, Jewish, Albanian, and Arab), religion, and characters that hint at supernatural beliefs, have been removed from the game. Modern karagoz instead refers to a rational and technological world; various characters such as Charlie Chaplin (Sarlo), Tarzan, Mickey Mouse, Greta Garbo, and famous Turkish authors were brought in (Babadoğan 2013, 233; Öztürk 2006 pp. - 304–305).

Karagöz, who was domesticated in the People's Houses according to the new management, could now return to the coffeehouses again after all these changes (Öztürk 2006, p. 307). Although some intellectuals supported modern Karagöz, some intellectuals did not support this change (Felek 2013, pp. 248–249).

After the 1930s, Karagöz began to be returned to its previous natural environment, the coffeehouses. Karagöz plays, in their domesticated form, began to be performed in the organized Ankara coffeehouses (Öztürk 2006). Until the Second World War, in coffeehouses, the superiority of the Republic of Turkey regime and the messages of the Kemalist Revolution, the importance of health, the harms of waste, alcohol, and gambling, public life, scientific methods of agriculture and animal husbandry, etc. were shown. With the end of the war, the demonstrations continued with a revival (Öztürk 2006, p. 307).

Creative arts approach in religious education

Religions have generally started verbally. Therefore, religious education was also initially verbal. Religions rely on the content of holy scriptures, catechisms, theological concepts, and principles. The Prophets spoke verbally of God's revelation to the people. Later, sacred revelations were written down. Modern man may not always understand the scriptures' language. Worse, especially young people, may reduce religion to a real and descriptive category, thinking there is no alternative. This may lead them to become fanatical or irreligious (Miller 1970, 309). Religion is more than just historical dynamics, beliefs, symbols, and rituals (Herawati and Syarif 2019, 33). If the relationship with objective realities in religions is through reasoning, religion can be a way of life and a means of communication (Miller 1970, 310). Hence, it would be appropriate to try to understand sacred texts by dealing with various interpretations of religion, such as the behavior and advice of the prophets, religious-literary texts and poems, stories, anecdotes, and legends about that religious tradition. Besides, in worship and interpersonal connections, it's important to use religion's functional features.

We utilise stories and narratives to shape our world and sacred experiences. The major world religions are 'living traditions', made up of beliefs, scriptures, and rituals passed down through the centuries and reinterpreted today. The way faith communities convey their views to themselves and others contributes to religious narratives (Reed et al. 2013, 298). Therefore, pedagogies that centre narrative learning in religious education have been created. Two approaches are common. First, an approach that focuses on conceptual research and learning. It puts the story at the center of education instead of the content of religious education classes. In this way, religious and human experiences are looked at through key concepts, arranged according to specific situations, and tried to be applied to the students' own lives (Erricker 2004, 47). The other approach, which is our topic in this article, is based on giving direction to life by internalizing the narratives in the sacred texts. In this case, the most important thing is to assume that the meaning of scriptures isn't always set in stone, but that they also can't be interpreted in any way you want either (Reed et al., 2013, 300).

Learning cognitively depends on intellectual activity, perception, and reasoning; affectively, it includes activities based on creative and emotional activity (Backenroth, Epstein, and Miller 2006, 470). The cognitive and affective fields must work together to understand religion, which usually involves abstract religious concepts (Milgrom 1987). In this sense, an art-based approach to religious education seems to be one of the best ways to make these two fields work together. Approaches to art in religious education have discussed the benefits of using art in religious education from various

