

# Hikâye and dastan : Turkish and Turkic epic traditions

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## Résumé

Titre français : *Hikâye et dastan : Traditions épiques des Turcs de Turquie et d'Asie Centrale* Le genre de poésie narrative qui est appelé 'épopée' dans la théorie littéraire occidentale, partage un air de famille avec le genre de la *hikâye* en Turquie et avec le genre désigné par le mot *dastan* dans diverses langues turques. Ces genres comprennent l'épopée héroïque et le roman d'amour et d'aventures. Comme exemple d'épopée héroïque le *dastan* ouzbek *Alpâmish* est présenté. Le 'roman d'amour' est illustré par le conte de *Şah İsmail* dans un hikâye turc et un dastan du Khorāsān iranien. Le cycle de *Köroğlu* (ou *Goroğlı*) est examiné comme exemple de variation entre épopée héroïque et roman d'aventures. Ce cycle est répandu parmi les Turcs de Turquie et d'Asie Centrale, mais aussi parmi les Tadjiks. En conclusion, on proposera l'idée d'un 'espace épique' composé des nombreuses traditions épiques turques et turciques du Moyen-Orient et d'Asie Centrale.

## Abstract

The kind of narrative poetry called 'epic' in western literary theory has a 'family resemblance' to what is designated *hikâye* in Turkish and *dastan* in other Turkic languages, genres that comprise both heroic epics and love and adventure romances. As a representative of the heroic epic of the Turkic peoples of Central Asia, the Uzbek dastan *Alpâmish* is discussed. The genre of the love romance is illustrated by the Turkish hikâye *Şah İsmail* in comparison to a dastan on the same topic from Iranian Khorasan. The variations between heroic epic and adventure romance are examined with reference to the *Köroğlu* (*Goroğlı*) cycle, a cycle not only found in Turkey and Turkic Central Asia, but also among the Tajiks. In conclusion, it is argued that the various types of oral epics and romances discussed define an 'epic space' that comprises a sizeable group of Turkic epic traditions of both the Middle East and Central Asia.

## Texte intégral

The Hungarian folklorist and turkologist Ignaz Kúnos begins his preface to a collection of Turkish folk literature from 1899 with the words : "The popular poetry (*Volkspoesie*) of the Ottoman Turks, as well as the spoken vernacular (*Volkssprache*), have remained unknown to us up to the most recent past."<sup>1</sup> Kúnos edited volume eight of Wilhelm Radloff's monumental ten-volume *Specimens of the Popular Literature of the Turkic Tribes*.<sup>2</sup> Kúnos explains why popular poetry together with the language spoken by the people was widely neglected and looked down upon by literate Turks. Ottoman Turkish was a polished literary language, whose lexicon, phraseology and syntax had been highly influenced by Persian and Arabic. This led to a diglossic situation, where the *Volkssprache* could not aspire to the status of an urbane written language. Similarly, Ottoman poetry was composed in the quantitative metres and poetic forms of Persian-Arabic classical poetry, compared with which the *Volkspoesie* was seen as a very poor and unsophisticated relative.

Kúnos collected his material in 1889 and 1890 in various areas of Anatolia ; it comprises folksongs, the librettos of folk plays (the shadow theater *Karagöz*), and two types of narratives : folktales, including humorous tales, and a genre called *hikâye*. The hikâye (from Arabic *ḥikāya* 'tale') is a narrative in verse and prose. It is typically performed by the Turkish minstrel (called *saz şairi*, 'saz singer/poet', or *halk şairi*, 'folk singer/poet'), who recites the prose parts and sings the verse passages to the accompaniment of a plucked string instrument, generally from the *saz* family.<sup>3</sup> The fact that the hikâyes are traditionally performed by a minstrel underlines their oral nature. This does not exclude their parallel circulation in written form, for instance as chapbooks, nor, in some cases, their ultimate origin in written literature.<sup>4</sup> The epic repertoire of the other Turkic peoples discussed here is also basically oral – in performance, circulation, and composition – , although, as with the hikâye, orality and literacy have often crossed paths, in some traditions frequently, in others only rarely.

Kúnos refers to the hikâye by the German term *Volksroman*, a term that stresses the popular nature of the genre (*Volk*) and qualifies it as an extended narrative (*Roman*). It differs from the folktale (*Volksmärchen*) in its narrative structure and especially in its prosimetric form.<sup>5</sup> Although folktales often incorporate verses, they are not in the same way consistently composed in a mixture of verse and prose. Kúnos published two subgenres of the hikâye, the first represented by the tale of *Köroğlu*, and the second by the hikâye of *Şah İsmail*.<sup>6</sup> Native genre terminology does not differentiate between these two subgenres. They show, however, significant differences, and scholars have felt the need for terminological distinctions. Pertev Naili Boratav classifies *Köroğlu* as an *épopée 'historique'* and hikâyes such as *Şah İsmail* as *épopées lyriques*. As will be discussed below, by *lyrique* Boratav underlines the presence of lyrical passages in these works. His qualification 'historical' is explained by his definition of the genre : *Par genre épique, nous entendons la narration de grande dimension où l' "historique" et le "merveilleux" prédominent ensemble, ce qui la distingue (avec la forme d'expression et le style qui lui sont propres) du conte et de la poésie lyrique.*<sup>7</sup> Boratav is uneasy about the term *épopée*, arguing that the term 'epic' should be reserved for extended narratives in verse only. This is the general understanding of the genre term 'epic' in western literary criticism, taking its cue from the Homeric poems and from Aristotle's reflections on the epic in his *Poetics*. Boratav's uneasiness is justified with regard to the Turkish hikâye. It can, however, be partially allayed when looking at related narrative traditions in other Turkic languages.<sup>8</sup>

In other Turkic epic traditions we find a similar bipartition into *épopées 'historiques'* and *épopées lyriques*, but with different designations. In Azeri the term corresponding to Turkish *hikâye* is *dastan*, a word derived from Persian *dastān* (also *dāstān*), 'tale'. It is used both in Azerbaijan and among the Azerbaijanians of Iran.<sup>9</sup> Looking further afield, we find this term also in Turkmen (*dessan*), Uzbek (*doston*) and Uighur (*dastan*) folklore, with the same generic characteristics, the same kinds of plots, even the same stories. The term *dastan* is also used by the Tatars and, among other genre terms, by the Kazakhs. The Karakalpaks, a Turkic-speaking ethnic group living on the shores of the lower Amu-Darya and the Aral Sea in Uzbekistan, also use the term *dastan*. Here we find two types of epic singers, of which one is the *jiraw*, who uses a bowed accompanying instrument (*qobız*), and the other the *baqsı*, who accompanies his singing with a plucked instrument (*dutar*). Both types of singers perform what they call dastans, but only in the *baqsı*'s repertoire are 'lyrical dastans', while the *jiraw* performs dastans on heroic themes, which on the basis of their content, conception and narrative breadth can be called 'heroic epics'.

### ***Alpāmish* and the heroic epic**

A short example will have to suffice. The Karakalpak dastans performed by the *jiraw* are like other dastans generally in a mixture of verse and prose. For a number of dastans, however, there are also versions in verse only. Eight versions of *Alpamis*, for instance, were edited (or re-edited) in 2007, of which seven are prosimetric, one, by Kāram-jiraw Nağıymov, in verse only. Kāram-jiraw's version comprises over 10,000 verse lines. Some of the other versions have similarly large verse passages, but also have prose narrative.<sup>10</sup> Kāram-jiraw's version of *Qoblan* is in verse only, while the version I have twice recorded from Jumabay-jiraw Bazarov is like that of his teacher, Esemurat-jiraw Nurabullaev, composed in a mixture of verse and prose. When comparing prosimetric dastans with their equivalents in verse only, we notice that the basic nature of the dastan is the same. The use of prose allows the singer to conflate the tale in order to speed up the performance. It also eases the strain of singing and allows a freer manner of telling the story. In my recordings of Karakalpak dastans, the singer regularly converted passages into prose in one telling, but might sing them in verse in another, and vice versa.<sup>11</sup> This variation between verse and prose in one version and verse only in another version of the same dastan is also common in other Turkic traditions. The majority of the Kazakh versions of this dastan are in in verse and prose (with generally substantial verse

portions), but occasionally in verse only, as in Äbdirayım Baytursin-uli's *Alpamis* (over 4,000 verse-lines).<sup>12</sup> The Uzbek versions of *Alpāmish* (as the epic is called in Uzbek) are all in a mixture of verse and prose. Some of these have substantial verse passages ; Fāzil Yoldāsh-oġli's *Alpāmish* has over 14,000 verse lines, as has a recently edited version of the dastan by the still living singer Abdunazar Pāyānov.<sup>13</sup>

