

Selected Studies on Genre in Middle Eastern Literatures

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From Epics to Novels

Edited by

Hülya Çelik and Petr Kučera

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Hülya Çelik and Petr Kučera

INTRODUCTION

PETR KUČERA AND HÜLYA ÇELİK

Studying the nature, development and formation of genres, this “universal dimension of textuality,”¹ belongs to one of the most important disciplines within literary studies. As scholars have observed, genres exercise an immense influence on the production, articulation and organization of knowledge and thus are closely linked not only to our perception of the world, but also to power and social change. Every piece of writing is molded by a generic structure, a normative framework that enables readers to decode the meaning by putting it into a certain context and providing them with “clues” as how to relate this particular example to other texts. It is impossible to “undo” genre: as a “set of rules and restrictions operating in the process of codification and production of literary texts”² genre is a non-separable component of texts. As with other discourses, it can be discussed, abstracted, and analyzed, but not “withdrawn,” otherwise it would leave the text in an “informational vacuum, without indicating a specific situation of understanding.”³ Given its fundamental function as a non-reducible, even axiomatic textual basis, a transformation of generic structure(s) not only attests to changing literary modes, but also signalizes a shift in the social, cultural, epistemological or even political and economic structures of a society.

It has been often assumed that classical Middle Eastern – Arabic, Turkish and Persian – literatures, with their immense concentration on poetry as the true expression of “literaricity” and their fixation on the continuity and stability of artistic expression, were characterized by a strong adherence to genre norms and a preference for normative poetics. The gradual adoption of Western genres from the first half of the 19th century onwards meant on the one hand a critical distancing from the inherited genre canon, its total refusal, playful reworking, or cross-breeding of genres, and

¹ John Frow, *Genre* (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 2.

² Sabry Hafez, *The Genesis of Arabic Narrative Discourse. A Study in the Sociology of Modern Arabic Literature* (London: Saqi Books, 1993), 33.

³ Hafez, *Genesis*, 33.

on the other hand the domestication of foreign generic structures. New genres, as for instance the novel or drama, were sometimes considered a “technology,” which, like other technologies borrowed from the West, could lead society to attain the level of contemporary civilization, to achieve progress and modernity; and, more recently, genres have been also used as tools of ideological battles, like in the Islamist critique of Western genres or the socialist instrumentalization of the realist novel, revealing the political dimensions of genre. Looking into the genre in the Middle East opens up the possibility of gaining new insights into the intellectual universe of Middle Eastern societies, into the questions of production of meaning, of what “literature” meant in different historical periods, of the underlying epistemology of producing knowledge, and of how this epistemology has changed over time. Moreover, given the intimate interconnectedness of genre transformation and social change, the study of genre also proves to be an important source of knowledge for the social historian.

The first seeds for this book were sown at a conference that we organized at the University of Hamburg in September 2019, and which brought together scholars with expertise in Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Turkic, and Ottoman-Greek narrative traditions. The papers presented at the conference looked at the manifold facets of the history, sociology and poetics of genre and generic structures underlying the literary production of the respective traditions. From these papers we selected 12, which underwent major changes up to the final version. The essays overlap only partially with the papers presented at the conference; in most cases, these are vastly new texts inspired by the original presentations and the ensuing discussions at the conference.

Our underlying idea of putting together the book in front of you was to apply a broad diachronic and synchronic perspective, instead of focusing merely on one period or one narrative tradition, in order to shed new light on the sociocultural and narratological dimensions of genre in the Middle East. It is our hope that this assemblage of scholarly studies on pre-modern epics and political novels, on sacred scriptures and books of sexual advice, on terminology connected to specific genres and the rise of new genres, or on the strategic deployment of different genres by a 15th-century Arab traveler and the emergence of a subgenre of city mysteries as the expression of a new collective identity among 19th-century Constantinopolitan Greeks might provoke an interdisciplinary discussion and engender in the reader an awareness of both the commonalities and the great richness and diversity of genres in an area which, to a great extent, shares a common historical heritage. Furthermore, we hope this collection of essays demonstrates that genres in the Middle East must be understood as dynamic structures which,

despite claims about the proclivity of Middle Eastern literatures to normative poetics, are never fixed and static, but continuously interact with the reading public, the social environment, the literary canon, and with other texts and changing world-views.

The volume is divided into three sections dealing with different aspects of genre in Middle Eastern societies. The essays are grouped according to their “generic traits” rather than linguistic criteria, proximity of content, region or narrative tradition. This, we hope, will enable a comparison between literary traditions and literary forms of different linguistic areas and epochs and diverse methodological approaches. In each section the essays are ordered more or less chronologically according to the literary works with which they deal. For some unknown reason, and despite our best efforts, none of the abstracts we received for the conference or the papers presented there dealt with theatre or modern poetry. Despite the great diversity of essays in each section, and for the sake of arrangement and clarity, a certain division into pre-modern and modern generic forms became almost inevitable. However, this does not suggest any dichotomy between the two realms.

Section I, “Epics and Classical Poetry,” is devoted to versified or prosimetric forms of premodern literature, both popular and high culture, namely, Persian and Turkic epics and Ottoman poetry. It raises questions concerning the concepts and terminology with which scholars approach non-Western narrative forms and the problems arising from the tendency to group seemingly similar literary texts under one classificatory heading. Other essays examine the formation of new (sub)genres and the transformation of genres, whether stimulated by a new historical situation or by widespread social practices. Overall, the essays underline the interconnectedness of extra-literary elements, including scholarly interest and socio-historical situatedness, and the constitution of genres.