perspectives (Miller 2003). The 'creativity and religious education' approach (Goldburg 2004a, 2004b; Harris 1987; Webster 1989) grounds this paper. This view promotes student creativity through many art mediums. This method claims that metaphors, symbolism, and religious beliefs may be better conveyed through creative expression. This approach to creativity and spirituality emphasises emotional awareness and creative sensitivity over theological analysis and description (Miller 2003, 208). Teaching religion through art can give all kids tangible material. The religious educator can use art to teach religion to youngsters through active, creative participation (Brooke 1974, 56). According to Goldburg, people learned to be religious by participating in rituals with music, movement, and visual aspects; that is, by doing religion. Therefore, the creative arts may be a way for communities to express and communicate their beliefs (Goldburg 2004b, 176). Religious education is no longer considered a dogmatic and rote transfer of theology but an interdisciplinary field that should engage with education, sociology, psychology, literature, art, and music. This approach integrates both classical and modern arts into religious education lessons (Goldburg 2004a, 38). Using creative arts in religious education can help us understand and make sense of religious life and experience by taking the message beyond theological limits (Herawati and Syarif 2019, 33). In some field studies, it has been found that teaching religion lessons through different forms of art helps children reflect on what they have learned in their own lives and internalise the subjects (Backenroth, Epstein, and Miller 2006; Epstein 2004; Ikonen and Ubani 2014; Levy 2002; Reingold 2015, 2016; Starkings 1993). Artistic learning activities can provide an opportunity to interact with and personalise scripture in a way that reading and talking about a text cannot (Reingold 2016, 185). Children and teens can actively learn to write narratives based on sacred texts. Combining these texts with artistic activities (Backenroth, Epstein, and Miller 2006, 478; Reingold 2015, 411) may improve religious comprehension, meaning-making, imagination, interpretation, and insight. Puppetry's hybrid nature as a dramatic and visual art creates chances to combine disciplines, learning methods, and technologies to produce immersive learning experiences (Romanski 2019, 37). Karagoz shadow plays can depict religious principles, stories, Qur'an and hadith passages, and other religious narratives. Using words, gestures, music, and humour with this artistic tool can build a unique world of thoughts and help us convey things a theologian or philosopher might have trouble expressing (Herawati and Syarif 2019, 33).

The benefits of using shadow puppets in teaching religion

Suitable for student-centered pedagogy

Some approaches can be utilised to make puppet shows in the classroom. Puppet shows can be divided into three as formal, creative (Batchelder and Comer 1958) and semi-formal approaches. The first is teacher-centred, and the second is student-centred. In the formal approach, the teacher selects the most effective plays with puppets and displays them via the computer in the classroom. In the creative approach, the teacher asks pupils to think about a scenario, idea, or concept and create a puppet presentation. The best games for children are the ones they create and play themselves. In this process, many educational processes come into play (Luchs 1950, 351). In this approach, the teacher's guidance continues. So, the teacher can observe student and group traits and assist them in generating ideas (Jane and Confino 1972, 452). An example of the semi-formal approach is my first puppet show. In this approach, the teacher is more active. To some extent, the teacher tries to involve the students in the show. In my first puppet presentation, I wrote the text myself and played the puppet. I tried to ask students game-related questions. By having the children identify with the puppets, I hoped to make their learning more dynamic. Later, when I was training religious educators in Instructional Technologies and Material Development (Instructional Technologies) courses at the university, I used the creative approach continuously because students had better active, collaborative participation and learning outcomes. In the creative approach, shadow plays are designed as large or small group assignments. This design encourages student collaboration and active participation. A collaborative approach enables pupils to use everyone's

strengths. Who will do what in the team depends on individual strengths (Brown 2004, 51; Romanski 2019, 41). The project group learns by doing and collaborates actively. Setting up a question-and-answer session at the end of the performance is the final step in getting the audience involved.

Encourages creativity by stimulating critical thinking and imagination

On two levels, artistic instructional activities are effective. At the first level, it promotes critical thinking by enhancing students' knowledge and comprehension, thereby enabling them to think freely. The critical thinking stimulates pupils' sentiments and thoughts, as well as their imaginations. Imagination has the unique function of providing awareness of meaning beyond the cognitive (Backenroth, Epstein, and Miller 2006, 468). Thus, the creative process, which includes both emotional and cognitive thinking processes, occurs (Reingold 2015, 401). At the second level, students try to show their feelings and ideas to their classmates and other people by putting up their art projects. At this level, the discussion with the audience and the students' evaluations turned out to help students learn more deeply. If arts-based learning is central to religious instruction, it may contribute to the spontaneous development of ideas. But students are expected to think critically about art as a tool for understanding and learning about religion (Goldburg 2004a; Harris 1987), instead of just using art in a way that is interesting or funny. Thus, a puppetry-based class quickly engages pupils and stimulates their creativity, and they contribute to the creation of the 'other personality' (Levy 2002, 53). Students learn how powerful it is to say something new and different when they put on a puppet show to tell religious concepts, stories, and narratives.

Facilitates teaching of abstract concepts

Shadow puppets, which are an interdisciplinary educational tool, combine humour, music, and aesthetic vision with narratives. Dramatisation may help students learn permanently by activating emotions and concretising knowledge in a game-like atmosphere. The visual simplicity of shadow puppets without colour and in three dimensions makes it easier to comprehend the subtlety of little gestures by providing a greater understanding of the concepts (Jianping 2013, 1).