In these and similar cases, the difference between a dastan in verse and a dastan in prose does not imply a generic difference. A dastan like *Alpāmish/Alpamis* is usually considered an epic, or more narrowly a heroic epic. Although there are good reasons for this, all of them depend on certain assumptions about the genre of epic. These assumptions are in many cases ambiguous or can at least be interpreted in different ways. The literary critic Albert Thibaudet vividly expressed both the necessity and the frustrations of defining literary genres in his *Physiologie de la Critique* of 1930 :

Celui qui ne se pose pas le problème des genres n'est pas plus un critique que n'est un philosophe celui qui ne se pose pas le problème des Idées. Et avoir le génie philosophique et le génie critique, ce n'est pas se poser ces problèmes une fois dans sa vie, c'est vivre avec eux (j'allais dire coucher avec eux) sans jamais les résoudre tout à fait, jamais les épuiser.<sup>14</sup>

Since then genre theory has continued to trouble critical minds, with some progress achieved, however, through casting a wider net by including folklore genres and by devising new taxonomies.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, the literary critic has to live with the fact that no definition of the epic, and in consequence also of the heroic epic, will ever meet with universal approval. Some scholars have therefore opted for a fairly general characterization. C. M. Bowra in his works on Homer, on the literary epic from Virgil to Milton and on heroic poetry in a wide range of traditions far beyond the European cultural sphere, has, despite his awareness of nuances and ramifications, upheld a somewhat simplified Aristotelian position :

An epic poem is by common consent a narrative of some length and deals with events which have a certain grandeur and importance and come from a life of action, especially of violent actions such as war. It gives a special pleasure because its events and persons enhance our belief in the worth of human achievement and in the dignity and nobility of man.<sup>16</sup>

The classicist J. B. Hainsworth quotes Bowra's characterization in his book entitled *The Idea of Epic* and builds on it an argumentation that is similarly Aristotelian in orientation :

What determines that storytelling leads in the direction of the epic is the emergence of a certain idea, the idea of heroic action. The greater the scale on which circumstances permit him to work, the more easily can the poet expand heroic poetry so as to give expression to the qualities of mind that fit the hero to perform great deeds.<sup>17</sup>

Both Bowra and Hainsworth underline the importance of "a life of action", of "violent actions" and "heroic action" for the definition of the heroic epic.<sup>18</sup> A reader of the dastan of *Alpāmish* in Uzbek (or of *Alpamis* in Karakalpak and Kazakh) will recognize all the traits of an epic hero in the main protagonist.<sup>19</sup>

*Alpāmish* consists of two parts, a bridal quest and a return story. In the first part the hero Alpāmish is betrothed to the beautiful Barchin while still in the cradle by the children's fathers, two tribal leaders. Barchin's father, however, has a quarrel with Alpāmish's father and moves with his clan and tribesmen to the land of the Kalmucks. Here Barchin is courted by Kalmuck suitors (seven brothers), but she stipulates that her future husband will have to come out winner in a horse race, a bow shooting contest, a wrestling match and a marksman competition. She manages to send a message to Alpāmish, who arrives in time and wins all contests. In the horse race he is helped by one of the Kalmuck suitors, Qārajān, who had become Alpāmish's blood-brother after he had been urged in a dream to convert to

Islam. After their marriage, Barchin and Alpāmish return home together with their tribesmen and Qārajān. Only Barchin's father stays behind, as he cannot forget the quarrel that had led to the estrangement.

When the news of the oppression to which his father-in-law is subjected reaches Alpāmish, he departs to fight against the Kalmucks. On entering Kalmuck territory he is, however, made drunk by a cunning witch, the mother of the rejected Kalmuck suitors, bound and thrown into an underground dungeon. During his captivity in a hole in the ground covered by iron bars, Alpāmish is befriended by a shepherd, who gives him food and is the means by which the Kalmuck khan's daughter sees the prisoner and falls in love with him. Alpāmish is able to send a message to his family in the form of a letter carried by a wild goose. Although this leads to Qārajān's attempt to rescue his friend, Alpāmish gets is freed in the end with the help of the Kalmuck khan's daughter. She brings Alpāmish's horse to the iron grid of the dungeon, and as the horse's tail lengthens miraculously to reach down to the bottom of the hole, Alpāmish is able to climb out. Before he returns home, he defeats the Kalmucks in a fierce battle, kills the Kalmuck khan, makes the faithful shepherd khan and gives him the khan's daughter in marriage.

After seven years of imprisonment, Alpāmish returns home to a land where his parents and his son, born after his departure, are oppressed by Ultāntāz. Ultāntāz is the son of Alpāmish's father by a slave girl and is about to force Barchin into marriage. Alpāmish arrives as the wedding feast is already in progress. He is informed about the state of affairs by a faithful servant, who recognizes him by a mark on his shoulder, and exchanges clothes with him. Alpāmish appears at the feast in the servant's garb and to the amazement of the bystanders flexes his grandfather's mighty bow in an archery contest. He then takes part in the traditional wedding song singing and also exchanges wedding songs with Barchin, who convinces him of her fidelity. Then he reveals his identity, punishes the oppressor and is reunited with his wife and family and also with his friend Qārajān. Barchin's father returns from the land of the Kalmucks and Alpāmish's tribe is once again united in peace.

Alpāmish's bride-winning expedition with the obligatory suitor contests in the first part places the dastan in a wide group of narratives, many of them of a heroic bent.<sup>20</sup> As to the second part, the most notable parallel to *Alpāmish* is the return of Odysseus. The motif of the husband or bridegroom returning just in time before his wife or bride is forced to marry another man is widely spread in folktales, romances, epics and other types of narrative. The return from captivity, often coupled with the testing of wife or bride left at home, is also a powerful pattern found in a number of ballads and narrative songs.<sup>21</sup> What is surprising in the dastan, however, are the close correspondences between *Alpāmish* and the *Odyssey*. His recognition by a faithful servant by a mark on his body is only one of them. Viktor Zhirmunsky pointed these similarities out long ago ; they hold not just for the Uzbek, but also for other versions of the dastan.<sup>22</sup>

*Alpāmish* is a store house of motifs that are widespread in a large group of narrative traditions. The hero and heroine of the dastan are miraculously conceived through the help of a holy man, the initial motif of a great number of hikāyes and dastans. The holy man appears also at the name-giving ceremony, and he and other saints and guardian spirits assist the hero at critical moments. This supernatural help does not, however, blemish the hero : his extraordinary valour and daring are amply demonstrated, but despite miraculous elements in the story, a certain realism pervades the narrative and shows the hero as human and hence subject to limitations.

Another miraculous element found in *Alpāmish* is the occurrence of dreams. There is an episode in which the hero spends a night in a graveyard in the company of the forty *chiltan* (saints of popular Islam), who welcome Alpāmish as the follower of the Caliph ʿAlī and effect by their powers that Alpāmish dreams of Barchin, while Barchin dreams at the same time of Alpāmish.<sup>23</sup> Dreams, especially between lovers,

play an important role in the *épopées lyriques* (see below), but also, for instance, in the *Odyssey*.<sup>24</sup> Another constitutive motif of the dastan is Alpāmish's sending a bird with a letter to his family. A wounded wild goose had fallen through the grid of his dungeon ; Alpāmish heals the bird and uses it as a messenger. This episode conforms to an international folklore motif ; it strikes a chord with readers of the Welsh *Mabinogion*, where in the 'Tale of Branwen Daughter of Llyr', Branwen sends a sparrow with a moving message about her misfortunes to her brother.<sup>25</sup> It is also found in the Uzbek dastan *Rawshan* (see below). – The examples given are only a small selection of the motifs structuring the dastan ; they will have to suffice in this context.

