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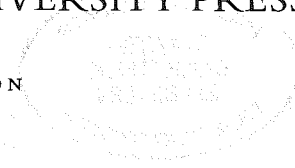
# SINGING THE PAST

*Turkic and Medieval Heroic Poetry*

KARL REICHL

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## Foreword

Gregory Nagy

Karl Reichl's *Singing the Past: Turkic and Medieval Heroic Poetry* forces a radical reassessment of the history of literature in medieval Europe. This book compares European poetic forms, as preserved in medieval manuscripts, with a dazzling variety of corresponding poetic forms surviving in the living oral traditions of the Kirghiz, Kazakhs, Karakalpaks, Uzbeks, Uighurs, and other Turkic peoples of Central Asia. Reichl's detailed comparisons add up to an inevitable overall argument: the genres of medieval European literature, including forms of “high art” conventionally linked with Classical epic poetry, derive from vernacular oral traditions as well as post-Classical literary traditions.

Reichl's argumentation, combining internal analysis with comparative methodology, continues where Milman Parry and Albert Lord left off. Parry analyzed the ancient text of the Homeric *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as evidence for a pre-existing poetic system, which he then compared with the living poetic systems of the South Slavic oral traditions in the former Yugoslavia, collecting more than 12,500 texts of live performances from 1933 to 1935. After Parry's premature death in 1935, the continuation of his comparative work was left to his student Albert Lord, who went on to write a definitive account in *The Singer of Tales* (Harvard University Press, 1960; 2000 edition, with new introduction by Stephen Mitchell and Gregory Nagy). Lord's book lays down a fundamental challenge to all readers of European literature when he announces, at the very beginning of his Foreword: “This book is about Homer. He is our Singer of Tales. Yet in a larger sense, he represents all singers of tales from time immemorial and unrecorded to the present. Our book is about these other singers as well.”

For Parry and Lord, the primary point of comparison with Homer was the *guslar*, the singer of tales in the South Slavic oral traditions. The heroic songs of the South Slavs were now suddenly being juxtaposed with the heroic poetry of Homer, which has been by hindsight the original model of epic in the history of European literature—or at least the prototype of the classical genre conventionally called “epic.” By now, the debate originally generated by this juxtaposition in *The Singer of Tales* has had a long history, but the actual challenge retains its freshness: How are we to compare the most canonical of canonical texts, the epics of Homer, to oral traditions that represent “all singers of tales from time immemorial and unrecorded to the present”?

The debate continues not only in the field of Classics (defined in a narrow sense as the study of Greco-Roman antiquity) but also in medieval studies, thanks largely to the last chapter of *The Singer of Tales*, “Some Notes on Medieval Epic.” Like the classicists, medievalists appreciate what is at stake when such classics (in a broader sense) as *Beowulf* and the *Chanson de Roland* are juxtaposed with the nonclassical traditions of oral poetics. It is at this crucial point in the debate that Reichl’s book enters the picture.

The point of entry for *Singing the Past: Turkic and Medieval Heroic Poetry* has to do with a salient fact. We can find this fact signaled by Albert Lord himself in his two last books, both of which appeared in the Myth and Poetics series: *Epic Singers and Oral Tradition* (1991) and *The Singer Resumes the Tale* (posthumously published in 1995, edited by Mary Louise Lord). Engaging the ongoing debate among medievalists as well as classicists concerning the applicability of oral poetics, Lord makes it clear in these books that the South Slavic model of oral traditional poetics is but a single example among many when it comes to comparing the forms of classical and medieval literature to corresponding forms in oral traditions. As a particularly effective comparative example, alongside the South Slavic evidence of the Balkans, Lord singles out the oral traditions of the Turkic peoples of Central Asia (*Epic Singers and Oral Tradition*, Chap. 13, pp. 211–244: “Central Asiatic and Balkan Epic”). The importance of the comparative Turkic evidence is highlighted also by the very first book in the Myth and Poetics series, Richard Martin’s *The Language of Heroes: Speech and Performance in the “Iliad”* (1989; see especially pp. 6–7).

Reichl’s work not only continues where Parry and Lord left off. Reichl himself boldly went where Parry might have gone if only he had been given the chance. The young Parry, not contenting himself with his work as a classicist studying the text of Homer, had sought the best place to study the comparative evidence of living oral traditions. Parry’s first choice, as Albert Lord was fond of recounting to his students, had been the Soviet Union; it was only after he was denied a visa to travel there that Parry decided on Yugoslavia as his

destination. The young Reichl, not contenting himself with his own work as a medievalist studying the text of *Beowulf* and other medieval classics, managed to travel throughout the former Soviet Union and China in his ongoing quest to engage the comparative evidence of the living oral traditions in Turkic Central Asia. Like Parry, Reichl had been inspired by the ethnographic work of Radloff, whose *Proben der Völksliteratur der türkischen Stämme* (I–VIII, 1866–1899) remains to this day a classic in the study of oral traditions in Central Asia. Unlike Parry, however, Reichl also had the advantage of hindsight, inspired by the ethnographic work of Parry and Lord in the Balkans. Reichl writes in an earlier book (*Turkic Oral Epic Poetry: Traditions, Forms, Poetic Structure* [New York: Garland Publishing, 1992], ix):

While still a student in Munich I bought a book with the title *Der Sänger erzählt: Wie ein Epos entsteht*. It was A. B. Lord’s *The Singer of Tales*, which had only just come out in a German translation. It made fascinating reading and first revealed to me the relevance of living oral epic poetry for the study of medieval epic poetry, in particular of works such as *Beowulf* or the *Chanson de Roland*, epics which have come down to us in written form but betray their origin in an oral milieu. The path to Central Asia was opened for me only later when I discovered that the Bavarian State Library possessed a complete set of Radloff’s *Proben der Völksliteratur der türkischen Stämme*. Radloff’s translations, in their charming, antiquated German, introduced me to a world of heroism and passion, romance and adventure, marvel and magic, which has held me spellbound ever since.

In Karl Reichl’s *Singing the Past: Turkic and Medieval Heroic Poetry*, the sense of wonder initially experienced by the young student reading Radloff’s old volumes in a library has become transformed. Not only have Reichl’s own first-hand experiences in collecting Turkic oral poetry surpassed those of Radloff himself in breadth and depth of knowledge. Even more than that, this knowledge has now been applied to a most lively re-reading of medieval European literature. To compare this luminous body of writings with Turkic oral traditions of song and music, in all their dazzling varieties of genre and artistic bravura, is to be spellbound all over again.



## Acknowledgments

My greatest debt is to the singers from Central Asia whom I was able to record in the course of many research trips to the Turkic-speaking areas of the former Soviet Union and of China. I would like to thank in particular Žumabay Bazarov, who has performed for me on many occasions, from my first visit to Karakalpakistan in 1981 to his stay in Germany in the autumn of 1997. These research trips were made possible by invitations from the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan, the Academy of Social Sciences of China, in particular its Xinjiang branch, and the University of Nukus, as well as by generous grants from the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft and the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst. I have received much help from native scholars, with the recording, transcription and translation of Turkic epic and heroic poems; without their cooperation and advice much of my research would have been difficult if not impossible to carry out.

I would also like to record my gratitude to Gregory Nagy for his suggestion that I should write this book for his series, and for his encouragement and help over the years. I am most grateful to Joseph Harris and to an anonymous reader for Cornell University Press for making a number of valuable suggestions for improvement. I have also profited by the many helpful comments and corrections made by Gavin Lewis in the process of preparing the manuscript for publication. Although I have followed the advice I was given, there are doubtless many shortcomings left, for which I alone must bear responsibility.

K. R.

## Note on Transcription, Pronunciation, and Translations

Russian is transliterated according to the international system used in linguistics; see Comrie 1981, 286.

Arabic and Persian words are transliterated according to the system used by the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*.

For the various Turkic languages I have mainly followed the transcription system employed in the *Philologiae Turcicae Fundamenta* (Deny et al. 1959–64, 1:xivff.), with the exception of Turkish (of Turkey), which is quoted in the official modern orthography. The other exceptions are: the voiceless velar spirant is transliterated by <x> instead of <χ>, the voiced velar spirant by <ğ> instead of <γ>, and the velar nasal by <ñ> instead of <η>. A number of Turkic languages spoken in Central Asia are in the process of adopting Latin alphabets. As these alphabets, however, differ considerably from one another and are still in a state of flux, they have not been adopted for this book.

The following remarks are offered as a rough guideline to pronunciation.

Long vowels are written as <ā>, <ē>, etc. The values of <ā>, <ē>, <ī>, <ō>, and <ū> correspond roughly to those they have in Italian or Spanish: [a:], [e:], [o:], [u:]. So do the values of all other vowels, apart from those noted below.

In Uzbek, Persian, and Tajik words, <ā> stands for a dark vowel as in English *ball*: [ɔ:].

The Turkic languages have an unrounded, central /i/ sound [ɨ], transcribed as <î> and written as <ı> in Turkish; its sound can be approximated by pronouncing German <ü> or French <u> without rounding one's lips.

The rounded vowels <ö> and <ü> are pronounced roughly like their German equivalents, as in German *schön* [ø] and *München* [y], respectively.

<ä> stands for the vowel sound in English *at* [æ].

Consonants have approximately their English values, but the following conventions and exceptions should be noted.

The voiceless and voiced sibilants as in English *shoe* [ʃ] and *rouge* [ʒ] are transcribed as <š> (= Turkish <ş>) and <ž> (= Turkish <j>), respectively.

The voiceless and voiced affricates as in English *chin* [tʃ] and *jump* [dʒ] are transcribed as <č> (= Turkish <ç>) and <dž> (= Turkish <c>), respectively.

The /r/ is trilled in the Turkic languages.

The velar nasal as in English *sing* [ŋ] is transcribed as <ñ>. Although /ñ/ has a different sound value in the International Phonetic Alphabet, I have chosen this symbol for [ŋ] because it is used in Turkish transliterations of Older Turkish (Ottoman) texts or texts in other Turkic languages and has been adopted in the new Latin alphabet of some Turkic languages of the former Soviet Union.

The velar voiceless fricative as in Scottish *loch* [x] is transcribed as <x>, its voiced counterpart [ɣ] is transcribed as <ğ>. The latter is written <ğ̃> in Turkish; in Standard Turkish it is virtually unpronounced, with, however, compensatory lengthening of the preceding vowel.

The semivowel /y/ as in English *you* is transcribed as <y>.

The consonantal value of the sound transcribed as <w> is in Turkic words either that of a labiodental fricative [v] as in English *vat* or, as in Arabic and Persian words, that of a bilabial fricative [β] or labiovelar semivowel [w] as in English *web*. After vowels, as e.g. in Kazakh *Täwke*, <w> stands for a vowel or semivowel (compare the /au/ sound in English *bough*).

All translations are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

## SINGING THE PAST



The singer Žumabay Bazarov

## Introduction

But if anything be already said in the defence of sweet poetry, all concurrerth to the maintaining the heroical, which is not only a kind, but the best and most accomplished kind of poetry.

For Sir Philip Sidney, from whose *Defence of Poetry* (1595) this quotation comes, heroic poetry is the best and most accomplished kind of poetry, because it “doth not only teach and move to a truth, but teacheth and moveth to the most high and excellent truth.”<sup>1</sup> “Truth” is a key term in Sidney’s *Defence of Poetry*: if poetry is true, its “backbiters,” who criticize poetry as a tissue of lies and fables, must be wrong. But with poetry of the highest kind—heroic poetry or epic—other charges can be refuted as well, in particular that poetry is “the nurse of abuse, infecting us with many pestilent desires.” Far from it: “For as the image of each action stirreth and instructeth the mind, so the lofty image of such worthies [as Achilles] most inflameth the mind with desire to be worthy, and informs with counsel how to be worthy.”<sup>2</sup> Although Sidney follows tradition in emphasizing the moral value of serious poetry such as epic, his insistence on the effect and function of heroic poetry nevertheless strikes a decidedly modern note. Ethnographic accounts of the performance of heroic poetry generally stress the close link between this type of poetry and the cultural values of an ethnic group. In fact, Sidney was clearly aware of this ethnographic dimension. Earlier in his *Defence* he mentions the singing of heroic songs which he had experienced during his stay in Hungary in the summer of 1573: “In Hungary I have seen it the manner at all feasts, and other such meetings, to have

1. Van Dorsten 1973, 47. For Sidney the heroic type of poetry is synonymous with epic; his examples include the *Iliad*, Virgil’s *Aeneid*, Statius’s *Thebais*, and Tasso’s *Gerusalemme Liberata*.

2. *Ibid.*, 51, 47.

songs of their ancestors' valour, which that right soldierlike nation think one of the chiefest kindlers of brave courage."<sup>3</sup>

The view of heroic poetry as "songs of one's ancestors' valor" underlines the union of singer and listeners through a common bond: they belong together because they share the same past, the same ancestors, and with their past the same cultural values and the same conceptualizations of themselves and their place in history. It also stresses the fact that heroic poetry, at least living heroic poetry, is sung poetry. Oral epic poetry only exists through the medium of the bard's voice; it comes into being only when it is performed, when it is sung to an audience. Hence the title of this book, *Singing the Past*, implies these two aspects of heroic poetry: heroic poetry as a performance event, as song, and as poetry with a clear cultural dimension, as poetry that "teacheth and moveth to the most high and excellent truth."

Another way of describing the emphasis of this book on "singing" and "the past," would be to say that I am trying to contextualize heroic poetry. Throughout the book, three types of context play a role: the situational context, the generic context, and the cultural context of heroic poetry. By situational context I mean the context of performance. Oral epic poetry is only secondarily and derivatively a text, the "weaving together" (if we take "text" in its etymological sense) of linguistic signs to form a complex meaningful entity. It is primarily something that happens at a particular time, in a particular place, and under particular circumstances. The ethnography of communication has provided convenient terminological and analytical tools for the study of this type of speech event, and I will draw on this conceptual framework in my discussion of epic poetry.

Although my concern will be with the heroic epic (in particular in chapters 4 and 5), I have adopted a somewhat wider point of view. One reason for this is that the epic as a genre (or type of speech event) stands in a dynamic relationship to other poetic genres, both in the repertoire of the singers themselves and in the actual performance situation. It will be argued that this relationship with other genres in the repertoire of a singer is not random and gratuitous; it is significant for a synchronic and diachronic understanding of the oral epic. Hence the generic context must also be taken into account.