The religious stories told let the audience see how the puppet works by letting the actor see through the puppet. Music helps the audience pay attention to the story. Karagoz shadow plays have both speech and action-based humour. Karagoz's ignorance, lack of etiquette knowledge, inability to reason, mishearing words, unsophisticated thinking, and use of common terminology are humorous (Yenen Avcı 2020, 303–304). Karagoz beating Hacivat for no reason, Hacivat interrupting him, Karagoz saying things without thinking, etc., are all examples of action humour. Plays use powerful language with metaphors, idioms, and proverbs. Strong language and rebellious humour break up the daily system of norms and hierarchy and help the children relax by laughing out problems they see in themselves but subconsciously throw away (Yenen Avcı 2020, 303–304). The humorous presentation of the contrast and miscommunication between the characters (Chasan 2020, 55), enables students to reinforce abstract concepts and to better understand the message intended to be given in the game. Shadow puppets, which add humour to teaching, give an enjoyable environment to develop an inner space by modifying how students perceive religion. What is meant by making fun here is to play out situations against the constraints of religious doctrine and certainty (Herawati and Syarif 2019, 38–39). To summarise, humour shouldn't need an explanation because it ruins the humour. If making people laugh can be achieved by adding humour, art, music, poetry, painting, lessons, advice, and Sufism, then Karagöz will have achieved the value transfer expected from him (Günana 2016, 152).

Messages containing information, thoughts, feelings, and experiences can be transmitted verbally, in writing, or visually. Visual tools are more preferred for widely understanding the content. Besides, visual materials enable speedy communication. Visual symbols, images, and objects create

connotations because of their source, use value, exchange value, or the way they are produced. Puppet theatre uses exactly this visual grammar to convey what it wants to tell its audience. Whether the plays are verbal or nonverbal, the puppet itself is a form of visual expression. A puppet can come to the stage as a concrete reflection of a thought, an emotion, a philosophy, or an ideology, and it can affect the audience with an aesthetic effect beyond verbal transmission (İşinsu 2019, 114–117).

Provides meaningful and permanent learning by appealing to emotions

'The complexity of form in puppetry allows for play, discovery, imagination, problem-solving, brainstorming, collaboration, and innovation' (Romanski 2019, 42). Not only the puppeteers but also the audience are active in puppetry. The puppeteer and the audience form the puppet's personality. The puppeteer's voice, accent, and puppet movement are audience cues. Audiences use these cues to complete the illusion and envision the puppet. This situation provides a tremendous opportunity to awaken students' emotions by touching their hearts through a mutual flow of information, sentiments, and thoughts between puppets and the audience (Levy 2002, 53). Moreover, puppets can also help students who are even quarrelsome and mismatched (Jane and Confino 1972, 452) pay attention to lessons, get excited about puppet shows, and feel accepted and confident in themselves. Educators may wonder whether using puppetry as a teaching technique has lasting effects on learning. Based on my own and other religious educators' field experiences, it can be stated that the use of puppets (Levy 2002, 52) and other art-based religious education activities (Reingold 2016, 183) in the classroom helps children internalise and retain abstract religious ideas and concepts.

Implication

Religious educators and Islamic religious educators have been using different art forms in the classrooms. However, many may think that puppets are better suited for theatrical stages than for religious education classes. However, that is not the case at all. I first used puppets in 4th and 5th grade when I taught Religious Culture and Ethics at the Ministry of National Education. Whenever I used puppets in lessons, I observed that children pay attention, smile, look happier, learn better, and, at the end of the lesson, curiously ask, 'Will we do such things again?' As I remembered, my first puppet performance was a hand puppet about a grandmother and a girl discussing prayer. All the children had answered my question about prayer on the written roll, including those who had trouble concentrating. Also, it was obvious that most of the students liked writing with parentheses and remembered my puppet show. These observations led me to focus more on arts-based teaching activities in religious education. Later, when I was a lecturer at a university's chair of religious education, I thought that doing artistic lecture presentations with future religious educators was the best way to add more art-based teaching activities to religious education classes. Therefore, I encouraged future teachers to design art-based presentations in Instructional Technologies and Material Design. It inspired me to watch teacher candidates' conviction in the profession and the job they will do grow, and that they leave with a grin and self-confidence at the end of these courses. As a result of this inspiration, this study is based only on the presentations with shadow puppets from many of the art-based teaching activities we do in the lessons.