There is, however, one further point that must be mentioned. It concerns the larger historical frame in which the dastan stands. The arch-enemies of the Turkic tribes in the dastan are the Kalmucks. The Kalmucks are also called Oirat, a federation of four western Mongol tribes, of which the Dzungars played a leading role in their attacks on the Central Asian Turks, in particular the Kazakhs and Kirghiz. Although Oirat incursions began in the 16th century, most of the battles occurred in the latter half of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th century. The Kazakh defeat of 1723 was remembered as 'The Great Calamity'. These historical events explain why the Kalmucks are the typical enemies of the Central Asian Turks in their dastans. As they are non-Muslims, they are reviled as pagans, not unlike – with reversed roles – the way the Saracens are seen by the Christians in the *chansons de geste*. The Kalmucks are the aggressors in Central Asian dastans ; by fighting against them the hero exhibits not only his physical prowess and martial skills, but rises to the role of a defender of his clan and tribe. It is noteworthy, however, that the hero's best friend can be a converted infidel, such as Qārajān in *Alpāmish* or Almambet in *Manas*.

It has been shown that in a number of Central Asian dastans the Kalmucks as enemies represent a later stratum in the historical development of the dastan. This is also the case in *Alpāmish*. A very close parallel to the dastan is found in a tale that antedates the Kalmuck incursions by several centuries. In the 'Tale of Bamsı Beyrek' in the *Book of Dede Korkut* we have the earliest documented form of the *Alpomish* dastan. The collection of prosimetric tales known as the *Book of Dede Korkut* has been transmitted in two manuscripts from the early 16th century, to which a third manuscript of much later date was added in 2018.<sup>26</sup> It has been argued, mostly on linguistic evidence, that the text of the two older manuscripts goes back to the 14th or 15th century, and it has been suggested that at least some tales of the *Book of Dede Korkut* reached Anatolia with the migration of Turkic tribes from Central Asia from the 11th century onwards.<sup>27</sup> The plot of the 'Tale of Bamsı Beyrek' parallels that of *Alpāmish*, with the exception that Beyrek and his companions are attacked on the night of the wedding feast by the king of Bayburt's men and are taken prisoner. While in prison, a rival spreads the rumour that Beyrek has died and is promised the hand of Beyrek's bride. When Beyrek hears of this, he escapes from prison with the help of the king of Bayburt's daughter and reaches home just in time before the marriage is performed. The events at the wedding feast agree with those told in *Alpāmish*. At the end, the traitor is punished, Bayburt is pillaged, the king of the infidels killed, and Bamsı Beyrek marries his bride – and also the girl who has helped him to escape. As is to be expected, the tales of the *Book of Dede Korkut* have undergone modifications over the course of time. The role of the infidel (i.e. Christian) king of Bayburt and his men in the 'Tale of Bamsı Beyrek' is transferred onto the Kalmucks in *Alpāmish* and other Central Asian versions of this dastan. The 'Tale of Bamsı Beyrek' is still to be found in the folklore of Turkey. Pertev Naili Boratav has edited a number of texts, of which one is a hikâye told by an Armenian from Beyşehir in 1934.<sup>28</sup> It agrees in its story-line, but also in a number of details, with the 'Tale of Bamsı Beyrek' and hence also with *Alpāmish*. The hikâye begins with the motif of the childless couple and their getting a son through the help of a dervish. Bey Böyrek performs several feats to prove his manhood and is successful in a bride-winning expedition. Before his marriage, however, Bey Böyrek fights against the Kral (king) and becomes a captive. He comes free with the help of the Kral's daughter Selvinaz, returns to the wedding feast, where he shoots with his



mighty bow, is recognized by his father and his bride, punishes the traitor and marries his bride and, as in the 'Tale of Bamsı Beyrek', the girl who helped him escape.

Even this short sketch of *Alpāmish* leaves little doubt that this dastan conforms to what is generally understood to be a heroic epic. Not surprisingly, the Uzbek dastan is repeatedly referred to in C. M. Bowra's comprehensive study of heroic poetry. Closest to the Central Asian heroic epic among Turkish minstrel tales is the cycle of hikâyes about the adventures of Koroğlu and his companions. The Turkish hikâyes of the Koroğlu cycle show, however, a number of characteristics that make their classification as heroic epics problematic. Before addressing these problems, I would like to turn first to Boratav's second subgenre of the hikâye, the *épopée lyrique*.

### **Şah İsmail as romance**

The *épopée lyrique* is represented in Kúnos' edition of Turkish hikâyes by the full text of *Şah İsmail*. I will begin with a short summary of the plot.<sup>29</sup>

In Kandahar lives a khan, who is without child. In his sorrow, he encounters a dervish, who gives him an apple and admonishes him to share the apple with his wife and to give the peel to his mare. His wife becomes pregnant and gives birth to a son, while at the same time the khan's mare foals. The foal is called Kamer Tay, and the boy is named Şah İsmail by the dervish. When one day the youth rides out hunting and pursues a gazelle he encounters a nomadic (Türkmen) encampment. He falls in love with the Türkmen girl Gülizar, who had dreamt of him and requites his love. She gives him her comb as a token of love. Şah İsmail falls into love sickness, but is healed when a wedding is arranged. The girl's mother is against this and persuades her husband to decamp and move away to Hint (India). Şah İsmail is desperate and departs on a search for his beloved. On his journey he encounters a beautiful girl by the name of Gülperi, who employs him to help her brothers in their fight against demons. Şah İsmail defeats the demons and is given Gülperi in marriage by her brothers. After the wedding Şah İsmail continues his search for Gülizar. On his journey he has to fight against a dark-skinned knight, Arabüzengi, whom he overcomes and who turns out to be a beautiful girl in disguise. She had vowed only to marry the man who defeats her. Şah İsmail takes Arabüzengi as his second wife and reaches, together with her, the town of Hint. Here he hears that Gülizar is about to be married. An old woman shows Gülizar the comb Şah İsmail had brought with him : she recognizes the love-token and flees with her lover. On their way back to Kandahar, more dangers are overcome, mainly with Arabüzengi's help. When Şah İsmail finally reaches his home, new trials and tribulations await him. In the end, however, all obstacles are surmounted and Şah İsmail ascends the throne and lives happily with his three wives.

The story is composed of a number of motives and narrative schemata, some of which are familiar from *Alpāmish* as summarized above : the childless couple, the miraculous intervention of a dervish or saint, the appearance of the loved person in a dream, and the hero's timely arrival at his bride's marriage to a rival. The plot of the hikâye develops in a few basic steps : hero and heroine fall in love, they are separated, the hero overcomes a series of obstacles on his search for his beloved and is finally reunited with her. Different hikâyes with two lovers as protagonists follow the same basic model, with varying adventures and tasks to complete before a happy end can be reached. There are, however, also hikâyes with a tragic ending, such as *Kerem and Aslı* or *Ferhat and Şirin*.<sup>30</sup> In these hikâyes the hero generally commands the skills of a minstrel or *âşık*, or even becomes a minstrel himself in the course of his adventures and wanderings, as in *Âşık Garip*. The Turkish word for minstrel and folk poet, *âşık*, an Arabic loan-word, has both secular and spiritual associations. These hikâyes, with the figure of the *âşık* in the centre, form a separate subgroup of the *épopées lyriques*.<sup>31</sup> As the heroine is also adept at singing and playing the lute (*saz*), the lovers hold dialogues and monologues in the form of songs. The text printed by Kúnos has 18 verse passages, comprising together 318

lines. The poems/songs consist of four-line stanzas, in lines of eight or eleven syllables the shortest songs have three stanzas, the longest eight.

The story of Şah İsmail and Gülizar (and his other two wives) is also known in Azerbaijanian, Khorasan Turkish and Kurdish versions. The Kurdish texts are in the form of folktales, while the Azeri and Khorasan Turkish dastans are comparable to the Turkish hikaye in their length and mixture of verse and prose.<sup>32</sup> Ameneh Youssefzadeh and Stephen Blum have recently edited, translated and studied a version of *Şah İsmail* recorded in Khorasan, Iran, from a singer who sang the verse passages in Khorasan Turkish and told the story in Persian.<sup>33</sup> This bilingual performance, together with the fact that the tale circulates both in a Turkic-speaking and in a Persian or Kurdish-speaking milieu, demonstrates the close interaction between the Turkic and Iranian narrative traditions.