In her investigation into the various appearances of the term *oğuznâme* in manuscripts and scholarly literature, Ingeborg Baldauf in her essay (“Is *Oğuznâme* a Genre?”) questions the uncritical deployment of the term to an extremely wide range of texts, particularly to legends and heroic stories related to the eponymous “ancestor” of Western Turkic peoples, Oğuz Qağan. The denominator *oğuznâme* became such a generic term, referring to any kind of narrative related to the Oğuzs, that it lost sharpness. Surprisingly, it is rarely that the authors themselves call their texts *oğuznâme*. It is mostly scholars who use this term, relying on paratextual appearances: the name is, for instance, added to prefaces or title pages of manuscripts by copyists or manuscript owners. Therefore, the genre of *oğuznâme* should be understood as a blend of heroic narrations and

metatextual framework. What could be incorporated in the heading *oğuznāme*, Baldauf emphasizes, is a dynamic amalgam of different generic modes stretching from prosimetric narrations such as proverbs and adages of Oğuz people to serials of heroic-narrational texts and politico-genealogical narratives. As Baldauf shows in her intriguing study, *oğuznāme* cannot be disassembled from its constituents – no component alone (proverbial, paeān, nor heroic elements) comprises an *oğuznāme*.

Jutta Wintermann's article ("A Transcultural Perspective on the Epic Genre in Persian and Kyrgyz Poetry") continues the examination of concepts behind the denominations of genres. It addresses the issue of compatibility of various generic concepts of different literary cultures and challenges the applicability of the Greek concept of epic (*epos*, ἔπος), adopted by Western literary studies, on non-European literary traditions. Wintermann draws attention to the cultural conditionality and evaluative nature of such categories as "epic," which is seen almost as a *conditio sine qua non* for the existence of great/ancient/cultural nations or ethnics, and proposes a more sensitive approach to genres that considers indigenous terminology. To illustrate her argumentation, she concentrates on designations used for narrative poetry in the Persian literary discourse (with a focus on Nizāmī's *Husraw va Šīrīn*) and for "epic" in Kyrgyz poetics (with a focus on *Manas*). With the exception of modern Kyrgyz poeology borrowing from Russian terminology, no systematic classification can be found in these literary traditions that is parallel to the European concept of genres and/or corresponding with the notion of "epos." In addition, lumping together *Manas*, a heroic epic, and *Husraw va Šīrīn*, which is clearly romantic in mode, as "epics," a name reserved predominantly for heroic poetry, makes this concept lose clarity and precision. Instead, Wintermann proposes including indigenous concepts in comparative and transcultural studies, in order to avoid a rigidly Eurocentric perspective and arrive at a workable definition of the given genre.

From problems of nomenclature and conceptual issues regarding genres, with the next two essays we move towards questions of the emergence and development of genres. Christine Kämpfer ("Between Innovation and Tradition: Khvājū Kirmānī (1290-1350) and the Post-Mongol Persian Epic") reads Khvājū Kirmānī's 14th-century epic poem *Humāy-u Humāyūn* as a turning point in the development of the Persian epic, situating it on the threshold of the genre's transition from secular-mundane to spiritual-mystic. Clearly, the changed socio-political landscape after the Mongol invasion of Iran also left deep traces in literature. Kämpfer's close reading of two episodes of Kirmānī's versified epic reveals that the author created a "third space," separated from human logic, in which romantic and mystic

elements fuse with narratives of heroic deeds and with the wonderous narrative landscape of folktales, infused with magic, exotic, and marvel. In the guise of a romance narrative, shot through with mystical thought conversing with romantic, heroic readings, and accommodating exotic and marvel, Khvājū Kirmānī succeeded in opening a new path in Persian literature; and the result is what Kämpfer calls the post-Mongol Persian epic – a stepping stone to the development of the Persian romance from secular to mystic.

The socio-poetological aspects of genre are continued in Edith Gülçin Ambros's meticulous study of two 16th-century Ottoman books of advice. In her essay ("A Case Study of Social Structures Triggering a Subgenre: the 16th-century Ottoman Poets 'Askerī and 'Ubeydī's "Books of Advice" (*Pendnāmes*) in the Context of Their Peers' Actions and Verses"), Ambros inspects 'Askerī and 'Ubeydī's lesser-known works and suggests that a social structure and practice could have sparked a new subgenre. The popularity of emotional and sexual relationships with young boys in learned circles, be they truly lived or only spoken about, might have given birth to a specific branch of advice literature – sexual advice on how to behave towards catamites. While the reader of such versified guidance is warned about the dangers of becoming servile towards catamites, whose bad character traits are vividly described, and about the perils of allowing himself to be exploited by them, the practice of pederasty itself, in line with the literary conventions of the time, is not condemned. Seen from a broader perspective, Ambros's study on these "marginal" texts – only two such *pendnāmes* are known – might also spark a wider discussion on "microgenres" in Middle Eastern literatures.

The final essay of the section ("Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Panegyric and Markers of its Narrativity") by Hülya Çelik starts with a detailed discussion of the notion of *kaşīde* and *medhiyye* and highlights the problem of separating these two terms. Following this, the article focuses mainly on the 16th century, which is considered to be the formative century for Ottoman-Turkish literature, and underlines the flexibility of the Ottoman panegyric in two ways: first, the Ottoman panegyric can be designed as a narrative poem, depending on the poet's intentions and decisions. Second, the praise poem is flexible in that it is not constrained to a particular form and can – unlike, for example, the lyric love poem, the *gazel* – also take the form of a stanzaic poem. Determining specific markers of its narrativity (such as the use of certain grammatical constructions and a special vocabulary), Çelik's essay demonstrates the Ottoman panegyric's flexibility in a sample of five poems written by four different poets.

The following **Section II**, “Classical Prose and Religious Narratives,” is devoted to the exploration of genre-related issues in a variety of texts that belong to narrative forms of “high culture” – products either of prophetic revelation or highly learned scholarly discourse. It brings together essays on the genre transformation within the Qur’anic corpus, on a text that might be considered both an account of a diplomatic mission and a brilliant example of the tactical deployment of rhetoric and genres, and on a classical travelogue of the pilgrimage-report type. Despite being written in various periods and located in different geographical regions – 7th-century Medina, 15th-century Tabriz and 18th-century Jerusalem – these texts are not only connected linguistically, but are also stunning examples of texts of classical Arabic culture that in themselves contain a whole repertoire of genres, with the two latter texts set in the framework drawn by holy scripture.