There is a third type of context. As the conventional meaning of individual words (as well as complete texts) rests on a presupposed knowledge of the world—otherwise we could not understand one another—so verbal acts such as the reciting of poetry rest on presuppositions about the value and place of this kind of activity in a society or a culture. It is not only the situational context

3. *Ibid.*, 46.

that is at stake here, but more fundamental "surroundings." I will term this type of context "cultural context," taking culture in the widely accepted sense of a system of shared meanings.<sup>4</sup>

In the chapters that follow, then, heroic poetry, and in particular the heroic epic, will be seen as standing in a network of oral genres with which it interacts both synchronically and diachronically; the heroic epic will be studied not only as a narrative of a particular textual structure but also as performance, as a speech event, a type of verbal interaction occurring in specific circumstances and conforming to specific rules; and finally, the heroic epic will be regarded not only as having meaning on the textual level but also as acquiring meaning through its special relationship to the speech community and its set of values. This cultural context of the heroic epic entails a particular view of one's own past and the relationship of oneself to this past, both in a "genealogical" and an "identificational" sense.

The poetry I am mostly concerned with in this book is the oral epic poetry of the Turkic-speaking peoples of Central Asia. Of their poetry, I will choose samples that come from various traditions (Uzbek, Kazakh, and Karakalpak) and that have generally been collected by myself. However, as the subtitle suggests, by contrasting Turkic with medieval heroic poetry I am looking at this poetry with the eyes of a medievalist. Why Turkic oral epic poetry and why comparative approaches from a medieval stance? In 1924 the Germanist Hans Naumann leveled an attack against the "Romantic concept of minstrel poetry."<sup>5</sup> Although Naumann had to admit the existence of minstrels in medieval Germany, he was emphatic in denying them any part in the composition of the works they performed. He even went so far as to doubt that minstrels ever performed narrative poetry. Sifting the evidence he came to the conclusion that "indeed there does not seem to be a single recorded example of the epic function of the [German] minstrel."<sup>6</sup> Naumann's views are extreme and have not gained general acceptance. But skepticism lingers on, and not only among students of medieval German epic poetry. In England, the debate about the creative contribution of minstrels to the poetry they are believed to have performed is of much older date. In his "Essay on the Ancient Minstrels of England" (1765), Bishop Percy expressed the opinion that while some minstrels might have been memorizing performers only, others must have been creative bearers of tradition, as "it would have been wonderful indeed if men whose peculiar profession

4. See, inter alia, Geertz 1973, 3–30.

5. The phrase comes from the title of Naumann's article: "Versuch einer Einschränkung des romantischen Begriffs Spielmannsdichtung" (Attempt at restricting the Romantic concept of minstrel poetry); Naumann [1924] 1977, 126.

6. Naumann [1924] 1977, 135.



it was, and who devoted their time and talents to entertain their hearers with poetical compositions, were peculiarly deprived of all poetical genius themselves."<sup>7</sup> For such an opinion Joseph Ritson had nothing but scorn, writing in his *Dissertation on Romance and Minstrelsy*: "The minstrels were too ignorant and too vulgar to translate pieces of several thousand lines; though such pieces may have been translated or written for them, as many a minstrel, no doubt, could sing and play what he had not the genius to compose, nor even the capacity to write or read."<sup>8</sup> Or as Naumann puts it, by crediting the medieval minstrel with any poetic faculty "we immensely overestimate the miserable ruffraff of minstrels."<sup>9</sup>

No doubt, the *menstellorum multitudo* was a mixed bag, and part of the problem is precisely the ambiguity of terms like "minstrel," "jongleur," "spielmann," "ioculator," and so on.<sup>10</sup> Although in the light of more recent research the emphatic denial of any poetic capacity in the medieval entertainer seems just as one-sided as the representation of the minstrel as an oral singer and creative bearer of tradition, the textual and historical evidence remains ambivalent and in need of interpretation, one way or the other. To make the issue even more entangled, the question of the minstrel's role in the performance, transmission, and composition of narrative poetry is intimately linked with the question of how we are to interpret extant medieval epic poetry for which an oral background has been assumed. Can such a background be substantiated? And, provided we answer this question in the affirmative, what is the precise relationship between the transmitted text and this oral milieu? And the oral background itself: is it one of reading aloud, of reciting a memorized text, or of "composing in performance"? As one tries to answer one question, more crop up: when a narrative was orally performed, was it recited or sung, and if sung, was it "properly" sung or rather chanted like, for instance, a psalm? Was it sung or chanted to the accompaniment of an instrument (which?) or without, with just one performer or several (how many?), with or without gestures and miming? Clearly, the more specific and involved our questioning becomes, the less likely it seems that the available evidence will provide us with an unambiguous answer.

7. Percy [1765] 1886, 1:356.

8. Ritson 1802, 57.

9. Naumann [1924] 1977, 126.

10. The main problem in the discussion of the medieval "singer of tales" is the fact that there were obviously a great number of different types of singers, a fact that forbids generalizations. What might be true of the Anglo-Saxon *scop* need not apply to the French jongleur, and what characterizes the jongleur of the twelfth century need not hold good for the jongleur of the fourteenth century. For a general account of the medieval minstrel (from a musicological point of view), see Salmen 1960; Faral's classic study of the jongleur in medieval France (1910) is still useful; on the various terms for the popular entertainer and narrator and their meaning, see Ogilvy 1963 and Burrow 1973; for a recent study of the various functions of the jongleur in the twelfth century, see Baldwin 1997. For a discussion of the *menstellorum multitudo* at a royal feast held in honor of the knighting of Edward, prince of Wales, in 1306, see Bullock-Davies 1978.

It has to be admitted that a phenomenon like oral poetry, being by definition bound to the fleeting moment of its realization, can never be studied satisfactorily when direct observation is not, or no longer, possible. This impasse has led scholars to reach out beyond the confines of their respective fields and study living oral traditions. In this endeavor they could build on a long tradition of comparative literature, which has provided the legitimation for the juxtaposition of literary works belonging to different and possibly fairly distant traditions. The foundations for comparative literature were laid in the Romantic period, by scholars and literati like Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803) or the brothers Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829) and August Wilhelm Schlegel (1767–1845). In their interpretations and historical sketches of medieval literature they pointedly ignored national boundaries, setting the German *Minnesänger* next to the Provençal troubadour or a Spanish ballad next to a Lithuanian folksong. The concept of "world literature," on which their approach rests, was further broadened by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, who in his *West-Östlicher Divan* (1819) made the poetry of the Orient (in particular of the Persian poet Hafiz) popular to a wider readership.<sup>11</sup> But it was only in the twentieth century that comparison for the sake of the elucidation of otherwise opaque phenomena was developed as a hermeneutic tool.

Milman Parry's, and later Albert B. Lord's, search for a better understanding of the workings of the Homeric poems by studying a living tradition of oral epic poetry is a lasting achievement, however controversial some of their conclusions might be. Goethe had already shown a keen interest in Serbian heroic poetry, and through the work of Wilhelm Radloff both Homerists and medievalists had become aware of the possibilities of a comparative approach. Eduard Sievers, for instance, points to Kirghiz oral epics in his study of Old Germanic metrics of 1893 as a parallel, and nineteenth-century scholars like Wilhelm Wundt, as a matter of course, considered oral traditions of epic poetry in their theories.<sup>12</sup> Yet it was only with Parry and Lord that comparison was methodologically developed and consolidated.

As for medieval poetry which is thought to have flourished in an oral milieu, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the ballad scholar John Meier brought support from oral traditions to the so-called "Liedertheorie" (theory of cantilenas), developed in the first half of the nineteenth century by Karl Lachmann for the *Nibelungenlied* on the model of F. A. Wolf's analytic approach to Homer. Meier drew attention to Kirghiz oral epics as collected and translated

11. On the origin and development of the comparative study of literature, see Wellek 1970, 1–36; Guillén 1993, 3–105.

12. See Sievers 1893, 20 n. 1. Similarly, Wundt refers to Kirghiz oral epics in his discussion of the "art of the heroic age" in his monumental *Völkerpsychologie*; see in his abbreviated version of 1912, 452ff.

by Wilhelm Radloff in the second half of the nineteenth century and pointed to the formulaic nature and "improvisational" character of oral epic poetry. In the thirties, Theodor Frings endorsed a traditionalist position vis-à-vis medieval Germanic and Romance heroic epic poetry by reference to Russian *byliny* (oral epics) and South Slavic heroic songs. Albert B. Lord ended his seminal book on the singer of tales with a chapter on medieval epic, in which he sought to apply the insights of his and Parry's findings in South Slavic heroic songs to medieval poems such as the Old English *Beowulf*, the Old French *Chanson de Roland*, and the Byzantine *Digenis Akritas*. Scholars like H. Munro Chadwick, Nora Ker-shaw Chadwick, and Maurice Bowra have also devoted considerable space to medieval narrative in their comparative studies of oral epic and heroic poetry.<sup>13</sup>

This list of comparative studies could be somewhat extended, but it is on the whole surprisingly short. Although there is no dearth of material from oral epic traditions around the globe, only a limited number are accessible to scholars in reliable translations and studies. A first reading of some of the translations available probably reveals the differences between these epics and the medieval texts more than their similarities. It is often only when the language of an oral tradition is fully understood that the poetry, too, loses its air of unfamiliarity. Of course, not all medievalists find a comparative approach necessary; it is by and large only those scholars who are interested in the orality of medieval poetry, and who tend towards a traditionalist view of medieval epics (such as the *chansons de geste*), that have found it worthwhile to look at contemporary or near-contemporary traditions of oral epic. In order to engage in comparative analysis, the usefulness and relevance of such an approach is presupposed.

It is true that scholars have studied the implications of an oral background for the interpretation of medieval works without an explicitly comparative stance. The study of variants can furnish important clues for the oral transmission of poetry. A particularly instructive example is the variation found in the transmission of Middle English popular romances; while some scholars impute variation to a complex manuscript transmission, others have stressed the role of oral transmission. Doubtless, medieval scribes felt free to alter their exemplar in the case of popular vernacular poetry, an attitude that also accounts for variation; but orality, at least in the sense of oral recitation, if not transmission and sometimes also composition, was surely also a factor. The variability of medieval poetry has also been recognized in the "new philology," which is highly critical of the old stemmatic method in textual criticism. This essential "variance" of medieval poetry has been much discussed, in particular by Bernard Cerquiglini; earlier, Paul Zumthor coined the term "mouvance" for the variability of much

13. See Meier 1909; Frings 1939; Lord 1960; Chadwick and Chadwick 1932-40; Bowra 1952.

of medieval poetry.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, manuscript studies have revealed the fact that poetry only transmitted in writing was nevertheless meant to be recited or read aloud;<sup>15</sup> even the odd "minstrel manuscript" has been identified, though generally not without reservations.<sup>16</sup> That much of medieval poetry was oral at least in the sense of being composed for oral recitation or reading aloud has long been recognized.<sup>17</sup> Hence it has also been realized that this type of poetry must be appreciated in its "vocality," as sound listened to, as words spoken or sung, as meanings unfolding in time.<sup>18</sup>

In their interpretations of medieval poetry, some scholars have also adopted a comparative stance, most notably Paul Zumthor, author of some of the most stimulating works on medieval poetics written in the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>19</sup> Jeff Opland has extended the Parry-Lord paradigm by drawing on his researches into Xhosa oral poetry in his study of Anglo-Saxon orality (and its transition into literacy); and John Foley has, on the basis of the Parry-Lord collection of South Slavic epics, elaborated the original oral formulaic theory into his theory of immanent art. According to this theory, the various characteristics of poetry as oral poetry can be uncovered in the texts of medieval and classical "oral-derived traditional poetry," through their traditional diction, thematic composition, and performance-oriented traits such as the presence of an oral narrator's voice.<sup>20</sup> No doubt awareness of the "vocality" of medieval traditional poetry is widespread. Gregory Nagy has recently shown how the insights of medievalists into the variability of texts as signs of their vocality, as traces of their performance character, can be sharpened and extended to the Homeric epics.<sup>21</sup>

Comparing different traditions, especially traditions that are neither genetically related nor geographically contiguous, raises a number of methodologi-

14. Cerquiglini 1989; Zumthor 1972, 65ff. On manuscript variation in the Middle English romances and their interpretation, see especially Baugh 1959 and 1967; I have taken up the questions posed by Baugh in a comparative context in Reichl 1991.

15. For Old English, see Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe's study of "transitional literacy" as revealed in manuscript layout, pointing, etc. (1990).

16. In a tour de force, Andrew Taylor has tried to expose the notion of the minstrel manuscript as a myth (1991).

17. The seminal study is Ruth Crosby's (1936). The reception of Middle High German literature by hearing (as well as by reading) has been studied in detail by D. H. Green (1994).

18. See in particular Paul Zumthor's study on medieval vocality (1987). Zumthor's notion of "vocality" has been taken up by Ursula Schäfer (1992), though not in its literal meaning but rather in a quasi-metaphorical sense, as a way of designating various stylistic features of traditional oral-derived texts that point to their original oral context.

19. See especially his introduction to oral poetry (1983).

20. See Opland 1980; Foley 1991, esp. 190ff., and 1995.

21. See Nagy 1996, esp. 7ff. and 207ff. for medieval poetry. For a recent discussion of the comparative approach in Old English (and generally Older Germanic) studies, see Lapidge 1997.



cal problems. Similarities found between these traditions cannot generally be interpreted as survivals from a common ancestor. Georges Dumézil has argued that a number of epic poems (or other forms of verbal art) in Indo-European languages reflect a threefold social stratification that can be interpreted as a common inheritance from Proto-Indo-European times. Other scholars have attempted to reconstruct elements of Proto-Indo-European poetic diction on the basis of texts in genetically related languages. Although some of these hypotheses have been contested, the comparative method as such has yielded convincing results when it comes to comparing genetically related languages and traditions that can be supposed to have a common origin.

If, however, the Anglo-Saxon *Beowulf* and the Kirghiz epic *Er Töštük* (Hero Töštük) have anything in common, and I think they do, this likeness cannot be explained by reference to a common ancestor, as the traditions that they embody are clearly genetically unrelated.<sup>22</sup> If they had originated in contiguous regions, we might expect mutual cultural exchanges and hence be tempted to explain similarities as influences in one direction or another. Such influences are unlikely, although there was a time when Germanic and Central Asian peoples such as the Huns and Avars were in direct contact with one another. It is more likely that the similarities in motifs and story patterns between *Beowulf* and *Er Töštük*, for instance, are to be accounted for by reference to the migration of narrative material. As research on folktales has shown, motifs and plots can easily travel over large stretches of time and place.