Other 'lyrical epics' of the group to which *Şah İsmail* belongs have an even wider circulation. *Tahir and Zühre*, to take just one other example, is documented in Turkish, Azeri, Türkmen, Uzbek, Uighur, Kazakh, Kazan Tatar, Crimean Tatar, Dobrudja Tatar, and Bashkir. It is a love story with a tragic end. The two lovers are promised to each other as children, but cruelly separated. Tahir has to endure many hardships, but his and Zühre's love are constant and they profess their love in songs and poems. As in *Alpāmish*, Tahir manages to arrive at Zühre's forced wedding and, although disguised, is recognized by her through his songs. Tahir is, however, betrayed and is sentenced to death. He can only save his life if he is able to sing three stanzas without mentioning Zühre. He manages two, but when he sees Zühre, he is unable to refrain from expressing his love for her in the third stanza. Zühre dies of grief when Tahir is killed. This is the ending of many known versions, but hikayes and dastans with a happy end have also been transmitted.<sup>34</sup> This story was circulated in printed versions, for example as Turkish chapbooks or late 19th-century/ early 20th-century editions printed in Kazan.<sup>35</sup>

Scholars studying hikâyes and dastans of the type illustrated by *Şah İsmail* and *Tahir and Zühre* use the terms 'love dastans' (Kazakh *ğashıqtıq dastanlar*, Uzbek *romanik dāstānlar*, Uighur *muhabbat dastanliri*, Russian *romaničeskij épos*) and 'lyrical epics' (Karakalpak *liröepos*, Russian *liričeskij épos*).<sup>36</sup> Other terms are also used. In Kazakh 'love dastan' designates lyrical epics such as *Tahir and Zühre*, which circulated from Anatolia to Xinjiang, while for love epics of Kazakh origin, such as *Qız Jibek*, 'The girl Jibek (silk)', the term *jır* is preferred. Both types of love epics are as a rule in verse only and several thousand lines long. Sometimes a distinction is made between love epics taking their plots from folklore and those originating in written poetry ; for the latter the genre label *qissa* (from Arabic *qisṣa*, 'tale') is found. No designation system is entirely consistent. The Turkish folklorist İlhan Başgöz uses the term 'romance' for the Turkish hikâye.<sup>37</sup> This includes not only lyrical hikâyes, focusing on love, but also adventure stories and the cycle of tales centering on Köroğlu and his companions. The term 'romance' is not as unambiguous as one would wish, but it recommends itself by its wide acceptance in English as a genre term. More than a hundred years ago W. P. Ker argued for a basic distinction between epic and romance for medieval literature. Ker saw as typical representatives of the epic the *chansons de geste* and works such as the Old English *Beowulf* or the Middle High German *Nibelungenlied*, while he classified medieval narratives about the adventures of knights, love intrigues, courtly quests or wondrous and awe-inspiring deeds as romances.<sup>38</sup> The term 'romance' is not restricted to western medieval literature ; it has been successfully applied to the tales of *Arabic Nights* or to medieval Persian works such as *Vīs-u Rāmīn* (Vīs and Rāmīn) or Niẓāmī's *Khusrau va Shīrīn*.<sup>39</sup> Romances are defined by content rather than form ; they can be in verse, in a mixture of verse and prose or in prose, both plain and *sajʿ* (rhymed prose). The dichotomy of epic and romance has fuzzy edges and there are many cases of overlap and controversial attribution, but it provides a rough guide to subdivisions in the genres of hikâye and dastan.

### ***Köroğlu/ Goroqli* : Adventure romance and heroic epic**

While a dastan like *Alpāmish* can confidently be called a heroic epic and a hikâye or

dastan like *Şah İsmail* meets all the qualifications of a love romance or a lyrical dastan, Kúnos' *Köroğlu* is neither a heroic epic nor a love romance. Alexander Chodzko, who published an English translation of an Azerbaijanian version of the cycle in 1845, called the hero of the cycle of tales a bandit.<sup>40</sup> There seems to be good reason for this. In the Turkish versions Köroğlu's father is the horse groom of the bey of Bolu. When he one day brings what seem to be unpromising foals to the bey, the bey in his anger blinds and dismisses his faithful servant. His son changes his name to 'son of the blind man' and, when of age, becomes an outlaw. Köroğlu establishes himself with a group of companions on a mountain pass, from where he attacks passing caravans to extort a road toll. In the version edited by Kúnos, we read :

[...] bunlar haramilik edüp çok adamı helak edeplerdi ve gelüp geçenlerden yol bacı alırdı.<sup>41</sup>

They [Köroğlu and his companions] committed robberies, killed many men and levied a road toll from those who passed by.

The Turkish storyteller Behçet Mahir, however, whose comprehensive version of the hikâye was recorded in Erzurum in 1958, mitigates this statement :

Köroğlu devletimiz, padişahımız Sultan Murat mekandan aldığı ferman üzerine, kırkda bir paç alırdı bezirganlardan, fukaraya bahşederdi. O zamanın devri devranı, gelen devrişhanların elindeki keşküllerine sadaka verirdi Köroğlu. İşte, bu sebepten Köroğlu'nun verdiği sakaveti, devrişer dilinde, fukaralar dilinde, Köroğlu her vilayette dillere destan olmuştu. Neyi ? Yiğitliği ile bir de mertliği.<sup>42</sup>

On the authority of a ferman, received from our government, from our padishah Sultan Murat, Köroğlu exacted from merchants a toll of one fortieth and donated it to the dervishes. In those times, Köroğlu put alms into the alms bowl the visiting dervishes held in their hands. Now, because of this, the generosity that Köroğlu showed was praised by the dervishes, by the wandering beggars ; Köroğlu became legendary in every province. What ? His courage and his bravery !

The Turkish cycle of tales about Köroğlu presents a many-faceted picture of the hero, who is involved in a great number of adventures and exploits, which comprise deeds of daring and heroism, abductions and robberies, bridal quests, and also humorous incidents. This cycle is widely spread in the Turkic-speaking world : versions of the cycle have not only been written down in Turkish, but also in Azerbaijanian, Turkmen, Uzbek, Karakalpak, Kazakh, Uighur and some other Turkic languages. In addition the cycle has also circulated in non-Turkic languages, among them Armenian, Georgian and Tajik.<sup>43</sup> Given this wide diffusion, differences between different versions are to be expected. A rough classification into western and eastern versions has been proposed ; it is basically correct, but shows on closer analysis some overlap. The Turkish cycle belongs to the group of western versions, where the main hero is called Köroğlu, 'the son of the blind man', while for instance the Uzbek cycle belongs to the group of eastern versions, where the main protagonist is called Göroğli or Goroğli, 'the son of the grave'. The hero receives his name in the western versions from the fact that his father has been blinded (*kör*, from Persian *kur*, 'blind'), while he gets his name in the eastern versions on account of his birth in his mother's grave (*gör* or *gor*, from Persian *gur*, 'grave').<sup>44</sup> In addition to a different initial story which explains the hero's name, the eastern versions, in particular the Uzbek cycle of dastans, enlarge and modify the narrative considerably.

In one of the Uzbek versions, the hero's father Rawshan-bek, a Turkmen, is, together with other Turkmens, taken prisoner by Khan Shāhdār. In captivity he falls in love with a fellow-captive, the beautiful Bibi Hilāl, and marries her. He advances to the post of horse groom, but when the khan is displeased with Rawshan's praise of an unsightly horse, he has him blinded. Rawshan flees back to his tribe, leaving Bibi Hilāl behind. She is expecting and dies shortly before the child is born. A boy is



born in her grave, first suckled by a mare and then raised by the horse herd Rustam. The boy is called Goroġli ; he later rejoins his tribe and gathers a group of young men around him to form a band of warriors.<sup>45</sup> Here, as in the Turkmen versions, the motifs of blinding and birth in the grave are combined. In other eastern versions, as for instance in the Uighur dastans, the blinding motif is missing.