The first article draws attention to the role of genres and narrative forms in scripture and offers analytical tools to allow scholars to write a genre history of the Qur’an that is sensitive to social dynamics. In order to support his argumentation, Karim Samji (“Genre Development in the Qur’an: Rethinking Prophetic Discourse in Late Antiquity”) first provides a concise introduction to genre theory and its applicability to the Qur’anic corpus. Since scripture, which Samji, depending on Gérard Genette’s concept, defines as “archigenre,” functions as a repository of genres decidedly showing signs of social settings, the question of genre formation becomes almost inevitable. Using the example of selected *suras*, the essay demonstrates how new literary forms emerge within established genres, or more specifically, how prophetic proclamations (*muḥāṭabāt*) in the Qur’ān originated from the long-established wisdom genre, or rather from its subgenre, the sermon form (*ḥuṭba*). In this transformation, the setting, namely, the place of performance (the Prophet’s relocation from Mecca to Medina), as well as the different roles and levels of authority assumed by Muhammad in the course of his prophetic mission, exercised an immense influence. As a result of the reaction to the new context and the steady multiplication of Medinan regulatory forms in the Qur’ān, a new genre of proclamation was finally minted.

The social context of genre(s) is at the heart of the second essay in this section. Georg Leube’s engrossing piece (“Erudition at the Intersection of Genres? The Asymmetrical Deployment of Genres in Ibn Ajā’s *Ta’rīkh al-amīr Yashbak*”) offers an attentive reading of Ibn Ajā’s 15th-century report on his diplomatic mission to the Akkoyunlu court in Tabriz. Leube locates the text within the discursive field of 15th-century Islamic courtly representational culture, which he sees as a system of multiple genres, used situationally as an arsenal of “rhetoric weapons” on the battlefield of the

highly contested sphere of competing courts. Thus, in Leube's reading, Ibn Ajā presents himself in the text as someone who staged a spectacular and highly sophisticated performance in rhetorical and scholarly abilities and asymmetrically deployed multiple genres and textual forms to impress his host and to establish his own and his patron's authority at the foreign court.

Laying bare the generic structures of Muṣṭafā al-Bakrī's 18th-century travelogue from Damascus to Jerusalem, Björn Bentlage ("Muṣṭafā al-Bakrī's *Jerusalem Journey* and the Early Modern Arabic Travelogue") shows the usefulness of genre theory as a tool which, far from being limited to matters of classification, can be employed to uncover the literary, social, and cultural conventions underlying the relationship between author, text and audience. To this purpose, Bentlage takes a close look at the style, structure, and context of the travelogue, as well as its composition, intertextual embeddedness, motives, and social function. He demonstrates how the combined processes of selection, compilation, and adaptation have all contributed to the overarching framework of the *riḥla* (account of a journey), through which autobiographical elements and the personal (spiritual) experience of the author are mediated. In the end, as Bentlage observes, the *riḥla* proves to be a highly complex genre that encompasses many "microforms," or embryonic generic structures, and which is closely connected to the cultural logic of early modern Arab culture.

The final **Section III**, "Modern Prose Fiction and Biography," is devoted to the shaping of modern prose and its manifold facets in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Special consideration is given to the genres of biography and novel, which are considered the youngest and most modern genres in the geography covered in the book. From the epistemological consequences of the introduction of new narrative genres in the Middle East to the specific features of a subgenre of Ottoman Greek city mysteries, from Arabic to Greek, and from socio-poetology to political uses of a genre, this section covers an exciting breadth of topics from the period.

The section opens with Stephan Guth's captivating essay ("What Does it Mean to Design a Plot? Space, Time, and the Subject's Agency in the New Narrative Genres of the 19th-century Middle East"). Basing his elaborations on Jābir 'Usfūr's idea of the profound consequences brought about by the shift from a poetry-concentrated esthetics to narrative prose and drama, Guth explores the twin processes of spatialization and temporalization in Middle Eastern literatures (especially in Arabic and Turkish). He emphasizes the psychological-anthropological dimension of the introduction of the new genres into Middle Eastern literatures in relation to author and audience in the 19th century. Put differently, the essay revolves around the question of how literature was affected by such changes as

secularisation and emancipation of the human subject. Assuming that genres reflect world views, Guth focuses on the essential choices that writers had to make regarding topic, characters, settings, structure, and language in their new role as “engineers” of a fictionalized factual world – a fictional world which, despite being “imagined,” reflects the real “factual” world and is shaped by the author’s subjective (or: creative) approach to it. By doing so, Guth brilliantly juxtaposes the epistemology and esthetics of modern genres with the traditional ones, in order to determine the continuities and the fundamental differences between them.

Günil Özlem Ayayadın Cebe (“Biography: Modest Champion of Ottoman-Turkish Literature”) examines the concomitant rise of the novel and the biography in the late Ottoman Empire. She presents a brief history of the Ottoman biography and underlines its eminent role within the Ottoman literary framework, approaching this genre from a sociological perspective and investigating its generic development. Scanning hundreds of periodicals and printed books in the second half of the 19th century, Ayayadın Cebe underlines the importance of biography in the shaping of the prosaic world by focusing on the fictional aspects of biography and the biographical mechanisms of the novel. Firstly, she demonstrates that biography, far from being a peripheral genre, was in fact a key genre whose rise – as evidenced by statistical data – went hand in hand with the rise of the Ottoman-Turkish novel and supplied rich material for novelists to draw their characters. Secondly, counter to widespread claims, she shows that Ottoman biography was not a mere imitation of French models with no roots in the domestic culture. Rather, it owes its birth to the privatisation and individualisation of Ottoman society and the interest of novelists in intimate details of an individual’s life as a consequence of literary modernisation. The early precursors of Ottoman biography (the *tercüme-i hal*) can be situated much earlier than most literary histories situate them, namely at the end of the 18th century, as a reaction to the needs of the modernising Ottoman bureaucracy. Thirdly, Ayayadın Cebe assesses the development and changing features of biography, especially as effected by the development of printing techniques (illustrations) and the changing expectations of readers.