While comparative philology is the methodological paradigm for a comparative approach to the interpretation of genetically related epic poetry and area linguistics for the study of geographically contiguous epic traditions, the theoretical model for the kind of enquiry conducted here comes from linguistic typology. In a typological approach to linguistics, languages are classified into linguistic types, irrespective of their genetic or geographical relationship, and it is assumed that languages belonging to the same type share essential characteristics. These characteristics are in the final analysis explainable only by positing universals of language. Linguistic research on universals and within a typological framework has become fairly sophisticated, and it is not my aim to transfer linguistic terminology to the study of literature. I do, however, find it useful to adopt a basically typological (and universalist) stance when engaging in comparative interpretations of Turkic and medieval epic poetry. It frees the interpretation from false hopes or claims about common origins or mutual influences, and it clears the way for questions of poetics and aesthetics.

22. My belief that *Beowulf* and *Er Töštük* are related is based on the fact that their story pattern is (at least in part) derived from a folktale generally entitled "The Bear's Son" and, more importantly, they are both transformations of such a folktale pattern into epic; see Reichl 1987.

Having stressed that my interest in living oral epic poetry is that of a medievalist, I hasten to add that I find the study of oral epic also rewarding in itself. This double perspective characterizes the entire subsequent analysis. I am primarily studying various aspects of a living tradition of oral epic poetry, but I am also studying these aspects because I feel that they can contribute to a better understanding of that part of medieval epic poetry which many scholars have associated with an oral milieu. While this medievalist bias is present in all chapters, not all of the following studies are meant to be fully developed comparative analyses. Sometimes it seemed sufficient to me to suggest rather than detail possible connections to medieval literature. Whether these suggestions are worth following up, future research will show.

The choice of Turkic oral epic poetry might at first sight seem arbitrary, and up to a certain point it is. There is, however, a long tradition of scholarly concern with Turkic oral epics within a comparative framework. John Meier has already been mentioned, and so have the Chadwicks and Bowra, who have all taken Turkic epics into account, in particular Kirghiz epics as edited and translated by Radloff. Radloff himself has drawn a parallel between the art of the Kirghiz singer and the Homeric bard in the introduction to his Kirghiz volume. In the West the most notable contribution to the study of Turkic oral epic poetry comes from a medievalist. The English Germanist Arthur T. Hatto has not only written a number of articles on Turkic, in particular Kirghiz and Yakut, oral epic poetry but has also published a critical reedition of Radloff's text of the Kirghiz epic *Manas*, together with a new scholarly translation into English.<sup>23</sup>

Turkic oral epic poetry has also been studied intensively by the Russian Germanist Viktor Žirmunskij. When Žirmunskij came into contact with Uzbek oral epics in Central Asia during the Second World War, he immediately realized the relevance of this type of poetry to medieval literature. He has published widely on Turkic oral epic poetry, but apart from a short book on comparative epic studies in German and a few articles in English, all of his work is in Russian and hence little known in the West.<sup>24</sup> Žirmunskij was not the first Russian medievalist to extend his view to Central Asian Turkic poetry. At the end of the nineteenth century G. N. Potanin wrote a voluminous study of the "Oriental" elements in European medieval epic poetry, also drawing on research on Central Asian epic traditions, and in the 1940s the medievalist A. S. Orlov wrote a book on Kazakh epics from the point of view of a *bylina* scholar.<sup>25</sup>

23. Hatto 1990; for a comparison between Kirghiz and Germanic heroic poetry, see Hatto 1973a.

24. A selection of Žirmunskij's studies on Turkic oral epic poetry is found in Žirmunskij 1974 (in Russian); compare also Žirmunskij 1960b (in German) and Žirmunskij 1985 (in English). See also Žirmunskij's contribution to Chadwick and Zhirmunsky 1969.

25. Potanin 1899; Orlov 1945.

While trying to take into account the relevant research of scholars who have studied Turkic oral epic poetry, whether as medievalists, comparatists, or Turkologists, the following analyses are also based on my own recordings and fieldwork in the Turkic-speaking area of Central Asia. The original impetus for these recordings, at first carried out in Turkey (in 1975) and then continued in Central Asia (from 1981 onwards), came from the work of scholars like Milman Parry and Albert Lord, with whom I share the wish to understand the oral background of Western traditional epic poetry better by studying a living oral tradition. In the course of my work on Turkic oral epic poetry it has become increasingly clear to me that comparative studies have contributed valuable insights on the form and structure of oral epic poetry but have touched on questions of function and meaning only incidentally. Medievalists have eagerly seized on the analytical methods elaborated by Parry and Lord, and the proponents of an "oral-formulaic theory" have successfully shown the formulaic nature of traditional epic, on the level of phrase, verse-line, motif structure and type-scene (or theme). The conclusions drawn from this have been various and not uncontroversial. The history of the oral-formulaic theory is well known, and there is no need here to retrace its course.<sup>26</sup> Although my starting premise is that there is an oral background to medieval traditional epic and heroic poetry and that this background can be elucidated by studying living oral poetry, it is not my intention here to prove the orality of a particular medieval work on the basis of its form. My concern is rather with questions of context and function, questions which I am proposing to discuss in the comparative framework adopted for this study.

There is a final point to be made briefly. I have so far rather indiscriminately spoken of "oral poetry" without paying much attention to the meaning of "oral." As Ruth Finnegan has rightly stressed, there are three basic meanings of "oral" when talking of oral poetry:

The three ways in which a poem can most readily be called oral are in terms of (1) its composition, (2) its mode of transmission, and (3) (related to [2]) its performance. Some oral poetry is oral in all these respects, some in only one or two. It is important to be clear how oral poetry can vary in these ways, as well as about the problems involved in assessing each of these aspects of "oral-ness." It emerges that the "oral" nature of oral poetry is not easy to pin down precisely.<sup>27</sup>

Most of the Turkic oral epic poetry to be discussed in this book is oral in all three ways enumerated by Ruth Finnegan; it is, as it were, "truly oral." It can-

26. On the history of the oral-formulaic theory, see the survey by Foley 1988.

27. Finnegan 1977, 17.

not be denied, however, that most singers alive today are literate, and that written transmission as well as written literature have exerted some influence on the epic of the Turkic-speaking peoples. In some traditions this written influence is stronger than in others; in some cases it is even difficult to draw the line between oral and written transmission. For the Turkic material forming the basis of the following discussion its orality (in all senses) is, however, incontestable.

As to the medieval poems with which the following chapters deal, it is clear that we only know them in their written form. There is, nevertheless, reason to suppose an oral background to these poems, although, on the medieval evidence alone, it cannot be unambiguously reconstructed. In the case of medieval poetry, "oral" is a somewhat elusive term. As primary orality is not directly observable in the case of a dead tradition, all we have is the textual evidence of traditional poetry. The degree of traditionality is a controversial issue in most cases. As there can be no doubt that medieval poetry recorded in writing has undergone a process of textualization, at least in the most literal sense of the word by having been "put down as text," scholars have coined the terms "transitional" or "oral-derived poetry," meaning by this that these poems have an oral background but have come under the influence of literacy.<sup>28</sup> Whether this oral background is one of oral composition, transmission, or performance is once again a moot point. In the following chapters I will assume that the medieval examples chosen are to be characterized correctly as "traditional" and "oral-derived," although, as will be seen, agreement among scholars is difficult to reach.

28. On the term "transitional," see Lord 1975, 23; on the term "oral-derived," see Foley 1990, 5ff.

## CHAPTER ONE

## Turkic Bards and Oral Epics

Among the Kara-Kirghiz the various legends and narrative traditions of the Turkic peoples have been welded into one grand epic, whose main protagonists are the Muslim prince Manas and the hero of the infidels, Džoloy. This epic, like the epic poetry of the Greeks, presents a clear picture of the spiritual life and the traditional ways of the whole people. With epic breadth it describes military campaigns, bridal quests, memorial feasts, races, domestic life, etc. All the various legendary figures become, as it were, persons of flesh and blood, real-life characters, whom we can watch acting and thinking. The main motive of the action is the superiority of the Muslims over the infidels. Every Kara-Kirghiz knows a part of this epic; it is a living force among the people and tolerates no other poetic creations at its side.

This description of the Kirghiz epic *Manas* and its place in Kirghiz society comes from Wilhelm Radloff's account of his travels in the Turkic-speaking areas of Central Asia and southern Siberia between 1860 and 1870.<sup>1</sup> Radloff, who was born in Berlin in 1837 and received his doctorate in Jena in 1858, went to Russia in 1858 in order to take part in a scientific expedition to eastern Siberia. Although the expedition never materialized, Radloff did go to Barnaul on the River Ob, about 150 miles north of the Altai mountains, in 1859, and from this date onward he became an indefatigable collector of oral poetry from various Turkic-speaking peoples of Central Asia and southern Siberia. When the fifth volume of his monumental collection of this material, devoted to Kirghiz epic poetry, appeared in St. Petersburg in 1885 with both Kirghiz text and German translation, Homeric scholars were for the first time able to form an opinion of

1. Radloff 1893, I: 534. It is to be noted that Radloff, in accordance with nineteenth-century usage, calls the Kirghiz "Kara-Kirghiz"; the name "Kirghiz" was at that time reserved for the Kazakhs.

a highly developed oral epic poetry which could be meaningfully compared to ancient Greek epic. In fact, Radloff himself, in his introduction to the volume, drew a parallel between the art of the Kirghiz singer and the Greek *aoidos*, a parallel that left a deep impression on scholars like John Meier or Milman Parry.<sup>2</sup>

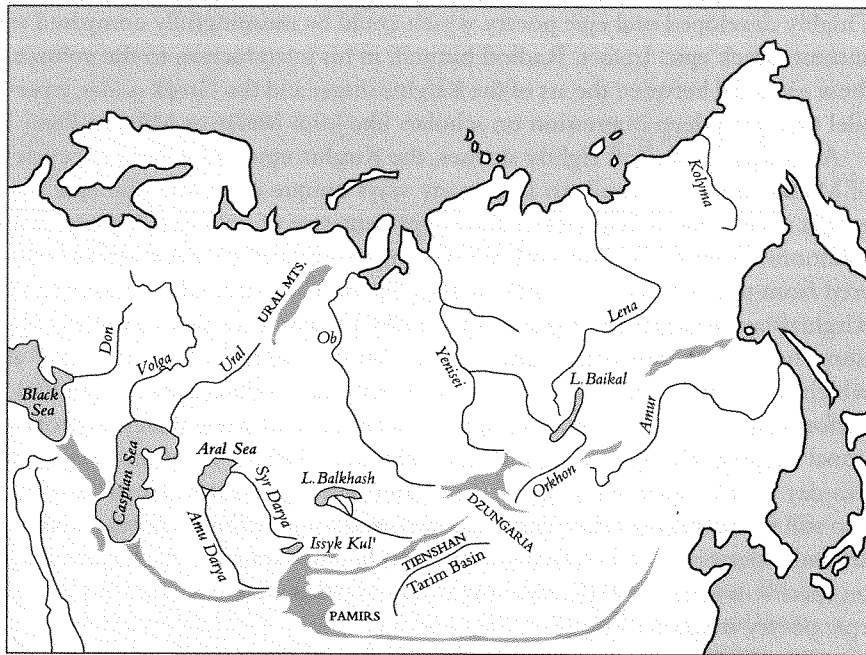
Although, as Radloff rightly stresses, the Kirghiz epic (or rather epic cycle) of Manas and his descendants is in many ways unique in Turkic oral epic poetry, it is only one of many epics and a representative of only one of many epic traditions. How much alive some of these traditions still are today can be gathered from the fact that as recently as 1995 the newly independent Republic of Kirghizistan (Kyrgyzstan) organized a UNESCO-sponsored festival of their national hero and heroic epic, named (somewhat misleadingly) "Manas 1000," at which not only was the mythical past of the Kirghiz people enacted in dramatic performances and state ceremonies, but the presence of more than one professional singer of the epic attested to the unbroken chain of oral transmission to this day. Oral singers who have learned their epics in the traditional way are also still found among other Turkic peoples, and some of these singers and their art and repertoire will be discussed in detail below. However, before focusing on specific traditions, epics, and singers, some general remarks on Turkic oral epic poetry might be helpful.

## Turkic Peoples and Epic Traditions

Turkic-speaking peoples are found in a vast area of Eurasia stretching from Western Europe (with sizable groups of migratory Turkish workers in Germany) and the Balkans to the northeastern parts of Siberia (see maps 1 and 2). Linguistically all these peoples form a fairly homogeneous group, with only the Chuvash, who live in the region of the middle Volga west of Kazan, speaking a somewhat deviating Turkic language. All these languages (and dialects) are descended from older forms of Turkic as recorded in basically two varieties, in runic inscriptions dating from the eighth century A.D. and found mostly in the Orkhon valley of present-day Mongolia, and in somewhat later Old Uighur manuscripts from Turfan and other places in Chinese Xinjiang.<sup>3</sup> The Turkic languages form a tightly knit language family comparable to other genetic groupings of languages such as the Indo-European or the Finno-Ugrian languages. It

2. See Radloff 1885, xviff.; for a partial translation into English, see Radloff 1990. Parry quotes Radloff's description of the art of the Kirghiz singer in the second part of his "Studies in the Epic Technique of Oral Verse-Making"; see Parry 1987, 334; see also Meier 1909, 13 ff.

3. Turkic languages have been written in a great number of different scripts. The oldest documents use a runic alphabet which is in general appearance similar to Germanic runes, though unrelated; the Turkic runic script is thought to be ultimately derived from the Aramaic alphabet; see Clauson 1970.