Karagoz shadow plays include high-quality arts and crafts like handicrafts, painting, music, and literature, as well as dramatisation, humour, and the authentic and powerful use of language (Chasan 2020, 32). Karagoz plays from today shouldn't be included in a traditional arts exhibition or to remember Ramadan. Karagoz plays should be included in schools at every stage of education as an aesthetic pedagogical tool, not merely to promote literary taste or humour (Öcal and Doğan 2015, 2). Puppets are generally used in social studies and language arts (Jane and Confino 1972, 452). A study found that Karagoz shadow plays can be utilised to teach foreigners Turkish and transmit Turkish culture. Science classes may use shadow plays. In an

experimental study, using Hacivat-Karagoz dialogues about the circulatory system in 6th grade Science and Technology lessons was beneficial (Öcal and Doğan 2015, 2–4). Puppets can also teach religion (Levy 2002) and moral values (Brown 2004, 52). Karagoz texts are a valuable source for teaching values in the 4th and 8th grades (Demir and Özdemir 2013, 57–70). Levy and a group of Jewish teachers, clergy, pastors, and non-religious people agreed that puppets are a good way to teach about religion (Levy 2002, 48).

Some teachers use puppets only with preschoolers. Levy recommends puppets for preschoolers and primary school students up to the 6th grade. He says that young people may think they're too old for puppet shows. Levy expresses that puppet shows, developed and performed by young people, might be used to educate younger children (Levy 2002, 56). I think puppets are good for all ages as long as the text and puppets are made for the student's age and cognition. In a way that supports my view, Brown noticed that after a puppet show, the younger students asked how puppets were made and the older students asked about what happened in the show (Brown 2004, 51). Some classroom puppet strategies were mentioned above. 'Semi-formal approach' can be from pre-school to the 3rd grade of primary school. The creative approach can be adopted in the 4th grade and after. Children at this age can prepare puppet shows under the teacher's direction since they can think abstractly and have mature manual skills. Middle and high schoolers can write and perform puppet plays. To give an objective grade for puppetry presentations, the teacher should use rating scales, and the students should use peer assessment.

I've given applied lectures in my religious educator training classes for four years. In these project-based courses, groups create presentations. Pre-service teachers with similar interests and abilities try to be in the same group to improve presentation quality. Each method and technique has a separate application. In the directive for shadow puppet performances, the working calendar is used to describe each step of the process. Steps include choosing the topic based on the religious education curriculum, doing research on the topic, writing a text, planning how the characters will be portrayed in the play, making the Karagoz scene, adjusting the light source, dubbing the characters, and practicing with them. Text authoring is the hardest and most significant part of this design. Students should read examples of Karagoz plays and watch videos to grasp the game's structure. Students generated impressive texts with the average organisation. I didn't interfere too much with what they wrote. This was important for students' self-confidence. I merely corrected spelling and grammar. The second difficulty was role selection. I advised students to choose roles related to their own characters and suitable for their tones of voice when sharing roles. We didn't interfere so groups might learn from each other. We guided the process when needed.

Quotations from some of the students' opinions about the process in the groups that wrote, performed, and performed Karagoz texts:

Meryem Hacer Genç: *The most fun part of this project for me was voicing Hacivat. Reading the curtain ghazal also felt very authentic. I learned by experiencing.* **Farmanur Yıldırım:** *'I would like to say it in one sentence: It was a great experience; I have never been involved in a project like this before.'* **Merve Aveder:** *This work was an adventure from start to finish. Thanks to this project, our sincerity with my group friends increased. While writing the text, we benefited from the ideas of faculty members from different branches. We wrote two plays called "Misunderstanding of the Verses". The plays we wrote were a bit long. However, those who watched the presentation said that they were not bored at all.'* **Yadigar Meşe:** *The feeling of producing something was very nice. My self-confidence increased.'* **Aslı Kaya:** *'I did a lot of rehearsals to voice the character of Laz. Even though it was a little difficult, I immersed myself in the accent. In the end, we put on very good shows.'*

In these classes, teachers-to-be kept giving presentations to their peers in class and getting feedback based on a holistic rubric. We wanted teachers-to-be to give presentations in an imaginary classroom before they went to their real classrooms. The presenting groups tried to present the lesson according to the specific grade level they had planned in advance. Audience teacher candidates focused on that level in thinking, speaking, and behaving according to the students' cognitive and affective levels.