At the heart of Zoi Georgiadou’s article (“The Popular *City Mysteries* Literary Genre: The Case of the Constantinopolitan Greek Novels in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century”) lies the argument that the novel can be a very useful source for the study of the collective identity of members of the reading community. Approaching literature as part of social life, and focusing on its reception and the expectations connected to various aspects of literary works such as their type, generic tradition and their

Zeitgeist, Georgiadou examines eight novels of the city mysteries genre written by Ottoman Greeks and published in Istanbul in the second half of the 19th century – most of them hitherto unknown to researchers. Georgiadou shows how this specific subgenre owes its emergence to the rise of new Greek-speaking classes in the Ottoman capital during the same period, culturally and socially powerful and slowly establishing something akin to collective identity. The genre of city mysteries participated in the creation and fixation of this Constantinopolitan Greek identity, as opposed to the *Megali Idea* in the Greek Kingdom. The novels capture the social realities of the time, serve as vehicles of critique of social injustice and exploitation in times of major economic and social changes, aim to offer the means to improve the situation of the Greco-Ottoman community in the capital, and are vivid expressions of the unique character of Constantinopolitan Greeks. As such, this highly interesting literary discourse also opens new avenues for social studies of late Ottoman metropolitan *Rums*.

In the last essay of this section and the volume (“In the Service of the Republic: Some Observations on the Kemalist ‘Revolutionary’ Novel”) Petr Kučera, through a close reading of seven novels written between 1928 and 1933, gives insights into the peculiarities of an emerging subgenre of Turkish republican literature and addresses the question of the function of the Kemalist novel within early republican Turkish society. The article highlights the need to contextualize this type of ideological fiction in order to lay bare its mythopoetic, ritual mechanisms and its role in the shaping of national identity. Furthermore, the essay tries to determine the factors that led to the emergence of the Kemalist revolutionary novel, especially in the context of the modernization of national culture. Delving into the language and style, emplotment, and iconography of these novels, Kučera reads them as “secular hagiographies,” whose primarily purpose was to “ritualize” and “mythologize” Kemalist ideology and recent Turkish history, thus helping to stabilize and entrench the tenets and values of the Turkish revolution.

SECTION I:
EPICS AND CLASSICAL POETRY

IS *OĞUZNĀME* A GENRE?

INGEBORG BALDAUF

What is an *oğuznāme*? Or should we ask, “What is the *Oğuznāme*?” The issue is tricky from the start: the denominator occurs in contexts conventionally attributed to folklore, literature and history. In some cases, it looks like a proper name, in others like a generic term, and in again others it seems uninterpretable, as if applied erroneously. *Oğuznāme* is such a broad term that the underlying phenomenon has recently been mystified as an ever-flowing Grand Saga.¹ Unfortunately, even this comprehensive overview of what *oğuznāmes* are known has failed to clarify what we are actually talking about when we use the word.² A clear and easy way to resolve the issue would be to consider an *oğuznāme* as a piece that has been deliberately given that name by its author, which means we would end up with a single item, the so-called *Kazan Oğuznamesi*,³ a late 18th-century historical compilation that seems, in this strict sense, to be the only “real *oğuznāme*.” However, this does not change the fact that the term also occurs in many other, less clear-cut cases.

What is most confusing about *oğuznāme* is authorship: in very few cases do we know who bestowed this name on a piece of historical writing, on an epic text, or on a particular anonymous manuscript or auctorial piece. One thing is for sure: it is generally scholars who name things *oğuznāme*. Naming in scholarship is an attempt at classifying; and, “if ‘genre’ is to function as an analytical tool, qualification as a genre must be determined

* I dedicate this article to the memory of Professor Dr. Semih Tezcan, my highly esteemed colleague and dear friend for many years.

¹ My interpretation of “*nehir destan*,” as coined by Ahmet B. Ercilasun, *Nehir Destan Oğuzname (Oguz Bitig)* (Istanbul: Dergâh, 2019).

² Zeynep Korkmaz’s review attempts to systematise Ercilasun’s universe but does not go far beyond an enumeration, however helpful, of important elements of that universe (“Yine Oğuznâmeler Üzerine”, *Türk Dili* 824 (69) (2020): 14-31.)

³ See Somayeh Easy’s doctoral thesis “Oğuznâme ve Şehnâme Üzerine Karşılaştırmalı Bir İnceleme” (Izmir: Ege University, 2015).

according to consistent criteria.”⁴ Does *oğuznāme* in this sense qualify as a genre?

In this article, I cannot resolve the big questions that arise regarding *oğuznāme/Oğuznāme*, but I hope to contribute some thoughts about it from a genre perspective. In some cases, this will necessitate a closer look into the texts – almost exclusively written texts, that is, as the oral tradition, which keeps giving rise to speculation, has only come down to us in one exceptional case. I intend to pay particular attention to the paratexts that complete the textual witnesses, and to the contexts in which particular texts have emerged and been dealt with by scholarship.

Some Codicological Considerations

In narrative texts – historical as well as literary ones – the term *oğuznāme* is mostly found in paratextual elements such as prefaces and conclusions,⁵ and sometimes in explanatory remarks that are part of the basic text, such as references to source works employed by the authors, or ponderings about intentions pursued with that given text.

The term *oğuznāme* can occur on an endpaper at the start of a book or on another supplementary leaf, as part of a clause defining the manuscript. It is difficult, if not impossible, to tell who actually added these small paratexts, at what time, or why. A case in point is folio 1a of the famous 41 folia compilation of adages preserved at Berlin State Library in the rich collection of the late 18th century Orientalist, enlightener and Prussian Ambassador to the Ottoman court, Heinrich Friedrich Diez, as part of multitextual manuscript Diez A quart. 31:⁶ the awkward but huge word *oğuznāme* on that page outshines the “subtitle” *ya‘nī żurūb-i emāl* “that is,

⁴ Frog, “Genres, Genres Everywhere, but Who Knows What to Think? Toward a Semiotic Model,” in *Genre – Text – Interpretation. Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Folklore and Beyond*, ed. Kaarina Koski and Frog with Ulla Savolainen, (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2016), 51.