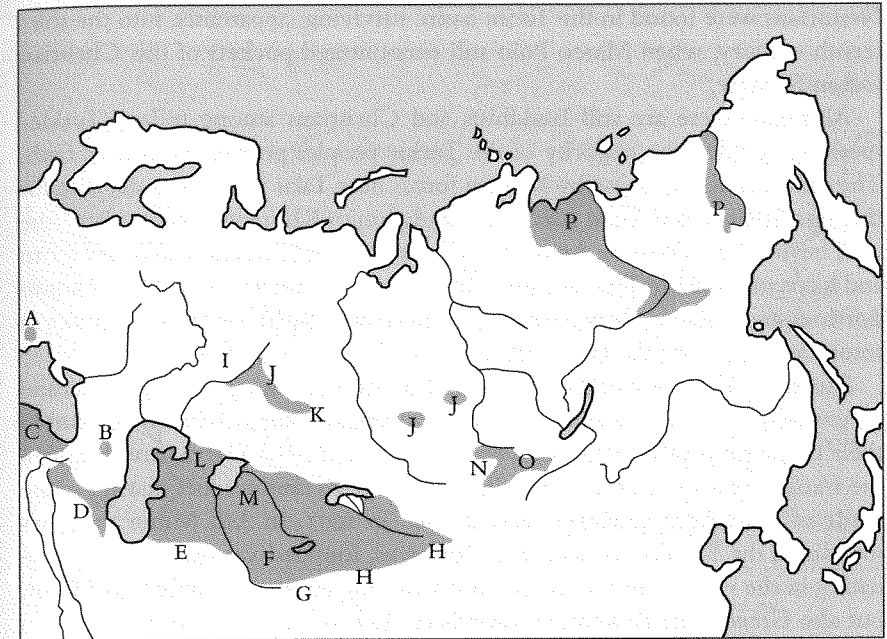
Map 1. Central Asia and Siberia (Physical)

is possible that the Turkic languages are related to the Mongolian and Tungusic languages, but this relationship is today contested by a great number of Turkologists; only adherents of the so-called “Altaic hypothesis” classify the three language families together, sometimes adding Korean and even Japanese to this group.<sup>4</sup> The ethnogenesis of the various peoples speaking Turkic languages is complex and in many cases controversial. But despite this complexity it can be said that the various Turkic-speaking groups have been shaped into linguistically, culturally, and socially coherent entities in the course of history, which has resulted in a strong sense of tribal, ethnic, or national identity.<sup>5</sup>

The earliest documents in a Turkic language, the runic inscriptions from the Orkhon and Yenisei valleys, tell us about the wars of the eastern Turks with their Chinese neighbors in the seventh and eighth centuries. The ancestors of these Turks are probably a people called the “T’u-chüeh” in Chinese historical sources. The T’u-chüeh gained a dominant position in eastern Central Asia

4. For further information on the Turkic languages and on problems of grouping and relationship, see Deny et al. 1959–64, vol. 1; von Gabain et al. 1963, 1–204; Menges 1968; Comrie 1981, 39ff.

5. For an up-to-date account of the ethnogenesis of the various Turkic peoples, see Golden 1992.



- |                    |            |            |               |
|--------------------|------------|------------|---------------|
| A Gagauz           | E Turkmens | I Chuvash  | M Karakalpaks |
| B Karachay-Balkars | F Uzbeks   | J Tatars   | N Altaians    |
| C Turks            | G Kirghiz  | K Bashkirs | O Tuvinians   |
| D Azerbaijanis     | H Uighurs  | L Kazakhs  | P Yakuts      |

Map 2. The Turkic Peoples

in the sixth century, in an area stretching from the region between present-day Mongolia and Lake Baikal to the Semirechie, the “Land of the Seven Rivers” (all of which, the most important being the Ili, flow into Lake Balkhash). The homeland of these Turks was, according to their own and Chinese traditions, the Altai. Whether their ancestors in turn can be identified with earlier peoples such as the Huns is a question which, in the absence of linguistic material, can only be speculated about.

The later history of the Turkic-speaking peoples is much better documented, although even here a great deal remains uncertain. At the beginning of the twentieth century a large number of manuscripts in the various languages of Central Asia (among them Old Uighur) were found in Chinese Turkestan (Xinjiang), which give us a vivid picture of the Turkic realms flourishing in the Tarim basin between the eighth and fourteenth centuries. The study of these manuscripts has made it clear that this area played an important role in the reception and transmission of Indian and Western thought in Central Asia. Buddhism and Manicheism exerted a powerful influence on the Uighurs, but also



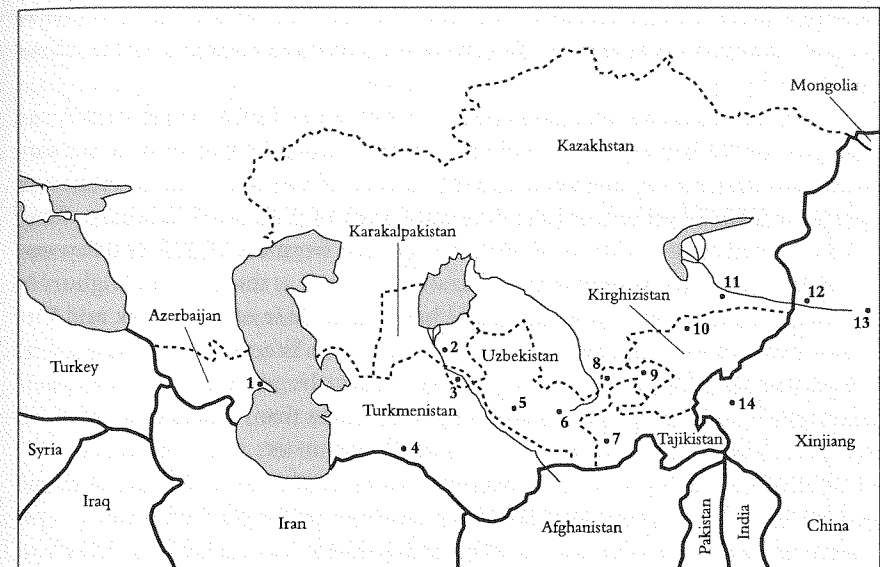
Nestorians were found in the Tarim basin, surviving, apparently, into the thirteenth century, when Marco Polo still encountered pockets of this Christian sect in Kashgar.<sup>6</sup>

Although there are still Buddhists and Christians among today's Turkic-speaking peoples, the majority of the Turkic peoples profess the Islamic faith. The defeat of the Chinese by Muslim forces near Talas in 751 was decisive for the Islamization of Central Asia: the population of Khorezm, Transoxiana (the land beyond the Oxus or Amu Darya), and the Fergana valley adopted Islam and has remained Muslim ever since. Further east, from the Altai Mountains to north-eastern Siberia, shamanism prevailed among Turkic peoples, surviving in some cases well into the twentieth century.

Much of the history of the Central Asian Turks is marked by migrations and varying tribal clashes and alliances. In the eleventh century Oghuz tribes started their move southwest from the lower reaches of the Syr Darya, invading first the Iranian plateau and then Anatolia, where the Byzantines met disaster in the battle of Manzikert northwest of Lake Van in 1071. In Asia Minor their descendants, the Seljuks and later the Ottomans, founded various realms culminating in the vast expansion of the Ottoman Empire over not only Asia Minor, but also Greece, the Balkans, and northern Africa.

During the reign of Genghis Khan (d. 1227) and his successors, many Turkic tribes of Central Asia came under Mongolian rule. However, after the death of Timur in 1405, Mongolian domination declined and a number of Turkic clans broke away from earlier tribal confederations. In the western part of the Mongolian Empire, the realm of the Golden Horde with its capital of Saray on the Volga was dissolved into the khanates of Kazan, Astrakhan, and the Crimea at the end of the fourteenth century; in the east, the Uzbeks and Kazakhs first arose as political powers in the fifteenth century. In the seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth centuries the Kazakhs came into hostile contact with the Mongolians, first with groups of western Mongolians (Kalmucks) who crossed their territory, and later with the Mongolian rulers of the Dzungarian steppe. The Dzungarian realm was, however, crushed by the Chinese in 1757; in the nineteenth century, the Chinese continued their subjugation of eastern Turkestan and had brought the Tarim basin under their control by the end of the century.

6. On the early history of the Turks in Central Asia, see Spuler 1966; Hambly et al. 1969; Sinor 1990. Peter Hopkirk has painted a vivid picture of the international race for Central Asian antiquities and manuscripts at the beginning of the twentieth century (Hopkirk 1980); Albert von Le Coq's compelling account of the Prussian Turfan expeditions has also been translated into English (Le Coq 1985). For an introduction to the civilizations of the Tarim basin, see Klimkeit 1988.



- |             |             |                      |                   |
|-------------|-------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| 1 Baku      | 5 Bukhara   | 9 Kokand             | 12 Kulja (Yining) |
| 2 Nukus     | 6 Samarkand | 10 Bishkek           | 13 Urumchi        |
| 3 Khiva     | 7 Dushanbe  | (formerly Frunze)    | 14 Kashgar        |
| 4 Ashkhabad | 8 Tashkent  | 11 Alma-Ata (Almaty) |                   |

Map 3. Central Asia (Political)

In western Turkestan, the Russians were steadily expanding their empire until with the fall of Tashkent, Samarkand, Khiva, and Kokand in the 1860s and 1870s the last Central Asian khanates and emirates came under Russian rule (see map 3). With the Russian Revolution, civil war broke out in Central Asia, where Soviet power was established in the Turkic-speaking areas after the crushing of anti-Bolshevik opposition, and various Soviet Socialist Republics were set up: Azerbaijan in 1920, Turkmenistan in 1924, Uzbekistan in 1924, Kazakhstan in 1936, and Kirghizistan in 1936. While Turkey has been an independent state since the founding of the Ottoman Empire, the so-called Turkic republics of Central Asia—Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Kirghizistan—have reached independence only after glasnost and perestroika led to the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Some Turkic groups enjoy some measure of autonomy within Russia (such as the Tatars, Bashkirs, Chuvash, Tuvinians, Yakuts, and Karachay-Balkars) or within one of the Turkic republics (like the Karakalpaks in Uzbekistan). Most of the Turkic-speaking peoples of China live in Xinjiang, which is officially termed “Xinjiang Autonomous Uighur Region.” There are also sizable groups of speakers of Turkic languages

in Afghanistan (mainly Uzbeks and Turkmens) and in Iran (mainly Azerbaijanis and Turkmens); at present they have no autonomous status within these countries.<sup>7</sup>

When one considers the geographical extent of the Turkic world and the vicissitudes of the history of the different Turkic peoples, it will come as no surprise that their poetry embraces a wide variety of forms and types. Although oral poetry can be considered the dominant form of their poetic heritage, there is also a flourishing tradition of written literature from the eighth century onward. It is in particular sedentary civilizations—such as those of the Uighurs in the Tarim basin, of the Central Asian khanates, or later of the Seljuk and Ottoman empires—that have developed a rich written literature, in Old Uighur, Chaghatay, and Ottoman Turkish, to name only the most important classical languages.<sup>8</sup> There have been innumerable influences from written literature on oral poetry and vice versa in the course of the centuries, and it would be foolish to neglect the impact of the written word in an account of Turkic oral epic poetry. It is nevertheless true that there has been a vigorous tradition of oral poetry, in particular oral epic poetry, among many Turkic peoples, which in some areas is still alive today. The cultivation of oral epic poetry is in the case of the Central Asian Turks intimately linked to nomadism. It is not by chance that the art of oral epic poetry has survived longest among those peoples who have been able to preserve their nomadic way of life. It is peoples like the Kazakhs and Kirghiz, who were wont to roam over the steppes and the mountains of Central Asia, that have clung to their ancient traditions most tenaciously: the art of erecting a yurt or making a felt rug as well as the art of singing of the heroes of yore.<sup>9</sup>

Pastoral nomadism has dwindled in economic importance today, but the structures of a nomadic society persist, at least in some Turkic ethnic groups such as the Kirghiz, Kazakhs, or Karakalpaks, and among them most clearly in the nonurban population. Among these peoples, the fundamental social unit is the clan or kin group. In his ethnographic analysis of the pastoral nomads of Central Asia, Lawrence Krader has shown that clans can be understood as corporations, i.e., as social entities that “have the right or power of succession in perpetuity which is a continuity transcending the life span of any individual member,

7. For the more recent history of Eastern Turkestan, see Lattimore 1950; for the history of Western Turkestan, see Allworth 1989. Modern histories, in English, of several Central Asian Turkic peoples have appeared in the series “Studies of Nationalities [in the USSR]” of the Hoover Institution in Stanford; see in particular Olcott 1987 on the Kazakhs and Allworth 1990 on the Uzbeks.

8. The written literature of the various Turkic peoples is extensively treated in Deny et al. 1959–64, vol. 2; see also Bombaci 1968.

9. For an introductory historical survey of nomadism in Eurasia, see Basilov 1989; on the construction of the felt yurt, the movable home of the nomads, see *ibid.* 97–101.

as well as a number of other rights, such as the possession of territory in common.”<sup>10</sup> The clan was originally responsible for the administration of the pastures to which it had a right. The clan also had religious and judiciary functions. An important role among the former is played by the worship of ancestral and lineage spirits. As Krader observes, “The closer the degree of agnatic relationship, the closer the spiritual bond.”<sup>11</sup> Clans were originally exogamic units and have remained so among the Karakalpaks into the Soviet era. Krader’s succinct characterization merits quotation in full:

A clan, *tire*, is composed of lineages, *kose* (the members of which are consanguine in fact); this is the unit of agnatic kin. A clan and its lineages are also composed of auls or nomadic villages; this is the unit of common residence and pastoralism.

The clan is not a unit of common ownership of herds; the right of disposition, subject to very strong restrictions, rests in the extended family and the village if the latter is particularly closely related. However, the clan has certain marks or signs whereby the herds of its members are identified; these marks are known as *tamga/tagma/tagba*. In keeping with its military functions, the clan has a characteristic battle cry, *uran*, a cry which may serve as a countersign or rallying call in battle, and alludes to a mighty ancestor, his name and his deeds.<sup>12</sup>

On the basis of a very rough taxonomy, six major groups of Turkic oral epic traditions can be distinguished.<sup>13</sup> First there are the oral narratives of the Yakuts in northeastern Siberia, which are characterized by their archaic nature and their close connection with the world of the shaman.<sup>14</sup> Very similar to the epic poetry of the Yakuts are the epic traditions of the various Turkic-speaking peoples of the Altai (Altaians, Tuvinians, and others).<sup>15</sup> These two groups of traditions, which might be termed “Siberian,” were excluded by C. M. Bowra from his study of heroic poetry on account of their shamanistic traits, on the grounds that their narratives do not embody “a heroic outlook, which admires man for doing his utmost with his actual, human gifts, but a more primitive outlook which admires any attempt to pass beyond man’s proper state by magical, non-human means.”<sup>16</sup> But it is precisely this “more primitive outlook” on which

10. Krader 1963, 327.

11. *Ibid.*, 329.

12. *Ibid.*, 330 (for *kose* read *köse*).

13. A survey of the epic traditions of the various Turkic peoples is given by V. Žirmunskij in “Epic Songs and Singers in Central Asia” in Chadwick and Zhirmunsky 1969, 271–348, and in Başgöz 1978. For a more detailed account, see Reichl 1992c.