Two features are characteristic of the Uzbek versions. One is the scope of the cycle. About sixty dastans, not counting variant versions, have been written down from Uzbek epic singers, which treat of various episodes in Goroġli's life from his birth in his mother's grave to his death, but also of the adventures of his adopted sons Hasan and Avaz, of his grandsons Rawshan and Nurali and his great-grandson Jahāngir. The second is that the adventures of an outlaw and his warrior band as told in the Turkish and Azerbaijanian versions, is replaced by a grander setting, resembling a feudal court rather than an outlaw's refuge :

The Uzbek Gorogli is not a 'noble bandit', but the Bek of the Turkmens and Uzbeks, of noble birth, ruler of the city and the land of Chambil, similar to the famous rulers of epic provenance — Charlemagne, King Arthur, Prince Vladimir of Kiev, the Kirghiz Manas or the Kalmuck Jangar. He is a wise and powerful sovereign and epic hero as well, the protector of his people against foreign invaders, alien khans and beks.<sup>46</sup>

This conception of the hero and his warrior band is reflected in the variety represented by the different branches of the cycle and in the extended scope of the individual dastans. In Uzbek, as in Turkmen, these dastans are in verse and prose, generally with substantial verse parts, while in Kazakh they are predominantly in verse. In some of the Turkish versions, on the other hand, prose predominates. This is the case in Behçet Mahir's version, but also in Kúnos' text, which was taken from a chapbook. When looking at the various Kōroġlu/Goroġli hikâyes and dastans, their differences in plot, focus, style and form suggest a generic variety and diversity that comprises both the heroic epic and the love romance. Both are sometimes interwoven, as for instance in the Uzbek dastan *Rawshan*. Rawshan is the son of Goroġli's adopted son Hasan. By means of a magic ring, he falls in love with Zulxumār, the daughter of the khan of Shirwān. His search for Zulxumār is a mixture of a bridal quest and love romance. Rawshan finally finds Zulxumār, but is imprisoned by her father and sentenced to death, unless he abjures his faith (Sunnite Islam for Shiism). Rawhan refuses, Zulxumār sends a starling with a letter to Goroġli, Hasan and a group of champions arrive in time to save Rawshan from the gallows in a fierce fight, in which the prowess and the heroism of Hasan and his companions are exalted. This war-like end does not make *Rawshan* into a heroic epic, but it changes the love romance into an adventure romance.<sup>47</sup> In Kazakh the branches of the *Kōruġli* cycle are classified as 'heroic epics' (*batırlar jırı*) in the various editions ; the genre term 'war-like dastans' has also been suggested and some of the edited texts have in their title the words *qissa* or *hikaya*.<sup>48</sup> In a simple dichotomy of epic vs. romance, the *Kōroġlu/Goroġli* cycle is in most traditions placed in the romance genre, even if of 'epic size' (*Rawshan*, for instance, has over 5,000 lines)<sup>49</sup>, and perhaps best described as an adventure romance, with an admixture of various elements, of which heroic deeds are prominent.

Summing up the discussion on genre, it has to be acknowledged that while sometimes clear generic borders can be identified, in many cases these borders are blurred or difficult to make out. Native genre terms such as *hikâye* and *dastan* allow various generic options and mixtures. In this the Turkic epic traditions here listed are not exceptional. The Celticist Myles Dillon, for instance, makes similar observations about the Old Irish sagas :

Epic and romance go hand in hand in Irish literature, for the two great cycles of heroic tales express sometimes one mood, sometimes the other . . . A story was just a story, whether the matter was legend or history, and the boundary between these two was of less interest in medieval times than it is today.<sup>50</sup>

## The Epic Space : Middle East and Central Asia

The family of Turkic languages extends from the Adriatic to north-eastern Siberia, from the shores of the Caspian to the Tarim basin, from the Urals to Central Asia, not counting recent migrations. With the exception of Chuvash, spoken on the upper Volga, and Yakut, spoken in north-eastern Siberia, the Turkic languages are closely related. With regard to their oral epic traditions, six groups can be distinguished. The first and second group consist of the traditions of the Yakuts in north-eastern Siberia and of the South-Siberian Turks in the Altay and Sayan region (Altaians, Tuvans and others). Typical of these two groups is the central role shamanism plays in their epic poetry, the Yakut *olongxo* and the Altaian *chörchök*. The Yakut epic tradition has a very strong mythological orientation, resting on a three-tiered cosmic model, with a Nether World, Middle World and Upper World. In the South-Siberian tradition both shape-shifting and hyperbole, typical elements of Mongolian epics, are omnipresent. The epic of *Alpāmish*, for instance, is also known in an Altaian version, but here the hero reads about his future in the *sudur bichig*, the book of prophecy (*sudur* from Sanskrit *sūtra*, 'sutra, Buddhist narrative') ; he is of terrifying stature : when he sleeps his breathing uproots trees and grinds rocks into sand and when he sneezes he blows a seven-headed monster over ten mountains and a hundred lakes, – and he can transform himself into a fly, just as his horse can change shape when necessary.

A third group is composed of the Central Asian Turkic traditions, that is, of the Kirghiz, the Kazakhs, the Karakalpaks, the Uzbeks, and the Uighurs. The Kirghiz have a very strong oral epic tradition, which stands somewhat apart from the other 'central traditions'. The Kirghiz make a distinction between two types of epic, which, however, do not coincide with the division into epic and romance. The Kirghiz prototypical heroic epic is the epic (or rather epic cycle) of *Manas*, performed in a distinctive singing and declamatory style by a singer who sings without musical accompaniment. Practically all the other epics are grouped together as 'younger (or small) epics' (*kenje epostor*) ; they are typically performed by a different type of singer, who accompanies himself (or herself) on the *komuz*, a plucked lute.<sup>51</sup>

A fourth 'south-western group' consists of the epic traditions of the Turkmens, Azerbaijanians (in Azerbaijan and Iran), the Turks of Khorsan, and the Turks of Turkey. A fifth group is formed by the Kazan Tatars and Bashkirs to the west of the Urals, with the addition of Siberian Tatars and Crimean Tatars. Their narrative traditions overlap with those of the Central and Southwestern Turkic traditions ; the love romances are especially wide-spread among them. On the other hand, their epic repertoire, in particular that of the Bashkirs, has a physiognomy of its own.<sup>52</sup> Finally, a sixth group can be made out of Turkic-speaking peoples of the northern Caucasus, especially the Karachays and Balkar, whose tales and epic songs, however, participate mainly in the Caucasian narrative tradition, i.e. the Nart tales of the Iranian Ossetes and speakers of Caucasian languages such as Adyge, Abkhaz and others.<sup>53</sup>

It emerges from the foregoing discussion that there is a continuum of epic traditions in a geographical area defined by the Southwestern and Central Turkic traditions, i.e. Turkish, Azerbaijanian, Khorasanian Turkish, Turkmen, Uzbek, Uighur, Karakalpak, Kazakh, and Kirghiz. Among these traditions the Karakalpak, Kazakh and Kirghiz form a separate subgroup. The Karakalpaks and Kazakhs have a larger shared epic repertoire with other Central Turkic traditions than the Kirghiz ; all three traditions also have their own individual epic repertoire, Kazakh and Karakalpak, for instance, have the cycle of dastans on the heroes of the Noghay Horde (15th century), the Kirghiz on *Manas* and his descendants. The epic repertoire of these groups extends also into that of the Tatars and partially that of the Bashkirs. There is, however, a fairly clear distinction between the epics and romances of the Southwestern and Central Turkic traditions and those of the Yakuts and the South-Siberian Turks ; this difference is enhanced by the fact that the Yakuts and South-Siberian Turks have not come under the influence of Islam, but have either

preserved an older shamanistic stratum or have, like the Mongols, come under the influence of Lamaistic Buddhism.

Another distinguishing feature of the Southwestern-Central Turkic epic area is the intensive interaction with the traditions of other languages of the area, in particular Iranian languages, and here specifically Persian. The Azerbaijani version of *Goroqli* translated and published by Chodzko was actually performed in two languages, Persian for prose and Azeri for verse.<sup>54</sup> The same applies to the romance of *Şah İsmail* in the Khorasanian Turkish version discussed above. For this romance also Kurdish tales are found, side by side with Kurdish love romances (in verse and prose) such as *Mem and Zîn*.<sup>55</sup> The type of love romance exemplified by *Şah İsmail* is not restricted to the area transcribed by the Southwestern and Central Turkic traditions, but is also found, for instance, in Pashto or Urdu, often in the form of chapbooks. No doubt, Persian romance, in both written and orally transmitted form, is one of the most important sources of the romance genre in the popular and oral literature of these Turkic and non-Turkic traditions.<sup>56</sup>

Turkic and Iranian narrative traditions influence and inspire each other mutually ; while the development of Turkic romance cannot be studied without reference to Persian romance, the rise of an oral epic cycle about *Goroqli* among the Tajiks is mainly due to their close contact with the Uzbeks and their *Goroqli* dastans. While these Tajik, i.e. Persian, narratives are in prose in the northern area of Tajikistan, they are in verse in the south. In addition to the story-lines and characters, the metre of the Tajik dastans points unambiguously to the Uzbek tradition : the verse is not in the Iranian quantitative metre, but in the syllabic metre of Turkic folk poetry. According to Tajik scholars over 350,000 verse-line of the epic cycle of *Gūrūgli* have been written down. The dastans performed by the singers, called *Gūrūgli-xāns*, are of various length. In a representative edition of twenty branches of the cycle, written down from the recitation of three singers, the texts vary between about 150 and 1750 lines in a total of 13,500 lines.<sup>57</sup> The singer Bābāyunus Xudāyād-zade (1875-1945), answering the question : "How many days do you need to sing *Gūrūgli* ?", is quoted as saying : "More than a month, if I sing from dawn to sunset."<sup>58</sup> The Tajik *Gūrūgli* cycle belongs with the Uzbek and Kazakh *Goroqli/Körügli* dastans to the elaborations of the *Köroğlu/Goroqli* legend that have assumed epic proportions. No doubt, the Tajiks have created a powerful oral epic tradition, which, however, has today all but disappeared.