⁵ Abdullah Bakır remarks that “titles,” in his case *Tārīx-i Āl-i Seljūq, Seljūq-nāme, Oğuz-nāme* and *Moğol-nāme* for one particular work, occur on several manuscripts, but “many/most of the names have been inserted later” (Abdullah Bakır, “Yazıcızāde ‘Alī’nin Selçuk-nāme İsimli Eserinin Edisyon Kritiği. Giriş-Metin-Dizin” (PhD diss., Marmara University, 2008), 167.)

⁶ For the content of the manuscript see Semih Tezcan, “Gedanken und Bemerkungen zu zwei türkischen Handschriften,” in *Heinrich Friedrich von Diez (1751-1817). Freidenker – Diplomat – Orientkenner*, eds. Christoph Rauch and Gideon Stiening (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 299ff.

proverbia” as well as an explanatory remark *türkîje zarb-i meṭel-dirler* “(These) are Turkic proverbs” placed on top:

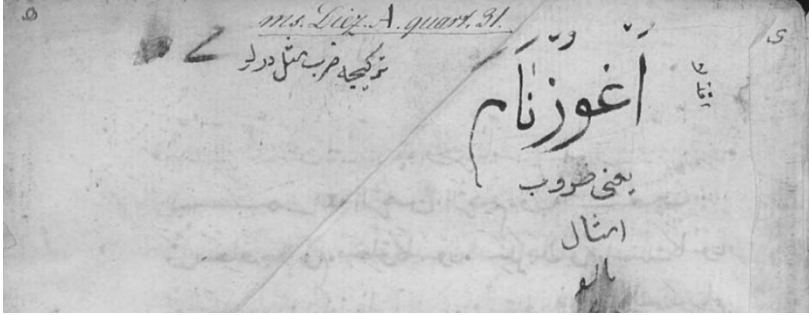


Fig. 1-1: Fol. 1a, Ms. Diez A quart. 31, Staatsbibliothek Berlin Preußischer Kulturbesitz⁷

Semih Tezcan, who worked on this challenging text for many years, and probably understood the true nature of that opaque piece better than anyone else, chose to name the work *Berlin Oğuznamesi*, assuming that the “title” of the multitextual manuscript related to its adages part only. He suggests that *oğuznâme* in this context should be interpreted as “proverbs of the legendary Oğuz people.”⁸ While Tezcan does not go into further detail on this, his suggestion is unlikely to be based primarily on folio 1a. Now, where else does the word occur? It is included in the headline on folio 1b, which – although in a rather untypical graphic constellation – reads as *ḥāẓihi r-risāle min kellimāt [sic] • oğuznâme el-meṣhūr bi-atalar sözi •* followed by the *basmala* and *ve-bihi nestaʿîn* in line 2.

⁷ Digitised manuscript available at https://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht/?PPN=PPN177221308X&PHYSID=PHYS_0003 (accessed December 31, 2022).

⁸ See Semih Tezcan, *Topkapı Sarayı Oğuznamesi. İnceleme* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2020), 300; Wilhelm Pertsch, *Die Handschriften-Verzeichnisse der Königlichen Bibliothek zu Berlin. Sechster Band. Verzeichnis der Türkischen Handschriften* (Berlin: Asher, 1889), 65-68.

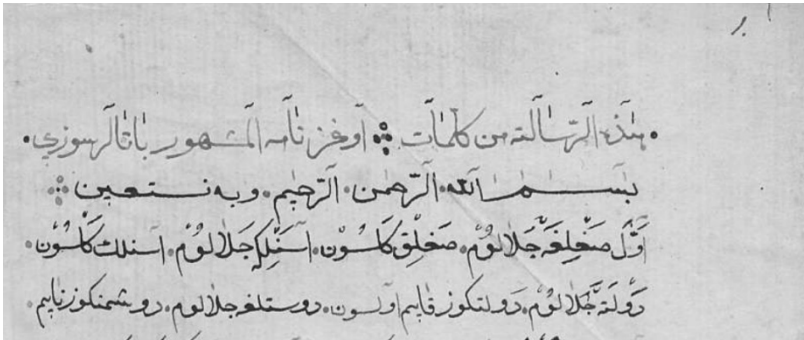


Fig. 1-2: From fol. 1b of Diez A quart. 31

The phrasing of line 1 is as unclear as it is irregular: should we understand that this treatise has been concocted from “the words of an *oğuznâme*” – to be read with an *izāfa*, against the ostentatious graphic separation of *kelimāt* and *oğuznâme* – which is “known as *Atalar Sözi*”? The heading would thus point to a model known by the name of *Atalar Sözi* (*Proverbia*), a work referred to by an appellative – not a proper name – *oğuznâme*, which then needs to be understood as a generic term.

However, at the end of that very proverbial text, in order to separate it more clearly from the ensuing, unrelated text than the scribe did, Diez himself⁹ has inserted the phrase *temmet oğuznâme* (“(here) ends ...”), in which *Oğuznâme* can only be interpreted as a proper name. Hence, Tezcan’s decision to employ *Oğuznâme* as a proper name and apply that name to a group of similar texts preserved at Berlin, St Petersburg and Istanbul is both disproved and confirmed by the Berlin manuscript.

⁹ Pertsch (*Die Handschriften-Verzeichnisse*, 228) identifies “Kitāb-i Dede Qorqud,” the Berlin version of the *Dedem Qorqud Kitābı* (Diez A fol. 61, <http://resolver.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/SBB0001AF0500000000>; accessed December 31, 2022), as a copy produced by Diez himself after the Dresden manuscript (cf. Tezcan, “Gedanken und Bemerkungen”); the insertion on fol. 41b of Diez A quart. 31 is by the same hand.