14. On the Yakut oral epic, see Puxov 1962.

15. On the Altaian epics, see Surazakov 1985; on Tuvinian epic poetry, see Grebnev 1960.

16. Bowra 1952, 5.

E. M. Meletinskij focused in his study of the origin and development of the heroic epic.<sup>17</sup> While Bowra is right in stressing the humanistic aspect of heroic poetry, it is nevertheless undeniable that even in heroic epics that conform to Bowra's definition a more archaic layer, harking back to the world of the shaman, can be detected.<sup>18</sup>

A third group consists of the epic traditions of the Turkic peoples of Central Asia proper, i.e., of the Kirghiz, the Kazakhs, the Karakalpaks, the Uzbeks, and the Uighurs. This group comprises a great variety of narrative genres: narratives that might be termed "heroic epics" as well as tales for which the term "love romance" is more appropriate; epic poetry in verse as well as in a mixture of verse and prose; long epic poems and cycles of Homeric and Mahābhāratan proportions, as well as short epics, heroic lays, and ballad-like poems. From their geographical origin, I will term these traditions "central"; it is from the central traditions of Turkic oral epic that my examples come in the following chapters.

The central traditions find their continuation in a fourth group, the epic poetry of the southwestern Turkic peoples, the Turkmens, Azerbaijanis, and Anatolian Turks. Here the predominant form is prosimetric, and there is a predilection for love and adventure romances. The main hero of their adventure romances is Kōroğlu, "the son of the blind man"; a fairly comprehensive Turkish version was recorded as late as 1958 from an illiterate peddler in Erzurum, in eastern Anatolia. This was, however, an unexpected stroke of luck, because not everywhere among the southwestern Turkic peoples is the art of the oral epic still alive; while the singing of epics is still flourishing among the Turkmens, the performance of epic poetry seems to be extinct by now in Turkey.<sup>19</sup>

For the sake of completeness two further, smaller groups should be mentioned, the oral epic poetry of the Bashkirs southwest of the Ural Mountains, which shows connections both to the Siberian and to the central traditions of Turkic epic; and that of the Turkic peoples of the northern Caucasus, in particular the Karachays and Balkars, which has many links to the Nart tales of the Ossetes and other Caucasian peoples.<sup>20</sup>

As is to be expected, every tradition has its own physiognomy and peculiarities and would hence merit a fuller characterization than this sketch can pro-

17. See Meletinskij 1963.

18. On the role of shamanism in Turkic oral epics, see Reichl 1992c, 57–62.

19. This Turkish version is edited in Kaplan, Akalın, and Bali 1973; for general discussions of Turkish singers and their narratives, see Eberhard 1955; Moyle 1990. The most comprehensive study of the various versions of the Kōroğlu cycle (found among a number of Turkic peoples, but also in non-Turkic traditions) is Karryev 1968. The Uzbek *dastans* belonging to this cycle are discussed in Žirmunskij and Zarifov 1947, 165–279; for an introduction see also Reichl 1992c, 151 ff., 318 ff.

20. For a Russian translation of the Bashkir epic corpus, see Sagitov et al. 1987; for a Russian translation of Karachay-Balkar Nart tales (termed "Nart epic" by native scholars), see Lipkin 1973.

vide. On the other hand, the various Turkic traditions also have many features in common, and some of the observations that can be made in a particular instance also apply to other cases. A more comprehensive survey than can be given here would reveal some kind of underlying affinity and similarity, pointing toward a common heritage, which reaches back, in the case of the central traditions, at least to the time of medieval prenational tribal confederations. In order to fill in at least some of the details, I will select one tradition and one epic; although this is a specific example, the analysis is also relevant to other epics and other traditions.<sup>21</sup>

### *Alpamiş* and the Form of Epic

In choosing *Alpamiş* I am discussing a well-known and in many ways typical *dastan* from the Turkic-speaking world of Central Asia. The term *dastan* (a loan-word from Persian, meaning "tale" or "story") is used in Kirghiz, Uighur, Uzbek, Kazakh, Karakalpak, Turkmen, and Azerbaijani to denote an oral narrative in verse, or in a mixture of verse and prose, which is customarily performed by a professional singer, sometimes called *dastançı* ("singer of *dastans*").<sup>22</sup> The form of this word varies from language to language (*dastan* in Uighur, Kirghiz, Kazakh, and Azerbaijani; *dāstan* in Karakalpak; *dāstān* in Uzbek; and *dessan* in Turkmen), and there are some differences in its application. Apart from *dastan*, the term *žir* is used in Kazakh, generally to denote heroic epics; in Kirghiz the older term for heroic poetry is *džomoq* (also meaning "fairy tale"), but *dastan* is also widely used. By and large, however, it can be said that *dastan* is the general genre term for "epic" in the central traditions (including those of the Turkmens and Azerbaijanis). It has to be noted, however, that "epic" is here used in a very wide sense to comprise various types of narrative poetry. In fact, the term *dastan* is clearly underdifferentiated and could, depending on the tradition and the particular work in question, correspond to what in classical Greek would be called *epos* (such as the *Iliad*); or to what in a medieval tradition might be called *chanson de geste* (such as the Old French *Chanson de Roland*), *romance* (such as the Middle English *King Horn*), *liet* (such as the Middle High German *Nibelungenlied*), or *chantefable* (as the Old French *Aucassin et Nicolette*).

21. Many of the general points made in this chapter are discussed in my book on Turkic oral epic poetry (Reichl 1992c). In order to avoid too much overlap with this book, I have refrained from repeating this information (on singers, traditions, earliest documents, genres, narrative structure, etc.); for a more detailed treatment of the questions raised here the reader is referred to this book (where further bibliographical references will be found).

22. See Elçin 1967.



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*Alpāmiš* is probably the best-known Uzbek *dastan*. In critical works it is generally considered a heroic epic, for example by Bowra, who repeatedly refers to it in his study of heroic poetry.<sup>23</sup> The first part of this *dastan* is based on the story pattern of the winning of a bride: Alpāmiš, the hero, succeeds in winning Barčīn's hand through the fulfilment of a series of tasks. In the second part of the *dastan* the motif of the return of the hero plays an important role: Alpāmiš becomes imprisoned in foreign lands but is finally freed through the help of his horse; he returns just in time to prevent Barčīn's remarriage, proving his identity by wielding his forefather's mighty bow. There are many variations and elaborations in the different versions of the Alpāmiš story, but the epic tales, found not only among the Uzbeks, all agree in their basic plot—a plot which, incidentally, shows surprising similarities to the story of the return of Odysseus.<sup>24</sup>

If we look more closely at one Uzbek version of *Alpāmiš*, the *dastan* recorded from the singer Berdi-baxši in 1926, we find that the story is told in the third person without the intrusion of the narrator as a persona, a narrative stance typical of epic poetry among the central traditions. The basic mode of the *dastan* is narrative, although toward the end of *Alpāmiš*, when several protagonists enter into a singing contest, there are longer lyrical passages. The form of the *dastan* is prosimetric: the speeches of the various characters of the tale are generally in verse while the connecting narrative is in prose. In this way the contrast between third-person narrative and monologue or dialogue is more clearly marked than in homogeneous narrative in verse only. Berdi-baxši's version consists of about 2,600 verse-lines; his *dastan* is, when compared to other Uzbek versions, of medium length: the version of *Alpāmiš* taken down from Saidmurād Panāh-oğli (1858–1945) comprises about 1,600 verse-lines, while the justly celebrated version of the epic tale by Fāzil Yoldāš-oğli (1872–1955) contains about 14,000 verse-lines.<sup>25</sup>

The mixture of verse and prose is familiar to classicists from Menippean satire, to medievalists from the Old French tale of *Aucassin et Nicolette*, and to folklorists from folktales in many traditions. The Old French tale dates from the beginning of the thirteenth century and is called a *chantefable* (or *cantefable* in the Picard dialect of the extant version), literally a “sing-tale.” The prose portions

23. Bowra 1952.

24. The Alpāmiš story has been studied in detail in Žirmunskij 1960a; Žirmunskij also pointed out the parallels to the *Odyssey*; see Žirmunskij [Žirmunsky] 1966. For a discussion of various versions of the Alpāmiš story, see also Reichl 1992c, 160ff., 333 ff.

25. Berdi-baxši's version is edited in Mirzaev 1969; Saidmurād Panāh-oğli's version is edited in Mirzaev and Zarif 1972, 48–115; Fāzil Yoldāš-oğli's version is edited in Mirzaev, Abduraximov, and Mīrbadaleva 1999. The various Uzbek versions are compared in Mirzaev 1968, 30ff.

of the tale are introduced by the formula “or dient et content et fablent,” “now they speak and narrate and recite,” while the verse passages are headed by the words “or se cante,” “now it is sung.” The verse portions are formally *laises*, i.e., nonstanzaic verse passages of variable length, linked by rhyme and assonance; the lines have seven syllables, with the exception of the last line, which comprises five syllables. The music of the sections in verse has been preserved, so that there can be no doubt about the mode of performance of this type of prosimetric tale. Tales in a mixture of verse and prose (or, as folklorists like to term folktales in this form, *cantefables*) are found in many poetic traditions around the world, and where this type of narrative is oral, the prose parts are generally recited while the verse parts are sung.<sup>26</sup>

This is also the case with Uzbek *dastans*. The singer normally accompanies himself on the *dombira*, a small two-stringed, fretless lute, when he sings the verse portions of his *dastan*. The metrical form of these verse sections varies. Turkic popular verse is syllabic; in epic poetry, lines of 7/8 or 11/12 syllables (“octosyllabic” and “hendecasyllabic” lines) are found. These are either arranged in irregular groups of lines, similar to the Old French *laisse*, or in stanzas (or strophes), often of four lines and frequently rhyming in a-a-a-b, c-c-c-b, d-d-d-b, etc. There is a tendency to group lines of 7/8 syllables into *laises* and lines of 11/12 syllables into stanzas. Furthermore, monologues and dialogues are often in hendecasyllabic lines, while descriptive verse passages, which also occur, are in octosyllabic lines.<sup>27</sup>

At this point, one might ask: how can a narrative that consists of a mixture of verse and prose be called an epic? Is not an epic by definition a narrative in verse only? From the Turkic point of view this purely formal criterion does not define the epic. It is possible to have two versions of the same “epic” that differ only in so far as one version is purely in verse and the other is prosimetric. Kazakh versions of *Alpāmiš*, for instance, are generally in verse only, while all known Uzbek versions are in a mixture of verse and prose. These respective versions are identical in narrative scope and development; the epics are denoted by the same generic term in the traditions in question; the singers have the same kind of repertoire; the only difference between a prosimetric and a verse version is simply that the one is recited and sung, while the other is sung only. There are, of course, other differences between various versions, but these need

26. For a survey of prosimetric narrative in world literature, see Harris and Reichl 1997; on *Aucassin et Nicolette*, see Ardis Butterfield's contribution to this volume (Butterfield 1997); on the mixture of verse and prose in Turkic epics, see my contribution to the same volume (Reichl 1997).

27. Rarely, verse passages in quantitative meters are also found. For surveys of metrics in the Turkic languages, see Gandjei 1957; Bombaci 1964, xxiff.; Boratav 1964a, 11ff.; Boratav 1964b, 133ff.; Xamraev 1969.

not be due to the formal difference of verse *dastan* vs. prosimetric *dastan*. I would therefore maintain that if we have a narrative A in verse which we want to call an epic, then we can also call narrative B, which differs from A only in that it is in verse and prose, an epic. Of course, we might not want to use the term "epic" in the first place; but the appropriateness of this term is, as far as the Turkic traditions to be studied here are concerned, not dependent on whether the narrative is in verse or in a mixture of verse and prose. It should be made clear, however, that the prosimetric form does not mean (as in the case of many folktales) that we have basically a narrative in prose with occasional interspersed verse passages. However important and stylistically polished the prose parts of a prosimetric *dastan* might be, the prose definitely serves a subordinate function in the narrative, providing links between the verse passages and in general supplying background information to the tale.

Berdi-baxši's version of *Alpāmiš* begins in prose, setting the scene for the following narrative:

Buruŋgi zamānda Šašābād šahrida Dābānbiy degan pādšā bār ekan. Dābānbiy pādšāniñ Bāybori, Bāysari degan ikki oĝli bār edi; Rawšanbāy deganniñ esa ikki qizi bār edi. Bunday čirāyli qizlar dunyāda heč bolmagan. Dābānbiy ikki oĝliga Rawšanbāyniñ ikki qizini ālib berdi: kattasi—Kuntugalni katta oĝli—Bāyboriga, kičkinasi—Džāntugalni kičkina oĝli—Bāysariga ālib berdi.<sup>28</sup>

Long ago there lived a padishah by the name of Dābānbiy in the town of Šašābād. Dābānbiy had two sons, called Bāybori and Bāysari. There was also a man named Rawšanbāy, who had two daughters. Such beautiful girls have never been seen on earth. Dābānbiy married his two sons to Rawšanbāy's two daughters, his older son Bāybori to the older girl Kuntugal, his younger son Bāysari to the younger girl Džāntugal.

The story continues in prose: Dābānbiy divides his riches and his realm among his two sons; after his death, Bāysari becomes ruler of half the realm, called Bāysin, and Bāybori of the other half, called Qoŋgirāt. To their great chagrin, neither of the two rulers has children. One day, when they hunt down a pregnant deer, they wish that their wives might equally become pregnant, a wish that becomes miraculously true. Bāybori has a son, at whose name-giving feast the saint Hizir appears and prophesies that the boy, who is to be named Mullah Hakim (popularly Alpāmiš), will become a great and invulnerable hero. Bāysari has a daughter; Hizir appears at her feast as well and prophesies great beauty

28. Mirzaev 1969, 8.

for the girl; he commands Bāysari to call his daughter Barčīn and give her in marriage to Alpāmiš. The children are sent to school, where Hakim-Alpāmiš hears about the custom of *zakāt*, the Muslim alms tax (amounting to one-fortieth of one's income). When he asks his father to give *zakāt*, Bāybori agrees to do so, but when he asks *zakāt* from his uncle, Bāysari calls his council together to deliberate the matter.

In the Uzbek versions of *Alpāmiš*, the first verse passages occur traditionally at this point, in a council scene when Bāysari and others deliver their speeches on the question of *zakāt*. In Berdi-baxši's *dastan* the council scene consists only of Bāysari's address to his tribesmen:

Xudā nega berdi ušu bālani,  
Yetti yašda buzdi bizniñ xānani,  
Tilab ālgan bāla ahwāli šul-da,  
Hanuzdan čiqardi zakāt-balāni.

Akam učun bir gunāhin kečirdim,  
Dawlatimdan čirāgini očirdim,  
Tilab ālgan bāla ahwāli šul-da,  
Hanuzdan čiqardi zakāt-ušurdi.

Ayā, dostlar, ešit ayĝān zārīma,  
Tāqatim yoq Bāysin-Qoŋgirāt šarīga  
Oz elima yurib zakāt bergunča,  
Kočib ketsam boyma qalmāq eliga?