Quotations from the opinions of some teacher candidates who attended these lessons, listened to, and evaluated the lesson about the shadow puppet show:

Ayşe: *“With the Karagöz play, I understood very well what the verses meant”. Demet:* *“I wish Tafsir lessons were always this artistic; I had fun and learned”. It’s great when a lesson leaves a student smiling’.* **Ali:** *‘When I become a teacher, I will teach with activities like these’. It’s actually very easy to make the teaching profession fun”.* **Ayşenur:** *‘If the lessons were this unforgettable in middle school and high school years, we would not be counting the minutes wondering when the lesson would end’.* **Raziye:** *‘I understood more the importance of small kindnesses to gain heaven’.* **Mehmet:** *‘I had heard many verses about heaven before. But I didn’t remember any of it. After this show, it was like heaven came to mind. Karagöz explained very well that doing good is the key to heaven’.*

After presenting in class, we encouraged groups to present in the great hall of faculty. Those who wanted to share their performances through educational media, social media, user-generated content, and internet communication were also encouraged. Photographs of the presentations are given in [Appendix I](#). These are just two of many art-based presentations made in these classes over the course of four years. The pre-service educator’s daily lesson plan and all Karagoz texts were too large to publish. The interested parties can request it from me. In these courses, it’s advised to use more than one teaching method and technique to reach more students. Basically, the subjects were managed with a different method and technique in the first 15 minutes of the lesson, and the puppet performances linked to the subject were given in the last 15–20 minutes of the lesson, before the evaluation phase.

Conclusion

This article discusses the use of shadow puppets, specifically Karagoz shadow puppets, to teach religious and moral values in Islam, utilising an art-based approach to religious education. Karagoz’s increasingly effective use of criticism and humour, along with its mystical aspect, may contribute to its greater effectiveness in religious education than other puppet varieties. The origin of shadow play can be traced back to religious and moral rituals. In this way, today, it can be utilised as an artistic pedagogical instrument in formal and non-formal education settings for the transfer of religious, moral, and cultural values.

Puppets solve many learning problems; however, it would be utopian to suggest they are the best classroom method. Generally, religious educators of Islam and other religions know it’s not enough to educate children and teens about religions’ history and core beliefs with traditional techniques. Teachers of religion want their students to learn and live by religious knowledge and values. To do this, teachers may use teaching methods and strategies that get students to feel something and touch their hearts. In this sense, puppets are quite an effective educational tool. However, puppets can’t save a poorly planned lesson. Pre-service teachers should know what, where, when, and why they’ll utilise it in classes. Besides, Using puppets may reduce teacher burnout at all education levels. Educators may perceive the fun in education, life, and faith by releasing their childlike side through puppetry (Levy 2002, 53–54).

Recommendations

Some education ministries around the world use puppets in public instruction (Jane and Confino 1972, 455). In this way, instructional shadow puppet projects can be designed to improve school, parent (Jane and Confino 1972, 455) and neighbourhood ties. In conjunction with the faculties of theology and fine arts, teacher candidates can take puppetry workshops or in-service seminars. This helps religious instructors who may use shadow puppets in their classrooms. Moreover, it may be conceivable to open puppet masters’ programmes to teachers. Shadow play associations can be formed to preserve traditional shadow theatre and assure its use in schools. These associations may sustain scientific symposiums, workshops, festivals, etc. More shadow play publications should be printed and digitalised. If Karagoz continues to be used as an educational tool in schools, it can contribute to the training of future Karagoz game designers and cultural transmitters to the future

(Chasan 2020, 89–90). Karagoz shadow puppet is defined as an intangible heritage because it is difficult to preserve (Piman, Talib, and Osman 2015, 231). People no longer remember shadow Theatre because cultural traditions are being lost and people like to watch TV, movies, etc. Shadow plays could be saved from dying out by being turned into interactive digital media (Jianping 2013, 2). Analysing the typology of shadow plays will help comprehend the types of performances without disrupting the traditional method and form, and to combine them with current technologies (Özcan 2002, 25; Ramli and Lugiman 2012, 359). Instead of digital puppet games controlled by the app, interactive shadow plays that let kids construct stories and control puppets in real-time should be created (Piman, Talib, and Osman 2015, 231). This will increase their interest in traditional art, make them appreciate their ancestors and heritage, and keep this legacy alive.

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Notes on contributor

Yasemin Güleç has worked in the field as a religious educator at the primary, secondary, and high school education levels for many years. She is currently a faculty member at Hacı Bektaş Veli University, Faculty of Theology. He has studied religious education, moral education, and human values.