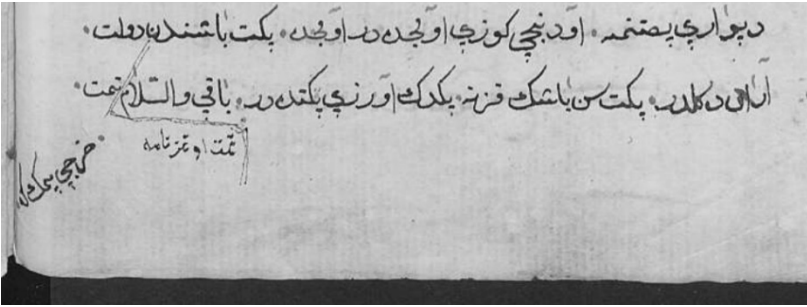


Fig. 1-3: End of the proverbial text with Diez's remark, fol. 41b of Diez A quart. 31

Semih Tezcan was well aware that Diez, although boldly naming the text *Oğuznâme* (ascribing the adages to the mythic figure *Oğuz*, whom he knew from Abūlgāzī's *Şajara* texts) “could not understand why that collection of sayings was called *Oğuznâme*. Such a term did not exist in the dictionaries available to him.”¹⁰ The best dictionary available was no doubt Meninski's *Thesaurus Linguarum Orientalium* from 1680. In Diez's time as Prussian Ambassador to the Ottoman Court (1786-1790),¹¹ this source was famous among Europeans in Istanbul who strove to learn local languages. Stanislaus Kostka Pichelstein, for example, who, from 1766 studied, and from 1779 onwards held a leading position at the Polish dragoman school in Istanbul,¹² authored 60 pages of explanations to the *Thesaurus*,¹³ which indeed does not include a lexeme *oğuznâme*.

The *Berlin Oğuznamesi* is one of a small number of texts grouped together because they share the denomination *Oğuznâme* and/or some conspicuous prosodic and/or content-related features. St Petersburg State University holds another important member of that group, a work that overlaps with its Berlin counterpart in both name and content – the so-called *St. Petersburg Oğuznamesi*.¹⁴ Its headline *hāzā kitāb oğuznâme* is straightforward, although not quite typical of conventional manuscripts;

¹⁰ Tezcan, “Gedanken und Bemerkungen,” 307.

¹¹ Nurdan Küçükasköylü, “İstanbul'da Avrupalı Elçiler ve Türk Dünyası Koleksiyonları,” in 8. *Uluslararası Türk Kültürü Kongresi, Kültürel Miras-Bildiriler II* (Ankara: Atatürk Kültür Merkezi Yayınları, 2015), [6] and [9-10].

¹² Agnieszka Emilia Lesiczka, “XVIII. Yüzyılda İstanbul'da Polonyalıları Türkçe Öğretim Projesi (1766-1793),” *Belleten* 64 (2) (2016), 218ff.

¹³ Lesiczka, “XVIII. Yüzyılda,” 220.

¹⁴ Digital copy available at <http://hdl.handle.net/11701/7186> (accessed January 1, 2023).

بسمائیسلاوس و سده چهلستین

هذ کتاب اوغوز نامی

و آرد که سورنی قرآن کرم لایله یانجی لایق الله یلشیر آتارسون
موقر ان آتار آتار ایتمه بی اید غنیمت تات بکنج

Pichelstein, born in 1742 to a family of Austrian background well connected in Ottoman and Crimean high society,¹⁵ had already, in his early Istanbul years (from 1766 onwards), authored studies on Arabic and Turkish grammar, compiled lexicographic information on Persian and Turkish, and provided informational materials and translations from Persian/Turkish into Polish.¹⁶ It is safe to assume that Pichelstein was in contact with Diez, who from 1786 to 1790 acted as Prussian Ambassador, and both men – as with several other European expatriates in Istanbul – obviously shared a keen interest in Oriental manuscripts. Traces of the Pichelstein family's Oriental book collection, which was later stored in their ancestral chateau at

¹⁵ See Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, “Na tropach Salomei Reginy Piłsztynowej: głosa do życiorysu,” *W cieniu wojen i rozbiorów. Studia z dziejów Rzeczypospolitej XVIII i początków XIX wieku*, eds. U. Kosińska et al. (Warsaw: Neriton, 2014), 216.

¹⁶ Lesiczka "XVIII. Yüzyılda," 220.

Steinbüchel/Zaprice (Slovenia), vanished in the aftermath of World War 2,¹⁷ but as Pichelstein's *Oğuznâme* manuscript bears the above-mentioned Russian owner's mark from 1864, there is little reason to consider manuscript O. 1364 as part of that recently lost collection. The transmission of the manuscript from Pichelstein's home at Istanbul to St Petersburg University Library remains obscure.¹⁸ Vasiliy Dmitrievič Smirnov, a professor at St Petersburg University in the late 19th century, and an expert on Turkic manuscripts,¹⁹ fails to mention this manuscript in his study *On the History of Turkish Literature* (1891), when discussing the *oğuznâme*, while he obviously knew Diez's partial translation of the *Berlin Oğuznamesi*. Smirnov was aware of Diez's assumption that the Berlin book of adages was named after Oğuz, the mythical ancestral leader of the Turks, who was said to have issued ethical and moral instructions, "among them adages of almost proverbial power."²⁰ If Smirnov had looked into Pichelstein's *Oğuznâme* manuscript, he would have seen that most of these adages, and also the more easily intelligible hymns of praise and mockery contained in the Berlin manuscript, were absent from the St Petersburg text.

Diez writes that he searched for other *oğuznâme* manuscripts in Istanbul and in European libraries, but failed to find any.²¹ Now the question is, why did Diez not know of Pichelstein's manuscript, if we assume that the two gentlemen could hardly have been unacquainted? The colophon of that manuscript includes the laconic date "*sene 9*," which has been interpreted (without comment) by A.H. Bayat, who was clearly in search of very early evidence of Turkic proverbs, as 1009/1600.²² However, the language,

¹⁷ See Küçükhasköylü "İstanbul'da Avrupalı Elçiler," [10].