Bedāw mingan čolda yelgan emasmi,  
Oz āgamdan koŋilim qālgan emasmi,  
Men kočib ketayin Kašal eliga,  
Oz xārlikdan yāt xārlik yaxši emasmi?

Qirq otāw tiktirdim irgaman irga.  
Bizdan adra qālar boldi āq orda,  
Agar hukmima boyin sunsañlar,  
Kašalga ketamiz hammamiz birga.<sup>29</sup>

Why did God give such a child [Alpāmiš]?  
Seven years old and he has destroyed our home.

29. Ibid. 9–10.

This is the way of a child who has been fervently wished for;  
Now he has brought us the misfortune of *zakāt*.

For the sake of my older brother I have forgiven his one sin; 5  
But I have extinguished his light from my possessions.  
This is the way of a child who has been fervently wished for;  
Now he has brought us *zakāt* and tithe.

O friends, hear the sorrow I am telling you!  
I can no longer endure to stay in Bāysin and Qoñgirāt. 10  
Rather than give *zakāt* to my own people,  
How would it be if I migrated to the land of the Kalmucks?

Does not the rider of a noble steed fly in the steppe?  
Does not my heart grow cold toward my own brother?  
I want to migrate and go to the land of Kašal: 15  
Is the misery in a foreign land not better than misery at home?

I had forty yurts put up next to one another,  
But our white *orda* [khan's yurt] has been destroyed.  
If you submit to my command,  
We will all go to Kašal together. 20

This verse passage is in eleven-syllable lines, arranged into four-line stanzas.<sup>30</sup> The basic rhyme scheme of this passage is a-a-x-a, i.e., the first, second, and fourth lines of a stanza are linked by rhyme (or assonance), while the third line does not rhyme. This third line does, however, frequently take up other lines. In the first two stanzas the third line is in fact identical, functioning as a kind of refrain, while the fourth line of the second stanza represents only a slight variation of the fourth line of the first stanza. It is typical of passages like this one that individual lines are repeated or varied from stanza to stanza. As will be seen below, it is also characteristic of Uzbek epic verse that gnomic sayings or nature images (as in line 13: “Does not the rider of a noble steed fly in the steppe?”) punctuate the poetry.

To give an idea of the variation encountered in Uzbek oral epic poetry, I will present an extract of the same scene in Fāzil Yoldāš-oğli's and Saidmurād

30. There are occasional “irregular” lines of twelve or ten syllables. Actually, these lines are not truly irregular: they are generally regularized in the musical performance, by singing extra syllables shorter (or eliding vowels) and conversely by either prolonging a syllable or adding a rest in the melody. On the musical performance of Turkic oral epics, see the conclusion below, and the chapters by Dzhamilya Kurbanova and myself in Reichl 2000, with further references.

Panāh-oğli's versions. In Fāzil Yoldāš-oğli's *Alpāmiš* there is an elaborate scene with speeches from various characters, weighing the pros and cons of giving *zakāt* and discussing other alternatives to that of emigration. The scene is opened by Bāysari addressing his tribal companions, a speech comprising fifty-four lines in the fullest edition of the text:

Āh urganda kozdan āqar selāb yāš,  
Maslahat ber, on miñ uyli qarindāš,  
Barcināyim boy yetgandir qalamqāš,  
Zālīm bilan hargiz bolmañlar yoldāš.  
Qoñgirāt eldan mālga zakāt kelibdi, 5  
Maslahat ber, on miñ uyli qarindāš!  
Qursin Hakimbegi, mulla bolibdi,  
Bezakāt māllarni harām bilibdi,  
Qoñgirāt eldan mālga zakāt kelibdi,  
Maslahat ber, on miñ uyli qarindāš. 10  
Dardli qul dardimni kimga yāraman,  
Ayrāliq otiga bağri pāraman,  
Muna elda siğindi bop turaman,  
Oz akamga qanday zakāt beraman?!  
Maslahat ber, on miñ uyli qarindāš! 15  
Xazān bolib bāğda gullar solibdi,  
Šum falak bāšimga sawdā sālibdi,  
Bāyboridan mālga zakāt kelibdi,  
Maslahat ber, on miñ uyli qarindāš!  
Xudā deyin, yaratganga džilayin, 20  
Oz akamga qanday zakāt berayin,  
Oz akamga ozim zakāt bergunča,  
Bāšqa yurtda džuz'ya berib yurayin,  
Maslahat ber, on miñ uyli qarindāš!<sup>31</sup>

Sighing with grief, floods of tears flow from the eyes.  
Give advice, tribal companions of the ten thousand yurts!  
My Barcin-āy<sup>32</sup> with black eyebrows has come of age.  
Don't ever associate with a tyrant!  
From Qoñgirāt a demand for *zakāt* on our property has come: 5  
Give advice, tribal companions of the ten thousand yurts!  
May Hakimbeg [Alpāmiš] be cursed, who has become a mullah!  
According to his knowledge untaxed property is against the law.

31. Mirzaev, Abduraximov, and Mirbadaleva 1999, 72.

32. Barč'in-āy: the beautiful Barč'in; āy is literally “moon.”

From Qoňgirāt a demand for *zakāt* on our property has come:  
 Give advice, tribal companions of the ten thousand yurts! 10  
 As a sorrowful slave of God, to whom can I tell my grief?  
 My heart is burning in the fire of separation,  
 Among this people I have become a poor relation.  
 How should I pay tax to my elder brother?  
 Give advice, tribal companions of the ten thousand yurts! 15  
 When autumn comes, the roses wither in the garden.  
 Cruel destiny has brought woe over my head,  
 From Bāybori a demand for *zakāt* on our property has come:  
 Give advice, tribal companions of the ten thousand yurts!  
 I will call on God and turn to my creator. 20  
 How should I give *zakāt* to my own elder brother?  
 Rather than giving *zakāt* to my own elder brother  
 I will give *džuz'ya* [a poll tax on people of different faith] in a different country.  
 Give advice, tribal companions of the ten thousand yurts!

These lines have a somewhat different metrical structure from the passage quoted above. Although they are hendecasyllabic lines, they are arranged as one long stanza, broken up at irregular intervals by refrain-like lines, such as:

Maslahat ber, on miň uyli qarindāš (ll. 2, 6, 10, 15, 19, 24)  
 (Give advice, tribal companions of the ten thousand yurts)

Qoňgirāt eldan mālga zakāt kelibdi (ll. 5, 9)  
 (From Qoňgirāt a demand for tax on our cattle has come)

Line 16 in this passage contains a nature image: "Xazān bolib bāgda gullar solibdi" ("When autumn comes, the roses wither in the garden"). The withering flowers of autumn suggest transience and decay and the image accords with the grief of the speaker. Such formulaic images are quite typical of Uzbek *dastans*; they set the tone of a situation or mirror the mood of a protagonist.<sup>33</sup>

In Fāzil Yoldāš-ōgli's version the deliberation scene continues, with two speeches by the *āqsāqāl* Yartibāy (*āqsāqāl* means literally "white beard," a term of respect for an old man) and a further speech by Bāysari. When comparing the two passages quoted, we notice that they are quite different in wording, although they obviously express the same thoughts on the part of Bāysari. Two lines, however, resemble one another more closely: lines 11–12 in Berdi-baxši's version correspond to lines 22–23 in Fāzil Yoldāš-ōgli's version:

33. See Feldman 1983; Reichl 1989b, 100–101.

Oz elima yurib zakāt bergunča,  
 Kočib ketsam boyma qalmāq eliga? (Berdi-baxši)  
 (Rather than give *zakāt* to my own people,  
 How would it be if I migrated to the land of Kalmucks?)

Oz akamga ozim zakāt bergunča,  
 Bāšqa yurtda džuz'ya berib yurayin (Fāzil Yoldāš-ōgli)  
 (Rather than giving *zakāt* to my own elder brother,  
 I will give *džuz'ya* in a different country.)

These lines, in particular the first, are traditional, as is also shown by Saidmurād Panāh-ōgli's version (lines 3–4, 8–9, 13):

Bu dunyādan yānip očsam bolmaymi,  
 Bāysinniñ bahridan kečsam bolmaymi,  
 Oz akamga ozim zakāt berganča,  
 Bu yurtndan qalmāqqa kočsam bolmaymi?

Āga-inim, ešitiñlar sozimni, 5  
 Nečalariñ yegansizlar tuzimni,  
 Quda bolib berib edim qizimni,  
 Oz akamga ozim zakāt berganča,  
 Qizimni qalmāqqa bersam bolmaymi?

Ešitiñlar, beš miň uyli elatim, 10  
 Āga-inim—suyanganim, quwwatim,  
 Ergašsañlar beš miň uyli Qoňgirātim,  
 Bu yurtndan qalmāqqa ketsam bolmaymi?<sup>34</sup>

How would it be if I quenched the fire, burning for this world?  
 How would it be if I left Bāysin?  
 Rather than giving *zakāt* to my own elder brother,  
 How would it be if I migrated from this land to the Kalmucks?

My brothers, hear my words, 5  
 How many of you have been my hosts!  
 As a matchmaker I have given my daughter away.  
 Rather than giving *zakāt* to my own elder brother,  
 How would it be if I gave my daughter to the Kalmuck?

34. Mirzaev and Zarif 1972, 49.



Listen, my people of the five thousand yurts, 10  
 My brothers, my support and my strength!  
 If you follow, my Qoñgirät of the five thousand yurts,  
 How would it be if I migrated from this land to the Kalmucks?

A careful analysis would reveal other similarities between the three texts and help us to understand the way in which each singer develops the commonly shared traditional lines within his individual version.

According to Berdi-baxši's version—and the other versions agree in their basic plot—Bāysari migrates with ninety thousand people to the territory of the Kalmuck Khan Tāyči. When the khan sees Barčın he falls in love with her but agrees to wait for another seven years before asking her to marry him. When the time comes, not only the khan but also the five gigantic sons of an old crone court the beautiful Barčın. Barčın imposes three conditions: whoever wins in a wrestling match, a horse race, and an archery contest will be allowed to become her husband. She negotiates for a delay of ninety days, within which she hopes that Alpāmiš, whom she notifies by a letter, will come to her rescue. Alpāmiš, when apprised of the letter's contents by his sister, leaves home against his father's wish and rides on a carefully chosen horse to Kašal, the land of the Kalmucks:

Hāwdak, Arpa koliga,  
 Mindi Bāyčibār beliga,  
 Na'ra tārtib mulla Hakim  
 Ketdi Kašalniñ eliga,  
 Beklar džonadi, džonadi, 5  
 Xānlar džonadi, džonadi.

Argimāq āti arillab,  
 Tilla qalqāni dirillab,  
 Āgzindan džālin čiqadi,  
 Ot čaqqandayin gurullab, 10  
 Beklar džonadi, džonadi,  
 Xānlar džonadi, džonadi.

Tāmāša tāgñiñ bāšiga,  
 Čiqdi Hizirniñ dašiga,  
 Ozi on tortlar yāšida, 15  
 Dubulğa taqib bāšiga,  
 Beklar džonadi, džonadi,  
 Xānlar džonadi, džonadi.

Uyqusi kelib bābirab,  
 Sari yāylari šalbirab, 20  
 Ikki kozlari alañlab,  
 Qizil tillari salañlab,  
 Qušga yetadi Bāyčibār,  
 Tāziday bolib yalañlab,  
 Beklar džonadi, džonadi, 25  
 Xānlar džonadi, džonadi.

Xawādan āqadi yulduz,  
 Daryāda oynaydi qunduz,  
 Šabgir tārtib āt čāpadi  
 Tinmasdan kečayu kunduz, 30  
 Beklar džonadi, džonadi,  
 Xānlar džonadi, džonadi.<sup>35</sup>

On his way to Lake Hāwdak and Arpa  
 Mullah Hakim [Alpāmiš] mounted Bāyčibār  
 And gave a shout.  
 He rode to the land of Kašal.  
 The *beg* [nobleman] is riding, riding, 5  
 The lord is riding, riding.

The noble steed is snorting,  
 The golden shield is ringing,  
 From the horse's mouth a flame is issuing,  
 Crackling and sparkling like fire. 10  
 The *beg* is riding, riding,  
 The lord is riding, riding.

Over the top of Mount Tāmāša  
 He came to Hizir's desert.<sup>36</sup>  
 He was in his fourteenth year. 15  
 He had fastened the helmet on his head.  
 The *beg* is riding, riding,  
 The lord is riding, riding.

When sleep overcame him, he was all languid;  
 His bow was dangling [from his shoulder]. 20

35. Mirzaev 1969, 22.

36. Hizir is one of the helper saints of popular Islam; he appeared at Alpāmiš's and Barčın's name-giving feast and helps the hero in his tasks.

He looked around with his two eyes;  
 The [breastplates of] red gold were swinging back and forth.  
 Bāyčibār was equal to a bird,  
 Racing along like a greyhound.  
 The *beg* is riding, riding, 25  
 The lord is riding, riding.

In the sky the star is shining,  
 In the river the beaver is playing.  
 On the overnight journey the horse is galloping along,  
 Day and night without rest. 30  
 The *beg* is riding, riding,  
 The lord is riding, riding.

This passage from Berdi-baxši's version (which comprises a total of fifty-seven lines in the edited text) is a type-scene or theme in Uzbek epic poetry. It shows that verse in prosimetric epics is not restricted to monologues or dialogues but can also be used for descriptive passages. The ride of the hero through the desert occurs frequently in Uzbek *dastans*, where it is generally expressed in a series of phraseologically fixed motifs: the clanging of the hero's stirrups and weapons, the hero's whipping the horse, the horse's racing faster than the birds, jumping over ravines and riverbeds, the ride through territory so inhospitable that even snakes and other wild animals avoid it. The other versions of *Alpāmiš* have similar verses, exhibiting the same or similar motifs and phraseology. Indeed, the scene of the hero's ride can also be found in other Turkic traditions, sometimes with identical motifs.<sup>37</sup> Rather than pursuing the question of thematic patterning here, I would like to draw attention to the metrical form of this passage. It is untypical in having stanzas and a refrain; octosyllabic lines are generally arranged in *laisses*, as in the corresponding section in Fāzil's version of *Alpāmiš*, of which I quote merely the beginning:

Dubulğa başda doñgullab,  
 Karq qubba qalqān qarqillab,  
 Tilla pāyanak urilgan,  
 Uzañgilarga širqillab.  
 Bedāw ātlari dirkillab, 5

37. The terms "type-scene" and "theme" are used interchangeably. "Type-scene" is modeled on German "typische Szene," as analyzed by Arend (1933) for Homer; the term "theme" is generally preferred by scholars working in the framework of oral formulaic theory. On theme in South Slavic heroic poetry, with parallels in Homer and the *Chanson de Roland*, see Lord 1960, 68–98. On the theme of the hero's ride through the desert in Uzbek epic poetry, see Reichl 1989b, 105–10.