While the heroic epic is predominantly found in Central Asia, the lyrical dastans, the romances of love and adventure, are spread over a wide area, covering both the Southwestern and Central Turkic traditions. In these romances the verse parts are in the foreground, as poems and in particular as songs, accompanied by one or more instruments and performed in various musical shapes, which are chosen from different musical modes and melodies. These *épopées lyriques* are often true garlands of songs.<sup>59</sup> The closest medieval parallel is probably the *Tale of Bayād and Riyāḍ*, a Hispano-Arabic romance, preserved in a 13th-century manuscript of the Vatican Library. This romance is a veritable anthology of Arabic poetry, unfortunately transmitted without musical notations. The Hispanist and Arabist A. R. Nykl called the romance 'an Oriental *chanteable* in Persian style' in the subtitle of his edition and translation.<sup>60</sup> The term *chanteable* (or rather *cantefable* in the Picard dialect of Old French) is found in the last but one line of the 13th-century 'sing-tale' *Aucassin et Nicolette*, the story of the love between Aucassin, the son of the count of Beaucaire in Southern France, and Nicolette, a Saracen girl. The story develops in conformity to the narrative pattern of Turkic love romances, with falling in love, separation, search, surmounting of obstacles and final (and in this case happy) reunion as main stations. With this *chanteable*, the music for the verse passages has been transmitted. These passages (*laisses*) are not reserved for monologues and dialogues, but also contain third-person narration ; they are sung to the same melody, a type of melody used for the *chansons de geste*. In other words, these melodies are narrative rather than lyric melodies.<sup>61</sup> What these examples confirm is that the Turkic central and south-western epic traditions, although forming a

continuous area from Turkey to Xinjiang, have a close relationship – of contact, influence and typological similarity – to the narrative traditions of the Iranian and Arabic world.

1 Kúnos, Ignaz (ed.), *Mundarten der Osmanen*, vol. 8 of Radloff, Wilhelm (ed. and tr.), *Proben der Volklitteratur der türkischen Stämme*, St. Petersburg, Académie Impériale des Sciences, 1899, p. i. The preface is written in German. – In this article, Russian is transliterated according to the international system used in linguistics, Arabic and Persian according to the system used by the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*. – Turkish and Azeri (Azerbaijani) words are quoted in their respective Latin script. In order to avoid confusion, words in all the other Turkic languages, irrespective of whether they are written in a Latin or Cyrillic script, are transliterated as follows : Vowels (as in Turkish) : <a>, <e>, <i>, <ı>, <o>, <u>, <ö>, <ü>, <ä> (= Azeri <ə>) ; long vowels are marked by a macron ; <ā> in Uzbek is pronounced as open 'o' /ɔ/ ; semivowels : <y>, <w> ; consonants : as in English, plus <q> for the voiceless guttural plosive (as in Azeri) ; <sh> and <ch> as in English ; <j> : as in English *journal*, but in Kazakh and Karakalpak generally as in French *journal* ; <x> stands for a voiceless velar fricative, <ğ> for a voiced velar fricative.

2 Volumes 1-7 were collected by Radloff ; volumes 1-6 consist of a text and a translation volume (in German) ; volume 7, on the Turkic dialects of the Crimea, has no translation ; volume 8, on the dialects of the Ottomans, is also without translation.

3 I am using the present tense also in cases where the oral epic tradition has practically died out, as, for instance, in Turkey.

4 An example of the latter is the hikâye of *Ferhat and Şirin* and its many parallels in other Turkic languages. They go back to a verse epic by ʿAlī Shīr Navāʾī, which is in turn based on *Khusrau and Shīrīn* by Nizāmī. See Özarslan, Metin, *Ferhat ile Şirin : Mukayeseli Bir Araştırma* [Ferhat and Şirin : A comparative study], Istanbul, Doğu Kütüphanesi, 2006.

5 Narratives composed in a mixture of verse and prose are widely spread in world literature ; see Harris, Joseph, Reichl, Karl (ed.), *Prosimetrum : Crosscultural Perspectives on Narrative in Prose and Verse*, Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997.

6 I am using the Turkish form of this name : *İsmail* ; used as an Arabic word it has to be transliterated as *Ismāʿīl*. – Of two further hikâyes of the second type (*Aşık Garip* and *Aşık Kerem*) Kúnos gives only the verse passages.

7 Boratav, Pertev Naili, “L'épopée et la 'hikâye'”, in Bazin, Louis et al. (eds.), *Philologiae Turcicae Fundamenta*, vol. 2, Wiesbaden, Steiner, 1964, p. 11-44, at p. 11.

8 For a detailed analysis of the relationship between the genre terms “dastan” and “epic”, see Akbarpouran, Monire, “Le *destan* turc est-il une épopée ? Premiers débats et prolongements actuels”, *Le Recueil ouvert* [En ligne], volume 2017 – Auralité : changer l'auditoire, changer l'épopée.

9 The term *destan* is also found in Turkey ; it is mostly used in scholarly literature for world epics such as the *Shah-nāma* or the *Iliad* ; in addition it designates a specific type of Turkish heroic folk poem and also longer poems on historical and heroic topics of written literature.

10 See Ayimbetov, N. Q. (ed.), *Qaraqalpaq fol'klori* [Karakalpak folklore], parts 1-8 (one vol.), Nukus, Qaraqalpaqstan, 2007.

11 See Reichl, Karl, “Medieval Perspectives on Turkic Oral Epic Poetry”, in Helldén, Jan et al. (ed.), *Inclinate Aures : Oral Perspectives on Early European Verbal Culture*, Odense, Odense University Press, 2001, p. 211-254, at p. 233-242.

12 For the Kazakh versions, see Qul-Muxammed, M. et al. (eds.), *Babalar Sözi : Batırlar Jırı* [The words of the forefathers : Heroic epics], vols. 33 and 34, Astana, Foliant, 2006.

13 For Fāzil's version, see Mirzaev, Tora (ed.), Abdurakhimov, M. (tr.), *Alpāmish : Ozbek xalq qahramānlik eposi/ Alpamyş : Uzbekskij narodnyj geroičeskij épos* [Alpāmish : An Uzbek heroic folk epic], Tashkent, Fan nashriyati, 1999 (Uzbek and Russian) ; for Abdunazar's version (14.230 lines), see Eshānqulov, Jabbār, Rozimurād Chāriev (eds.), *Alpāmish : Ozbek xalq dāstāni* [Alpāmish : An Uzbek folk dastan], Aytuwchi : Ozbekistān xalq baxshisi Abdunazar Pāyānov [Told by the folk baxshi of Uzbekistan Abdunazar Pāyānov], Tashkent, Akademnashr, 2018.

14 Thibaudet, Albert, *Physiologie de la Critique*, 7<sup>e</sup> édition, Paris, Éditions de la Nouvelle Revue Critique, 1930, p. 185.

15 See Madelénat, Daniel, *L'Épopée*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1986, esp. p. 17-78 ; Ben-Amos, Dan (ed.), *Folklore Genres*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1976, esp. p. 215-242 ; Fowler, Alastair, *Kinds of Literature : An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1982. For a new approach, comprising an analysis of 'classic' epics and of a wide array of non-western epic traditions, see Goyet, Florence, “De l'épopée canonique à l'épopée « dispersée » : à partir de l'*Iliade* ou des *Högen* et *Heiji monogatari*, quelques pistes de réflexion pour les textes épiques notés”, *Études mongoles & sibériennes, centrasiatiques & tibétaines (EMSCAT)*, vol. 45 (2014), <https://journals.openedition.org/emscat/2366>; see also the other contributions to volume 45 of *EMSCAT*, edited by Florence Goyet and Jean-Luc Lambert.

16 Bowra, C. M., *From Virgil to Milton*, London, Macmillan, 1963, p. 1. See also Bowra, C. M., *Heroic Poetry*, London, Macmillan, 1952, p. 1-47.