¹⁸ On ways in which manuscripts acquired by late 18th/early 19th-century expatriates could end up in Russia during their lifetime or posthumously see Frederik Thomasson, "Johan David Åkerblad: Orientalist, Traveller, and Manuscript Collector," and Olga V. Vasilyeva, "Åkerblad's Collection in Suchtelen's Orientalia: From Sweden to Russia," in *Travelling through Time: Essays in Honour of Kaj Öhrnberg* (*Studia Orientalia* 114), eds. Sylvia Akar et al. (Helsinki: Finnish Oriental Society, 2013), 463-78 and 493-510.

¹⁹ In 1897, he published the catalogue *Manuscripts Turcs de l'Institut des Langues Orientales, décrits par W.D. Smirnow* (St Petersburg: Egger & Co., 1897).

²⁰ Vasiliy Smirnov, *Oçerk istorii tureckoj literaturı* (St Petersburg: Stasyulevič, 1891), 9. Interestingly, Smirnov points to similarities of these proverbs with pieces of poetry by 'Andalīb; the 17th-century Khorezmian poet has a versified "Oğuznâme" (see below) that is not mentioned in this book or in Smirnov's 1897 catalogue.

²¹ See Tezcan, "Gedanken und Bemerkungen," 307.

²² Ali Haydar Bayat, "İlk Atasözü Kitaplarımızdan Oğuznâme'nin Berlin Nüshası ve Feridun Nâfiz Uzluk'un Bir Derlemesi," *X. Millî Mevlâna Kongresi. Tebliğler*.

design and style of the manuscript are more suggestive of a later drafting: 1109/1698, if not 1209/1795.²³ By 1795 Diez had already left Istanbul, which would explain how he missed out this sought-after piece, and it might perhaps even explain why Pichelstein set his name on top of the text in such a triumphant manner: he had found what Diez had been searching for – a collection of proverbs by the name of *Oğuznâme*.

Proverbs and Adages

On reflection, however, Pichelstein's triumph loses some of its glamour: his manuscript is not exactly what Diez had been searching for. Pichelstein's *St. Petersburg Oğuznamesi* can best be characterised as a simple collection of proverbs, not as a book of adages like Diez's *Berlin Oğuznamesi*. It includes many proverbs that are also found in Diez's manuscript, and in other related works, but it follows a totally different discursive pattern, namely, arrangement by alphabetical order. Regarding genre, Pichelstein's piece fits in with another type of manuscript sought after by European collectors: systematic compilations of proverbs and idioms in Oriental languages, which firstly catered to the practical needs of *jeunes de langue* who had to become conversant to fulfill their espionage and diplomatic missions, and secondly, which spoke to the growing interest of enlighteners in the mental setup of "the nations."²⁴ An early manuscript of that type that has found its way to Europe is Ms. turc 237 from 885/1483, held in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.²⁵ The alphabetical order in this work, which Pertev Boratav considered as a pioneer of its genre,²⁶ has not been thoroughly maintained;²⁷ large chunks of the material follow a more or less transparent

Cilt II (Konya: Selçuk Üniversitesi Basımevi, 2003), 28. Bayat's reading "on the 4th of Rajab" needs to be corrected to "in the month of Rajab, on Wednesday, between the two prayers" – Bayat's dating has gone down in scholarship without a further plausibility check.

²³ The online information on Ms. Or. 1364 only mentions 1809 as "date issued," with no further explanation.

²⁴ For Diez's interest in proverbs as "true national witnesses" see Tezcan, "Gedanken und Bemerkungen," 304.

²⁵ The source can be found at <http://gallica.bnf.fr>; see also *Catalogue des manuscrits turcs. T. I : Ancien fonds, nos 1-396. Supplément : nos 1-572 / Bibliothèque nationale*, ed. E. Blochet (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, 1932), 99.

²⁶ Pertev N. Boratav, "Quatre-vingt quatorze proverbes turcs du XVe siècle, restés inédits," *Oriens* 7 (2) (1954): 223-249.

²⁷ A later example is *Emîâller türkçe italyânja ve lâtinje terjemesi ile "Adagia turcica cum interpretatione Italica et Latina,"* contained in the multitextual Dresden Mscr.Dresd.Ea.224 (fol. 68b-92a) from ca. 1689, which is carelessly drafted and

associational principle instead.²⁸ By the second half of the 18th century, the genre had settled in and the alphabetical order was well established. The genre had meanwhile developed into a learned one, as indicated by the choice of Arabizing titles.²⁹ On the other hand, the headpiece of the old Paris proverbs manuscript, whose design equals that of Pichelstein's *St. Petersburg Oğuznamesi*, displays the modest generic title *Atalar Sözi* – the same Turkic title by which Diez's *oğuznâme* was allegedly known.

Challenged by the alien structure and difficult details of “his” manuscript, Diez must have searched not for a register-like compilation of the type just mentioned, but for a text of the kind that Boratav has described in his considerations on the passage from orally performed folk wisdom to the singled-out proverbium.³⁰ Taking Boratav's thoughts yet a step further we can say that in communities oriented on oral lore, proverbial sayings would not (only) come as isolated sentences. Instead, bards in their performances would group together a number of thematically associated maxims, observing conventions of oral prosody (alliteration, variation, extension...), which allowed them to capture a given concept from several perspectives, before jumping, in an associative twist, on to the next topic, which they would elaborate in the same way. Boratav does not explicitly define an adages *genre* in his essay, but his definition is so consistent that he might plausibly have done so.³¹ Interestingly, his description matches not

arranged by a loosely associative order (available at <https://digital.slub-dresden.de/werkansicht/dlf/253822/164/0/>, accessed January 2, 2023).

²⁸ Alizade, who edited the *St. Petersburg Oğuznamesi*, unfortunately rearranged the materials in order of the Latin (!) alphabet and omits a significant number of proverbs judged as *müsteheçen* (“immoral”; see *Oğuznâme (Emsâl-i Mehmedali). XVI. yy.da Yazılmış Türk Atasözleri Kitabı*, ed. Samed Alizade with remarks by Ali Haydar Bayat (Istanbul: Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları Vakfı, 1992), ix).