Ālgir qušdayin čarqillab,  
 Qolda nayzasi solqillab.  
 Yurmakč'in uzāq yoliga,  
 Qaramay oñgu soliga,  
 Yetsam deb yārniñ eliga. 10  
 Siltab yuradi Bāyčibār,  
 Yāqin bolar uzāq yollar,  
 Yol yurar dawlatli šuñqār,  
 Qalmāq yurtini axtarar,  
 Yālgiz ketdi bundan šuñqār. 15  
 Hakimbek qildi ġayratdi,  
 Qiladi ātga šiddatdi,  
 Ču, ha, dedi, qamči čātđi,  
 Izġār čolni tozān tutđi,  
 Yolniñ tanābini tārđi, 20  
 Qir kelsa qilpillatdi,  
 Arna kelsa irġitdi,  
 Or kelsa omganlatdi,  
 Šuytib Hakim yol tārđi.<sup>38</sup>

The helmet on his head is ringing,  
 The bulging shield, made of rhinoceros hide, is resounding,  
 The tip of the golden scabbard is beating  
 Against the stirrups and rattling.  
 The courser is racing forward, 5  
 Flying like a bird of prey,  
 The spear in his hand is shaking.  
 He is intent on a long journey,  
 Looking neither to right nor left,  
 Saying, "If only I would reach the country of my beloved!" 10  
 Bāyčibar is galloping forward,  
 The long way becomes shorter,  
 The mighty falcon is on his way,  
 Seeking the land of the Kalmucks,  
 Alone the falcon is riding along. 15  
 Beg Hakim exerted himself,  
 Urged his horse on,  
 Said "Hay!" and swung the whip,  
 Raised the dust in the cold desert,  
 Rode on his way. 20

38. Mirzaev, Abduraximov, and Mirbadaleva 1999, 135.



When he came to the mountainous steppe, he made his horse move on,  
 When he came to a river, he made him jump across,  
 When he came to a ravine, he made him press on.  
 In this manner Hakim went his way.

The passage continues for another sixty lines and has the typical monorhyme sections of irregular length (*laissez*), occasionally broken up by nonrhyming lines (as in the first section).

As can be seen from the two quotations in octosyllabic verse-lines, the lines have either eight or seven syllables. Octosyllabic lines in *laissez* are generally sung to a stichic, syllabic melody (i.e., each line has basically the same melody and each syllable corresponds to one note). Stanzaic passages, on the other hand, whether they use octosyllabic or hendecasyllabic lines, have a somewhat more involved melody, which extends over more than one verse-line.<sup>39</sup> When comparing different Turkic traditions with one another, we find that the shorter verse-line (the octosyllabic line) is by far the more common line in epic poetry. It is found in Kazakh, Kirghiz, Karakalpak, and other epic traditions, as well as in the heroic songs which Maḥmūd of Kashgar (eleventh century) quotes from the popular Turkic poetry of his day in his *Dīwān luḡāt at-turk* (*Dictionary of the Turkic Language*). It is more than likely that it is the older of the two types of verse-line, and it can be considered the epic line par excellence in the central traditions of Turkic oral epic poetry.<sup>40</sup>

When Alpāmiš arrives in the land of the Kalmucks he is both successful in the suitor contests—partly thanks to the help of his new Kalmuck friend Qāradžān—and victorious in his hostile encounters with the Kalmuck khan and his warriors. Alpāmiš can therefore return in triumph to Bāysin with the beautiful Barčīn as his bride. Soon after, news of the Kalmuck khan's scandalous treatment of Bāysari, Barčīn's father, and his tribesmen in Kašal reaches Alpāmiš's ears. The hero departs immediately to come to their rescue. On his way, however, a trap is laid for him: he is made drunk in a show of treacherous hospitality and thrown into an underground dungeon. Although various attempts are made to free the hero, it is in the end only his faithful horse Bāyčibār who succeeds in the endeavor, by pulling Alpāmiš out of the dungeon with his miraculously lengthened and strengthened tail. The Kalmuck khan meets death at the hand of the hero, and the exiled tribesmen are finally freed from the Kalmuck yoke.

On his return home, however, Alpāmiš finds that his own people have in his

39. For further details, see Reichl 2000.

40. The development of this verse-line (from syntactically parallel structures) is treated in Žirmunskij [Žhirmunsky] 1985.

seven-year absence come under the tyrannical rule of his half-brother Ultāntāz, his father's son by a slave woman. Moreover, Ultāntāz is about to wed Barčīn in a forced marriage. Alpāmiš exchanges clothes with the loyal guardian of horses Qultāy—who recognizes Alpāmiš by the mark of the saint Šāhimardān's fingerprints on the hero's right shoulder—and betakes himself to the scene of the wedding celebrations. In the course of a poetic exchange with Barčīn, Alpāmiš realizes that his wife has remained faithful to him: while his verses probe her feelings, she reveals in her songs her unchanged love for her husband. When Barčīn declares that she will only marry the man who is able to shoot with her husband's heirloom, a mighty bow, it turns out that only "Qultāy" has the strength to bend the bow. Alpāmiš sheds his disguise as a shepherd, has the usurper of his throne executed, and is happily reunited with his faithful wife, family, friends, and tribesmen.

Even this bare outline of the *dastan* leaves no doubt about its generic nature: it is a heroic epic as commonly understood in literary criticism, with stress on both "heroic" and "epic." Alpāmiš's behavior is regulated by the code of honor valid in the nomadic society the *dastan* depicts: the hero must show his prowess not only in winning a bride but, perhaps more importantly, in fighting against external and internal enemies of the tribe, the Kalmucks—stylized in Turkic epics of the central traditions as infidels (non-Muslims) and monster-like beings of darkness—and the slave-born usurper of a legitimate successor's throne. The hero also embodies the ideals of a warlike tribal society, continually threatened by hostile surroundings, both natural and human, as these nomadic societies have been for centuries. The epic of Alpāmiš is definitely "poetry of action" as analysed by Bowra. Motifs, figures, and narrative devices found in heroic epics of many traditions will be easily recognized from the summary above: the hero and his loyal companion, the hero and his miraculous horse, the hero and his faithful wife, bride-winning expeditions and suitor contests, single combat against the enemy, and victory over aggressors and usurpers.

The longer versions of the epic, in particular that of Fāzil Yoldāš-oḡli, paint a detailed and vivid picture of nomadic life, the customs and rules of conduct of a nonsedentary society. Bowra remarks that "Fazil shows how a bard who has enough inventive power can extend a story to a large scale without making it look at all inflated. Part of his gift lies in the speeches which he gives to his characters and which abound in eloquence and dramatic strength. In this poem expansion comes easily because the poet has mastered the fundamentals of his story and seen what new possibilities it contains."<sup>41</sup> And Žirmunskij, who has written a penetrating study of the various Turkic versions of the Alpāmiš story,

41. Bowra 1952, 354–55.

characterizes the Uzbek epic (together with Hādi Zarif) as follows: “The heroic theme of Alpāmiš—the theme of the heroic deeds, the winning of a bride and the return of the hero—develops in the poem against a broad, realistic background of the people’s life, the patriarchal, nomadic lifestyle of a cattle-breeding tribe, and in this respect the Uzbek “Odyssey,” like the ancient Greek Odyssey, can today serve as an excellent historical source and a creative monument of that type of life.”<sup>42</sup>

These sketchy remarks do not pretend to furnish an exhaustive discussion of generic questions concerning Turkic *dastans* such as *Alpāmiš*. While the “idea of epic,” as J. B. Hainsworth has argued, has in Western literature its roots in the Homeric epics and hence “epic” is primarily viewed as a historical genre in critical discussions, there are enough family likenesses between the Homeric poems and a *dastan* like *Alpāmiš*, in particular in a polished and circumstantial version like that written down from Fāzil Yoldāš-ōgli, to allow the use of the generic label “epic” also for this type of Turkic narrative. A more sophisticated analysis would, of course, have to distinguish between various sub-genres and modes of Turkic oral epics and heroic poetry. As generic distinctions and boundaries (as well as mixtures and overlaps) will be the topic of later chapters, there will be occasion to come back to questions of genre.<sup>43</sup>

### Singer, Performance, Repertoire

Among Turkic-speaking peoples epic poetry is generally performed by a professional singer. Uzbek and Turkmen singers are commonly called *baxši*, a name also applied to one type of Karakalpak singer.<sup>44</sup> This is an interesting word (possibly derived from Chinese), which denotes the shaman (or his latter-day descendant, the healer) in Kazakh and Kirghiz, an indication of the intimate connection between singer and shaman in central and northern Asia. There are many other signs of this connection, one of them being the initiation dream or vision many singers and shamans profess to have had, and another the musical style of the singer (suggesting shamanic ecstasy), at least in some traditions. Other names for (epic) singers are *žirši* (Kazakh) and *žiraw* (Karakalpak), derivations from *žir*, “song”; in Kazakh and Kirghiz the singer is also called *aqin*, a

42. Žirmunskij and Zarifov 1947, 108.

43. For the “idea of epic,” see Hainsworth 1991, esp. 1–10; for a useful discussion of the criteria used for generic definitions, see Fowler 1982; on the question of genre in the case of Turkic oral narrative, see Reichl 1992c, 119–41.

44. As with *dastan*, this word has somewhat different forms in different Turkic languages; in Turkmen the singer is called *baqši*, in Karakalpak *baqši*.

word probably derived from Persian *āxūn*, “orator; tutor; preacher.” The Altaians use the term *qayči*, a *nomen agentis* formed from the verb *qay-*, “to sing”; in Azerbaijani and Turkish the popular singer is called *aşiq* (spelled *aşık* in Modern Turkish), an Arabic loan-word, literally meaning “lover.” There are a great many more terms such as these.<sup>45</sup>

A professional singer has typically learned his profession from another singer, and may remain with his master for years before becoming an independent performer. The Karakalpak *žiraw* Žumabay-žiraw Bazarov (born in 1927), for instance, lived with his master, the singer Esemurat-žiraw Nurabillaev (1893–1979), for three years before he began performing on his own. Here is his account of his training, as he told it to me in Nukus on May 19, 1994. In answer to my question how he became a singer, Žumabay-žiraw said:

As to this question, I would like to say that I was born in 1927, into the family of a farmer. In Village Number Thirteen of the Köne Ürgenč district, of the Täšauz province, belonging to Köne Ürgenč: there I saw the light of the world. Later I lived in Village Number Three of the Xoželi district on the Žaňa-žap River; in my childhood I learned reading and writing in elementary school according to our old alphabet. Because of the famine, I tended cattle and looked after my father and mother. At that time, in those days, *žiraws* like Öteniyaz-žiraw, Seytmurat-žiraw, Esemurat-žiraw, Žannazar-žiraw performed, *baqšis* like Esen-baqši in Šawdir—such Karakalpak *baqšis*. When I was sitting at the door then and listening to them, I thought: “I will never walk among the people as such a *baqši*,” but I went on hoping. I lived with this hope, but the times changed, with the Revolution there was chaos, the war came. After the war, when I spent my life in a remote place called Aqqum, carrying reeds from the Tölegen rushes and weaving reed mats, the art of singing came to me, in the following way. As everybody said: “If you went to Esemurat-žiraw, child, you would be famous among the Karakalpaks as a *žiraw*.” I went to this Esemurat from there, on foot. On the way I spent the night one evening in a field, without, however, lying down on the ground, but on the thick branch of a tree, somewhat above ground, at that time on the branch of a *torañgıl*, a thick branch, there I slept. In the early morning at dawn I resumed my journey and came to the place where Esemurat-žiraw lived, a place by the name of Ayran awıl in the Qoñirat district, and I went to him, in 1947, in June or July. It was probably about August, as the honey melons were getting ripe. I went there, took Esemurat-ağa by his hands, said why I had gone and journeyed and come to him to learn the art of singing. He said: “My child, the people are hungry, there are no feasts nowadays, no banquets. For what are you going to learn?” “It doesn’t matter, I have now come to you,” I said.

45. For a more detailed treatment, see Reichl 1992c, 57–91.

Then his wife said: "Take him as your pupil! We'll give him work, we'll give him the food left over from the children, he will fit in with us and will further your fame." After these words he took me as his pupil. I stayed with him for three years. From 1947 till 1950, on January 16 or 17 I was given the master's blessing (*pātiya*) and returned to my people.<sup>46</sup>

I came back to my father and my mother. In this way, with the *qobiz* in my hand, I came back. The instrument sounded well in my hands and so I went to feasts. Did what I am narrating come of itself, the words at a feast? The number of people who invited me to a feast increased, and from then on my fame as a singer has grown. From 1950 to this year, 1994, it is 44 years that I have practised the art of a singer. From this *žiraw* I learned first *Edige* and *Šaryar*, then *Qoblan*, three *dastans* I have learned. To narrate each *dastan* I need two days. If I don't rest and narrate without a break, I finish in two days. If one has a rest, a bit of time will pass. If I narrate something twice, there won't be any difference. Until this day I have always preserved the words themselves, which in former days Turimbet-žiraw, Nurabilla-žiraw, Old Paleke-žiraw, and Šaňköt-žiraw, have sung—the heritage that they have left behind. Following their direction and teaching, I have now become an old man, enjoying very good health. My former youth did not stay and I have reached the age of sixty-eight; I have become an old man.

Žumabay-žiraw mentions three epics, *Edige*, *Qoblan*, and *Šaryar*, to which I will return later. Apart from these three epics, Žumabay-žiraw's repertoire consists also of a number of shorter songs. These he performs before the recital of a *dastan* or by themselves if there is no occasion for the singing of an epic. Among these songs there are two poems of advice (*nāsiyhat*):<sup>47</sup> one in which various bad things are compared with good things, and one in which the things and qualities necessary to a young man are listed: "Ne dārkar žigitke?" ("What's necessary for a young man?"); both songs are traditional and also found (with variations) in the repertoire of other *žiraws*.<sup>48</sup> A work of the singer's own composition is a praise song on his native town, Šomanay, "Šomanay tārīpi" ("A description of Šomanay"). Finally, Žumabay-žiraw sings a traditional song on a historical figure, *Ormanbet-biy*. This poem will be discussed in detail in chapter 4.