17 Hainsworth, J. B., *The Idea of Epic*, Berkeley, The University of California Press, 1991, p. 10 ; see also Reichl, Karl, *The Oral Epic : From Performance to Interpretation*, New York, Routledge, 2022, p. 11-22.

18 See Bowra, *Heroic Poetry*, p. 48-90 on the poetry of action and 91-131 on the hero ; for a far-flung study of the epic hero, see Miller, Dean A., *The Epic Hero*, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000.

19 The Uzbek and Kazakh dastan have been translated into Russian. For a translation of the Uzbek *Alpāmish* into German, see Reichl, Karl (ed. and tr.), *Das usbekische Heldenepos Alpāmish : Einführung, Text, Übersetzung*, Turcologica vol. 48, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, 2001. On the various versions of the



epic, see Žirmunskij, V. M., *Skazanie ob Alpamyše i bogatyrskaja skazka* [The tale of Alpamysh and the heroic tale], Moscow, Izdatel'stvo Vostočnoj Literatury, 1960 ; Reichl, Karl, *Turkic Oral Epic Poetry : Traditions, Forms, Poetic Structure*, New York, Routledge, 2018 (rpt.), p. 160-170, 333-351. – For simplicity's sake I will in the following limit my discussion to the Uzbek version of the epic.

20 For a general survey of bridal quest narratives, see Geißler, Friedmar, *Bräutwerbung in der Weltliteratur*, Halle, Max Niemeyer, 1955 ; see also Bornholdt, Claudia, *Engaging Moments : The Origins of Medieval Bridal-Quest Narrative*, *Ergänzungsbande zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde* vol. 46, Berlin, de Gruyter, 2005.

21 On the folktale type, see Holzapfel, Otto, "Heimkehr des Gatten (AaTh 974)", in Ranke, Kurt et al. (eds.), *Enzyklopädie des Märchens*, vol. 6, Berlin, de Gruyter, 1990, p. 702-707.

22 Zhirmunsky, Victor, "The Epic of 'Alpamysh' and the Return of Odysseus", *Proceedings of the British Academy*, vol. 52, London, Oxford University Press, 1967, p. 267-286. See also West, Stephanie, "Some Reflections on Alpamysh", in Montanari, Franco, Rengakos, Antonios, Tsagalis, Christos C. (eds.), *Homeric Contexts : Neoanalysis and the Interpretation of Oral Poetry*, Berlin, de Gruyter, 2012, p. 531-542.

23 This episode is found in Fozil's version of the dastan ; the bodily mark by which Alpamysh is recognized on his return by a shepherd is the imprint of the caliph's hand on the hero's shoulder. See also Reichl, Karl, "L'épopée orale turque d'Asie centrale : Inspiration religieuse et interprétation séculière", *Études Mongoles et Sibériennes*, vol. 32 (2001), p. 1-162, at p. 39-67 (II Le héros et le saint : L'influence islamique sur l'épopée turque d'Asie centrale).

24 Penelope's dreams are compared to those of Barchin in Grossardt, Peter, "Die Träume der Penelope im 19. und 20. Buch der Odyssee : Eine ethnographische Parallele aus Usbekistan", *Wiener Studien* vol. 119 (2006), p. 23-37.

25 See motif B292.1 in Thompson, Stith, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature*, 6 vols., rev. ed., Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1955-1958.

26 The two older manuscripts are kept in the State Library of Dresden and the Vatican library ; the third manuscript comes from Gonbād in Iran. It is an 18th-century copy of a text probably written down in the second half of the 16th century. It contains over twenty verse texts (*soylama*) and only one narrative, which is unknown in the other manuscripts ; see Ekici, Metin, *Dede Korkut Kitabı, Türkistan/Türkmen Sahra Nüshası : Soylamalar ve 13. Boy, Salur Kazan'ın Yedi Başlı Ejderhayı Öldürmesi. Orijinal Metin (Tıpkıbasım)-Transkripsiyon-Aktarma* [The Book of Dede Korkut, Türkistan/Türkmen Sahra-Version : Soylama-Parts and the 13th episode, 'Salur Kazan's Killing of the Seven-headed Dragon'. Original text (facsimile) – transcription – translation], Istanbul, Ötüken Neşriyat, 2019.

27 The *Book of Dede Korkut* has been much studied, especially in Turkey and Azerbaijan ; see Hacıev, Tofiq (ed.), *Dədə Qorqud Kitabı : Ensiklopedik lüğət* [The Book of Dede Korkut. An encyclopedia], Baku, Öndər nəşriyyat, 2004 ; for English translations, see Sümer, Faruk, Uysal, Ahmet Edip, Walker, Warren S. (trs.), *The Book of Dede Korkut : A Turkish Epic*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1972 ; Lewis, Geoffrey (tr.), *The Book of Dede Korkut*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1974. See also Reichl, Karl, "Das Buch von Dede Korkut : Ein Zyklus türkischer heroischer Erzählungen", in Sauer, Hans, Seitschek, Gisela, Teuber, Bernhard (eds.), *Höhepunkte des mittelalterlichen Erzählens : Heldenlieder, Romane und Novellen in ihrem kulturellen Kontext*, Heidelberg, Winter, 2016, p. 283-297.

28 Boratav, Pertev Naili. "Bey Böyrek Hikâyesine Ait Metinler" [Texts relating to the hikâye of Bey Böyrek], in Boratav, Pertev Naili, *Folklor ve Edebiyat (1982)* [Folklore and literature (1982)], vol. 2, Istanbul, Adam Yayıncılık, 1983, p. 141-210, at p. 147-159.

29 Kúnos, *Mundarten der Osmanen*, p. 27-57 ; the text agrees in the main with that of a chapbook reprinted in *Tam Şah İsmail* [Complete Şah İsmail], Saz Şairleri Hikâyeleri, vol. 1, Istanbul, Maarif Kitaphanesi ve Matbaası, 1975, and also with the German translation of this hikâye in Fischer, Hans-August (tr.), *Schah Ismajil und Gülüzar : Ein türkischer Volksroman*, Türkische Bibliothek vol. 26, Leipzig, Mayer & Müller, 1929.

30 Occasionally the audience demands a happy ending, as with *Kerem and Aslı*, or the singer decides to change the tragic story into a happy one, as in Fâzil Yoldâş-oglı's version of *Farhâd and Shirin* ; see Reichl, *The Oral Epic*, p. 40-42.

31 On the *âşık*, see Boratav, Pertev Naili, "La littérature des 'âşık'", in Bazin, Louis et al. (ed.), *Philologiae Turicae Fundamenta*, vol. II, Wiesbaden, Franz Steiner, 1964, p. 129-147, at p. 129-131. On the subgenre of the *âşık* tale, see Başgöz, İlhan, "Turkish Folk Stories About the Lives of Minstrels", *Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 65 (1952), p. 331-339.

32 For the Kurdish folktales, see MacKenzie, D. N., *Kurdish Dialect Studies*, vol. 2, London, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1962, p. 4-33 (text and translation) ; Cukerman, I. I., *Xorasankij kurmandži : Issledovanie i teksty* [Khorasan Kurmandji : Study and texts], Moscow, Nauka, 1986, p. 208-217 ("Sergužeštê Şah-İsmail"), p. 217-227 (Russian translation). For the Azeri dastan, see Axundov, Əhliman (ed.), *Azərbaycan Dastanları* [Azerbaijani dastans], vol. III, Baku, Lider Nəşriyyat, 2005, p.123-158.

33 See Youssefzadeh, Ameneh, Blum, Stephen, *Shāh Esmā'īl and his Three Wives : A Persian-Turkish Tale as Performed by the Bards of Khorasan*, *Studies on Performing Arts & Literature of the Islamic World*, vol. 12, Leiden, Brill, 2022.

34 Despite a basic similarity, the various versions of *Tahir and Zühre* differ from one another in their motifs and narrative thread. The Turkish hikâye summarized by İlhan Başgöz, for instance, in his *Hikâye : Turkish Folk Romance as Performance Art*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2008, p. 275-276, has a happy end. This is also true of the Uzbek version published by Järaev, Mamatqul, Mamatqulova, Feruza (eds.), *Tāhir va Zuhra : Ozbek xalq dāstāni* [Tāhir and Zhura : An Uzbek folk dastan], Tashkent, Muharrir nashriyāti, 2011.