²⁹ An example of this advanced stage is Müstakîmzâde's (m. 1788) *Hurûf ile müretteb zurûb-ı emîâl*; Ali Şeylan, “Müstakîmzâde Süleymân Sâdeddîn'in Durûb-ı Emsâl Adlı Eserinin Işığında Atasözlerinin Tarihî Seyri ile Eserdeki Atasözlerinin Tespiti ve Tasnifi,” *Beykent University Journal of Social Sciences* 9 (1) (2016): 72-101. Şeylan's edition preserves the original order.

³⁰ Boratav elaborates his understanding of that intermediary genre in “Quatre-vingt quatorze proverbes,” 226.

³¹ A folkloric genre that widely coincides with Boratav's definition is the all-Qıpçaq-Turkic and Mongolic “long song.” For an example from the Bashqort genre *qubayır*, which displays most of these features, see [Anonymous] “Qara hüz ni mägñälä,” *Başqort Aymağı* 1 (1925): 31-32.

only parts of the *Berlin Oğuznamesi* included in his elaboration, but also the preamble to the *Dedem Qorqud Kitābı* (hereafter DKK).³²

The initial part of the *Berlin Oğuznamesi* starts out with a series of multiple-phrase ponderings, each resumed with an apotropaic stanza naming the figure of Dede Qorqud. The ponderings are about: the (missing) qualities of true men; deeds that lead to disaster; alleged habits of “Turks and Turkmens,” women, pastoralists and agriculturalists; and prognostic signs of apocalypse. The text then culminates in a (partly ironical) self-reflection by Dede Qorqud, associatively followed by a brief mention of the Oğuz heroes and tribes, and of Salur Qazan and Qorqud, and a short conclusive blessing. After these six pages or so, whose coda echoes a salient passage from another type of “*oğuznāme*” to which we will return shortly, the text turns to its core topic by briefly laying out the general nature of the “sayings of the elders” (*atalar sözi*) and then displaying a sarcastic best-of from these sayings (“They told the elders ‘My father has died’ – they responded ‘Now you have a problem’ (...) ‘My daughter has died’ – ‘Now you are rescued from expenditures’ (...) ‘All my relatives have died’ – ‘Enjoy!’”). The passage concludes with a couplet on “those things on earth which Oğuz Ata wouldn’t know” (end of fol. 4a). Solemnity reloaded, the text then takes up a new theme: “things impossible” (“Unless you say Allāh-Allāh, things aren’t going to work out. A man won’t get rich unless God almighty grants. (...) A son-in-law won’t be a son, a daughter-in-law no daughter. (...) No matter how much snow comes down, it won’t last till the summer...”). After that comes a new thematical passage, and so on.

The preamble to the Dresden and Vatican DKK manuscripts³³ also contains all of these elements, but is much more strictly structured. It sets out with the above-mentioned element also known from the so-called *Oğuznāme of Yazıjizāde* (see below for more), which is Qorqud Ata’s prophecy that “at the end of time princely rule shall again go to the Qayı and no one shall take it from their hands until the end of time when doomsday comes.”³⁴ The preamble proper opens with the above-quoted *Allāh-Allāh dēmeyinje işler oñmaz*, thus directing the attention to God. This is an appropriate opening for an introduction to a narrative text as the Dede

³² The DKK Dresden manuscript is available at <https://digital.slub-dresden.de/werkansicht/dlf/10013/1/> (accessed January 2, 2023); the Vatican manuscript at https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.turc.102 (accessed January 2, 2023).

³³ Dresd. 3a|2 and Vat. 58b|3; see Semih Tezcan and Hendrik Boeschoten, *Dede Korkut Oğuznameleri* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2001), 29ff. and 197ff. Although I follow Tezcan and Boeschoten’s approach to treat the two manuscripts as independent, for our purposes the (almost identical) preambles can be seen as one.

³⁴ Text in Bakır “Yazıcızāde,” 24, my translation.

Qorqut stories, regardless of whether we imagine a reading session or oral performance; and it is different from an introduction to a collection of proverbial sayings that must first draw attention to the essence of proverbs. By way of prosody-based association (the categorical denial of possibility expressed by a negative aorist), there follows a long passage of “things impossible,” concluded by an apotropaic line that again invokes Allāh (rather than Qorqut, as is the case in Diez’s text). Next come passages on “undesirable qualities in young men/sons” and on “expert knowledge” (“The deer knows best where the pasture grounds are ...”; “The mother knows best who has fathered the child...”; “The singer knows best which man is generous or stingy”); a passage in praise of God, the Prophet, major figures and features from the creed, and close family; and the latter theme carries the author’s inspiration on to a long evaluation of “four types of wives,” out of which, of course, three are utterly undesirable.³⁵ Each of these passages opens with the mention of Qorqut (the last passage: *ozan* “the singer”) and concludes with an apotropaic formula. Only the “wives” passage is in prose, while all others come in syllable-counting meter with occasional extended lines, as is typical of folkloric performance; verse-concluding words assonate, and some verses display alliterating headwords.

Frames and Narrations

All in all, the DKK preamble lays out many of the basic concepts then elaborated in the plots.³⁶ Together with the short coda pieces of the Dresden and Vatican manuscripts, which ponder the vanity of this world and conclude in blessings for end-of-life and afterlife, they establish a frame that somehow holds together the narrations of the tribal heroes, which form the core of the book, on an ideological plane. Another such bond, though much less elaborate, arises from the introductory presentation of Dede Qorqut as

³⁵ Also compare the above-named Bashqort “long song” (*qubayır*), which shares several of these features and also culminates in an evaluation of wives. See [Anonymous] “Qara hüz ni mägnälä,” *Bashqort Aymağı* 1 (1925): 31-32.

³⁶ The DKK-like Günbed text, whose narrative part is a singular song in praise of Ġazan/Qazan’s heroic killing of the dragon, is also introduced by a long reflective preamble, which – partly in a different order – contains similar elements; the basic idea of decay, vanity, and ultimate meaninglessness of heroic struggle and life in general is elaborated there in a very similar way. (Text in N. Shahgoli et al., “Dede Korkut Kitabı’nın Günbet Yazması,” *Modern Türklük Araştırmaları Dergisi* 16 (2) (2019): 147-379.)