ORCID

Yasemin Güleç  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8843-3270>

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Appendix I

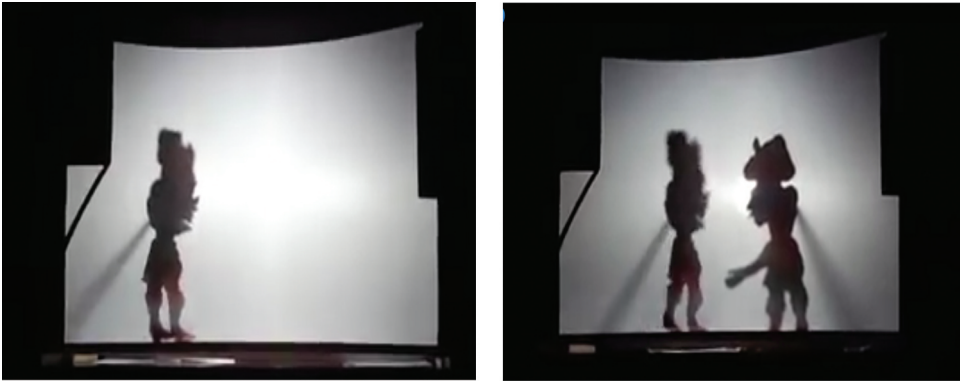


Figure A1. Playing shadow puppets and back view of the stage. 7th grade, religious culture, and moral knowledge course, belief in the afterlife unit/effect of belief in the hereafter on human behaviour, in the representation of 'roads to heaven', Fatma Nur Yıldırım played Karagoz, and Meryem Hacer Genç played Hacivat.

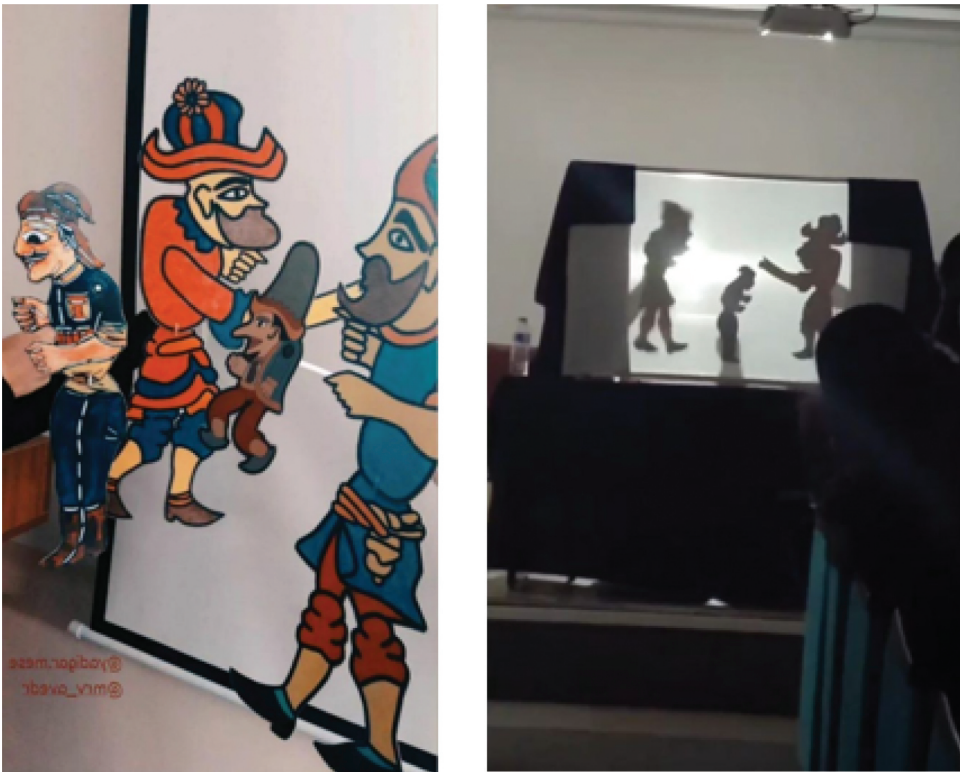


Figure A2. Shadow play characters and scenes. 11th grade, Tafsir/comprehending and interpreting the quran. 'Misunderstanding the verses'. Aslı Kaya played Laz, Merve Aveder played Karagoz, and Yadigar Meşe played Hacivat.