35 The Turkish chapbook summarized here is published in *Tahir ile Zühre* [Tahir and Zühre], Saz Şairleri Hikâyeleri, vol. 4, Istanbul, Maarif Kitaphanesi ve Matbaası, 1975. For an edition of a Kazakh version, produced in Kazan as a popular print in 1911 (first published in 1883), see Äzibaeva, B. et al. (eds.), *Babalar Sözi : Ğashıqtıq dastandar* [The words of the forefathers : Love dastans], vol. 19, Astana, Foliant, 2005, p. 162-257.



- 36 See Azibaeva, B. U. (ed.), *Kazaxskij épos* [The Kazakh epic], Almaty : Institut literatury i iskusstva imeni M. O. Auëzova, 2010, p. 222-357 ; Sayimov, B., Mominov, Ğ. (eds.), *Ozbek fol'klorining epik janrlari* [Epic genres of Uzbek folklore], Tashkent : Fan, 1981, p. 21-23 ; Tarim, Osman Isamayil, *Uyğur xalq eǵiz ädbiyati häqqidä omumiy bayan* [An introduction to Uyghur oral folk literature], Ürümqi, Shinjang universiteti nashriyati, 2009, p. 645-661 ; Maqsetov, Q., Maqsetova, R., *Qaraqalpaq xalqining körkem awızeki döretpeleri* [The oral poetic art of the Karakalpak people], Nukus, Bilim, 2002, p. 135-144.
- 37 See his comprehensive study *Hikâye* of 2008.
- 38 Ker, W. P., *Epic and Romance : Essays on Medieval Literature*, 2n ed., London, MacMillan, 1908. On medieval romance, see Stevens, John, *Medieval Romance : Themes and Approaches*, London, Hutchinson, 1973 ; on romance as a literary genre, see Frye, Northrop, *The Secular Scripture : A Study of the Structure of Romance*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1976.
- 39 See Heath, Peter, "Romance as Genre in 'The Thousand and One Nights'", *Journal of Arabic Literature* vol. 18 (1987), p. 1-21, vol. 19 (1988), p. 1-26 ; Rubanovich, Julia, "In the Mood of Love : Love Romances in Medieval Persian Poetry and their Sources", in Cupane, Carolina, Krönung, Bettina (eds.), *Fictional Storytelling in the Medieval Eastern Mediterranean and Beyond*, Leiden, Brill, 2016, p. 67-94.
- 40 Chodzko, Alexander, *Specimens of the Popular Poetry of Persia, as Found in the Adventures and Improvisations of Kurroglou, the Bandit-Minstrel of Northern Persia ; and in the Songs of the People Inhabiting the Shores of the Caspian Sea*, London, Oriental Translation Fund of Great Britain and Ireland, 1842.
- 41 Kúnos, *Mundarten der Osmanen*, p. 9 (transliterated in Modern Turkish script).
- 42 Kaplan, Mehmet, Akalın, Mehmet, Bali, Muhan (eds.), *Köroğlu Destanı* [The destan Köroğlu], Anlatan Behçet Mahir [Narrated by Behçet Mahir], Ankara, Sevinç Matbaası, 1973, p. 278.
- 43 For surveys, see Karryev, B. A. 1968. *Épičeskie skazaniya o Kër-ogly u tjurko-jazyčnyx narodov* [Epic tales about Kër-ogly among the Turkic-speaking peoples], Moscow, Nauka, 1968 ; Reichl, *Turkic Oral Epic Poetry*, p. 151-160, 318-333.
- 44 The 'western versions' comprise the Turkish and Azeri texts, the 'eastern versions' the rest. It has to be noted, however, that in Türkmen some singers use the name 'Köroglı' instead of 'Göroglı' ; also in the Uzbek versions from Khorezm the hero is called 'Koroğlı'. In Kazakh *kör* means both 'blind' and 'grave' ; therefore the hero's name begins with *K*.
- 45 See Mirzaev, Tora, Husainova, Zubayda (eds.), *Goroğli : Ozbek xalq dāstānlari* [Goroğli : Uzbek folk dastans], Aytuwchi : Rahmatulla shāir Yusuf oğlu [Told by Rahmatulla shāir Jusuf-oğlu], Tashkent, Sharq, 2006, p. 15-40 ; on the birth of the hero in various Turkic versions of the cycle, see Ekici, Metin, *Türk Dünyasında Köroğlu : İlk Kol – İnceleme ve Metinler* [Köroğlu in the Turkic world : The first branch – Studies and texts], Ankara, Akçağ, 2004.
- 46 Chadwick, N. K., Zhirmunsky, V., *Oral Epics of Central Asia*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1969, p. 302.
- 47 For a more detailed appreciation of this dastan and a German translation, see Reichl, Karl (tr.), *Rawšan : Ein usbekisches mündliches Epos*, Asiatische Forschungen vol. 93, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, 1985 ; on its composition and style, see p. 19-44.
- 48 See Azibaeva, B. et al. (eds.), *Babalar Sözi : Batırlarjırı* [The words of the forefathers : Heroic epics], vol. 48, Astana, Foliant, 2008 ; Azibaeva, *Kazaxskij épos*, p. 409-424.
- 49 See Reichl, *Rawshan*, p. 4-12.
- 50 Dillon, Myles, *Early Irish Literature*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1948, p. 1. The two cycles to which Dillon is referring are the Ulster Cycle and the Fenian Cycle.
- 51 Epic singers in most Turkic traditions are male ; women singers do exist, but are a small minority and often only perform to a female audience ; see Reichl, *The Oral Epic*, p. 26-27.
- 52 Several versions of the epic of *Alpāmish* are known among the Bashkirs ; they also share the epic of *Edige* with the Kazakhs and Karakalpaks ; their main epic *Ural Batır* (Hero Ural) is unique.
- 53 For surveys of these traditions, see my articles on Azeri, Bashkir, Karachay-Balkar, Karakalpak, Kazakh, Kirghiz, Noghay, South Siberian, Tatar, Turkish, Turkmen, Uyghur, Uzbek, and Yakut oral epics, as well as the articles 'Oral Epics' and 'Narrators and Singers' in Johanson, Lars, Csató, Éva Á. et al. (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Turkic Languages and Linguistics*, Leiden , Brill ; online version to be published in 2023.
- 54 For an edition of the original manuscript, but with a translation of Persian into Azeri, see Abbaslı, İsrail, Bəhlul, Abdulla (eds.), *Köroğlu : Paris nüsxəsi* [Köroğlu : The Paris manuscript], Baku , Şərq-Qərb, 1997.
- 55 See Allison, Christine, "Kurdish Oral Literature", in Kreyenbroek, Philip G., Marzolph, Ulrich (eds.), *Oral Literature of Iranian Languages : Kurdish, Pashto, Balochi, Ossetic, Persian and Tajik*, vol. 18 of *A History of Persian Literature*, New York, Tauris, 2010, p. 33-69, esp. p. 48-61. See also Lescot, Roger (ed. and tr.), *Mamé Alan : Épopée kurde*, Paris, Gallimard, 1999 ; see p. ii-xxv on the various versions.
- 56 See Bürgel, Christoph J., "The Romance", in Yarshater, Ehsan (ed.), *Persian Literature*, Columbia Lectures on Iranian Studies, vol. 3, Albany, SUNY Press, 1988, p. 161-178.
- 57 See Nazarov, X. et al. (eds.), *Gürüglı : Eposi xalqii tājiki/ Gurugli : Tadžikskij narodnyj épos* [Gürüglı : A Tajik folk epic], Moscow, Nauka, 1987.
- 58 Nazarov et al., *Gürüglı*, p. 681.
- 59 See Reichl, *The Oral Epic*, p. 208-216 ; Youssefzade, Blum, *Shāh Esmā'il*, p. 85-105.
- 60 Nykl, A. R. (ed. and tr.), *Historia de los Amores de Bayāḍ y Riyāḍ : Una Chantefable Oriental en Estilo Persa (Vat. Ar. 368)*, New York: The Hispanic Society of America, 1941 ; for a new edition, see D'Ottone, Arianna (ed. and tr.), *La Storia di Bayāḍ e Riyāḍ (Vat. Ar. 368) : Una Nuova Edizione e Traduzione*, Studi i Testi vol. 479, Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 2013.
- 61 See Stevens, John, *Words and Music in the Middle Ages : Song, Narrative, Dance, and Drama, 1050-1350*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986, p. 222-234. For text and translation, see Walter, Philippe (ed. and tr.), *Aucassin et Nicolette : Chantefable du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris, Gallimard, 1999.

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### **Quelques mots à propos de : Karl REICHL**

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