Žumabay Bazarov is a *žiraw*, one of two types of singers found among the Karakalpak. The *žiraw* plays the *qobiz* (an archaic type of fiddle) and specializes in heroic epics, while the *baqsī* accompanies himself on the *dutar* (a two-stringed

46. The *pātiya* (from Arabic *fatīḥa*) is the formal blessing that the pupil (*šakirt*; Persian *šagerd*) receives from this teacher (*ustaz*; Persian *ostād*) at the end of his apprenticeship.

47. This Arabic word (*nāsiyhat*) is rendered somewhat differently in the various Turkic languages (Karakalpak *nāsiyhat*; Kazakh *nasixat*).

48. Extracts are found in Tāžimuratov 1980, 365–79.

lute with frets) and mostly performs lyric *dastans* as well as branches of the *Čoroqli* cycle. Their styles of performance are also quite different: the *baqsī* sings the verse parts of the *dastans* to a great variety of song-like melodies; the *žiraw*, on the other hand, sings the epic to a simpler, generally stichic melodic line.

As emerges from Žumabay-žiraw's "autobiography," he sees himself as part of a long chain of transmission, insisting that "until this day I have always preserved the words themselves, which in former days Turimbet-žiraw, Nurabilla-žiraw, Old Paleke-žiraw und Šaňköt-žiraw have sung—the heritage that they have left behind." According to the various teacher-pupil relationships, "genealogies" and "singer schools" (called *baxšilik maktabi* or *dāstānčilik maktabi* in Uzbek) can be established. Fāzil Yoldāš-oqli, for instance, belonged to the "School of Bulungur," famous for its heroic epics. Another well-known Uzbek singer, Ergaš Džumanbulbul-oqli (1868–1937), belonged to the "School of Qorgān," in which lyrical *dastans* were particularly cultivated. Other Uzbek "singer schools" are the "School of Šahrisabz," the "School of Qamay" (in the province of Qašqdaryā), the "School of Šerābād" (in southern Uzbekistan), the "School of Southern Tajikistan" (Uzbek-Laqaq), and the "School of Khorezm."<sup>49</sup> In a similar way, various "singer schools" can be distinguished for Kirghiz singers, Turkmen singers, and Karakalpak *baqsīs* and *žiraws*.<sup>50</sup>

As can be seen from Žumabay-žiraw's repertoire, a singer performs not only epics but also songs of various kinds. The latter are an important part of his performance, which generally proceeds according to a fixed pattern. This pattern can be best captured by interpreting the performance of epic as a particular type of speech event. The description of speech events owes its initial impetus mainly to the work of Dell Hymes, whose researches helped find what is generally referred to as "ethnography of communication" or "ethnography of speaking." Hymes and other anthropologically oriented linguists have developed a supple set of descriptive categories. In a seminal article, Hymes differentiates between fifteen components of a speech event, involving the event's physical circumstances—the setting (time and place) and participants (speaker and hearer/audience, social relationships); the event's formal aspects—the forms and manner of speech (verse, chant, etc.), channel (oral, read out, etc.), and the internal sequence of events (act sequence); its content—genre, topic, and message; and its nature as a whole—its general character (key, i.e., "the tone, manner, or spirit in which an act is done"), its role in society (purpose or function), and its cultural grounding (norms of interaction and interpretation).

49. For an elaborate genealogy of this "singer school," see Zarif 1970; see also Razzāqov et al. 1980, 197ff.

50. For Kirghiz "singer schools," see Kydyrbaeva 1984, 12ff.; "Manasčılar mektebi" in Qaripqulov et al. 1995, 2:77–78; for Karakalpak "singer schools," see Ayimbetov 1988, 79ff., 126ff., with genealogies on pp. 140 and 153.

Some of these categories have been regrouped, reinterpreted, and supplemented by various scholars: John Foley has coined the useful term “performance arena,” as a class name comprising several components of a communicative event, in particular setting and participants; and Gary Palmer has recently subsumed the various elements of a speech event under the term “discourse scenario.”<sup>51</sup>

As to the performance of epics among the Turks of the central traditions, there is a clear dichotomy between singer and audience, reflected in the seating arrangement in the yurt, the traditional felt tent of the nomadic Turks, or in the room in which the performance takes place. The singer is placed on the *tör*, the seat of honor, which is customarily opposite the entrance to the yurt. This is the part of the yurt which is embellished by an ornamental wall carpet (Kazakh, Karakalpak *tus kiyiz*, Kirghiz *tuš kiyiz*) and where the floor is covered by decorated felt rugs (Karakalpak *tekiymet*, Kazakh *tekemet*). The worthier members of the audience sit closest to the singer around the *dasturxan*, the table cloth which is spread on the floor and on which the food is served. As the occasion for a singer’s performance is generally a feast, the singing of epic poetry is set in a framework of banqueting and merrymaking. The performance of the singer takes place in the evening and night and starts when the feast is well under way. The singer does not as a rule begin his recital with the epic itself but with shorter traditional songs and compositions:

When the singer (*baxši*) came to a village he stayed with his friends or with the person who had invited him specially and in whose house the performance was arranged. By the evening all the neighbors had gathered in the house. The singer was placed on the seat of honor. Around him, along the walls, but also in the middle of the room if there were many guests, the men would sit. In the old days women and children did not take part in these gatherings and would listen through the windows and the doors. The evening began with light refreshments. Then the singer sang the so-called *terma* (literally “selection”), as a prelude to the performance of the main part of his repertoire: short lyric pieces of his own composition, excerpts from *dastans*, sometimes songs from classical literature—all of these songs small works (approximately up to 150 lines), forming a unity by their function as a prelude, attuning the singer himself and his audience to the more serious epic theme.<sup>52</sup>

51. Foley 1995, 47ff.; Palmer 1996, 170ff. A convenient introduction to the field of ethnolinguistics and the ethnography of communication is Saville-Troike 1989; see in particular pp. 138ff. In addition to Hymes 1972, 59ff., see also Bauman 1986, 1–10, and the entries “Performance” and “Ethnography of Speaking” in Bauman 1992. For a general discussion of the performance of Turkic oral epics as speech event, see Reichl 1995.

52. Žirmunskij and Zarifov 1947, 29.

As this description by Žirmunskij and the Uzbek folklorist Hādi Zarif indicates, there is a definite succession of poetic genres and performance modes which regulate the event.<sup>53</sup> This patterning is itself part of a larger act sequence, which comprises the reactions of the audience (the least a singer expects is the muttering of phrases expressing praise and admiration); the singer’s leaving the gathering in the middle of his performance to give the listeners an opportunity to deposit their gifts; and the various breaks in the recital occasioned by food, ritual toasts, or the need of the singer for some recreation.

As Žirmunskij and Zarif point out, these shorter compositions which introduce the performance of epic are called *terma* in Uzbek, meaning literally “a gathering” or “collection.” The word denotes a song that is often composed by the singer himself and deals with a variety of topics presented from a personal point of view:

In the composition of the *terma*, an independent genre of Uzbek folklore, the *baxšis* play a very important role; in the majority of cases the *terma* can be considered the individual work of the epic singers. Lyric or lyric-epic songs that are composed on such themes as advice, moral teaching, or word and music, which are devoted to various events of social life, to the description of persons or animals or to their criticism, which are sung by *baxšis* and which comprise from 10 or 12 to 150 or 200 lines—in some cases even more—are called *terma*.<sup>54</sup>

What Žirmunskij and Zarif say of the performance of the Uzbek singer is also true of other Turkic traditions. The Turkish minstrel (*aşık*) prefaces his performance of narrative poetry—heroic romances of the *Köroğlu* cycle, called *destan*, and lyric love romances, termed *hikâye*—with up to a dozen lyric songs, while the Azerbaijani singer includes in his introductory part in addition to songs, sung to the accompaniment of the *saz* (a kind of lute), recited poems, prayers, and formal greetings.<sup>55</sup> In the Azerbaijani tradition, the poems prefaced to the *dastan* are generally called *ustadnamä* (“master’s letter”); they are poems of a philosophical, moralizing, or gnomic nature, not unlike the *terma*.<sup>56</sup> Kazakh singers also begin their recitals of epic poetry with various songs, which are denoted by the same generic term as the corresponding Uzbek poems (*terme*; the same word is also used in Karakalpak and Kirghiz).<sup>57</sup> As in Uzbek,

53. For an English translation of the whole passage see Reichl 1992c, 97–99.

54. Mirzaev 1979, 86. On this genre of Uzbek folklore see also Imāmov et al. 1990, 169–73.

55. For the Turkish minstrel see Başgöz 1975, 154; a detailed description of the performance of an Azerbaijani minstrel is given by Albright 1976.

56. See the definition in Orudžev 1966–87, 4:234, s.v. *ustadnamä*; for examples see the introductions to *Tahir-Zöhra*, *Äsli-Käräm*, *Gurbani*, and other *dastans* edited in Tāhmasib et al. 1979.

57. On the act sequence typical of the performance of a Kazakh singer see Kunanbaeva 1987.



this genre is in Kirghiz, Kazakh, and Karakalpak partly defined by authorship—the poems are usually individual compositions of a singer; partly by the manner of the poems' performance—they are sung in a particular "recitative" singing style; and partly also by content. One of the most salient content features of many representatives of this genre is, as in the Old English elegy, the meditative and moralizing stance adopted by the singer, which has led Kazakh folklorists to view the *terme* as basically a didactic genre.<sup>58</sup>

These introductory songs are part of a fairly rigid act sequence of epic performance. Although it would be far-fetched to call them ritual, they do seem to have a more than merely practical function. The singer not only wants to test his audience and needs to get his voice exercised but also has to get into the mood of an epic performance, which is generally physically quite strenuous. The singing of shorter songs and the applause he receives stimulate the singer and put him into a kind of excited frame of mind that enables him to continue singing for a long period of time, sometimes all through the night. Some singers also need other stimulants such as *nas* (chewing tobacco), tea, or mild narcotics. One of the Turkmen *baxšis* I have recorded (Gulum-baxši Ilmetop, 1996, in Khorezm) would sing shorter songs for hours before embarking on the epic, while gradually increasing his state of exaltation by taking *trieb* (a kind of hashish).

Although the contents of the nonepic repertoire of a singer might at first sight seem arbitrary, there are some constants, at least in some traditions and among some singers. The *terma* that Uzbek *baxšis* sing are generally songs about their instrument ("Dombiram," "My *dombira*") and on their repertoire ("Nima aytayin?" "What shall I tell you?").<sup>59</sup> Similarly, Karakalpak and Kazakh singers perform *terme* of a philosophical and gnomic character, called *nāsiyhat* ("advice"; see above). In addition to these types of poem, there is a further type, named *tolgaw*. This is the generic term for the song entitled "Ormanbet-biy" in Žumabay's repertoire. This genre is intimately related to the wisdom poetry these singers cultivate, but it also has historical dimensions and leads by its subject matter directly to the heroic epic. As will be argued in chapter 4, *Ormanbet-biy* underlines the heroic epic's fundamental orientation toward tribal history. While this *tolgaw* focuses on the distant past, historical songs are generally

58. B. Akmukanova defines the Kazakh *terme* as "edifying recitatives" (*nazidatel'nye reĭtitivy*), and remarks that they consist basically of a series of moral precepts, strung together like beads without intrinsic ordering; see Akmukanova 1968, 153–54. The Karakalpak genre of the *terme* is discussed in Maqsetov and Tāžimuratov 1979, 91–96; Ayımbetov 1988, 38–45.

59. A number of these are published in Zarif 1939, 50–52; one of them is translated in Reichl 1992c, 99–100.

concerned with more recent events. Both genres are, however, reflections on history, and both types of poems stand in a dynamic relationship to epic, synchronically as well as diachronically. The historical dimension is most clearly in the foreground in the historical songs, which will form the subject of the next chapter.

## CHAPTER TWO

## Variations on Epic and History

Rex autem misit fratrem cum exercitu in Saxoniam eam devastandam. Qui appropians urbi quae dicitur Heresburg, superbe locutum tradunt, quia nichil ei maioris curae esset, quam quod Saxones pro muris se ostendere non auderent, quo cum eis dimicare potuisset. Adhuc sermo in ore eius erat, et ecce Saxones ei occurrerunt miliario uno ab urbe, et inito certamine tanta caede Francos multati sunt, ut a mimis declamaretur, ubi tantus ille infernus esset, qui tantam multitudinem caesorum capere posset.

The king, however, sent his brother with an army into Saxony in order to lay it waste. When he approached a town named Eresburg, he is said to have proudly declared that he was worried about nothing more than that the Saxons might not dare to show themselves outside the walls, so that he might not be able to fight them. These words were still on his lips, when behold, the Saxons rushed upon him a mile from the town and, when the battle had begun, punished the Franks with such a mighty slaughter that the *mimi* declaimed: "Where is a hell so big that it can contain the great number of the slain?"

Like other medieval authors, Widukind of Corvey, the tenth-century historian of the Saxons, incorporated into his history not only annals and other sources that had reached him in writing, but also oral accounts of past happenings.<sup>1</sup> Some of these are eyewitness accounts (much of his *Res gestae Saxonicae* covers recent history); others have a longer tradition of oral telling and retelling behind them. The quotation given above narrates an event from the beginning of the tenth century: in 915, the Frankish king Conrad (r. 911–18) sent his

1. Widukind of Corvey, *Res gestae Saxonicae* 1: 23, ed. Hirsch and Lohmann 1935, 35–36. On Widukind of Corvey and the oral sources of his history, see Beumann 1950, 101–6.

brother Eberhard against the Saxons under Duke Heinrich, the later King Heinrich I (919–36), in an unsuccessful attempt to win Saxon allegiance by force. The Frankish defeat took place many years before Widukind's probable date of birth (c. 925), but was certainly within the living memory of some of his contemporaries. It emerges from Widukind's text that the Frankish defeat was not only remembered by eyewitnesses, but had also passed into the repertoire of the medieval *mimus*, a word which in tenth-century German society might still denote the *scof*, the West Germanic singer, rather than the minstrel and popular entertainer of the later Middle Ages.<sup>2</sup> In any case, it is the singers who tell of this historical event, and they do this in poetic speech, as the verb *declamare* quite unambiguously shows. What Widukind is most probably referring to, must be some kind of historical narrative poem (or, more probably, song), presumably praising Saxon prowess and gloating over the Frankish defeat.<sup>3</sup>

Historiography versus Poetry: *Brunanburh*

Apart from Widukind's mention of the *mimi*, no other trace of such a poem or song can be found. There are, however, a number of poems in the vernacular extant which might be of the type Widukind possibly had in mind. They come from various parts of the Germanic world, including Anglo-Saxon England. One of them is an Old English poem recorded in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and known under the title *The Battle of Brunanburh*. This poem is transmitted in five manuscripts of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, as the sole entry for the year 937,<sup>4</sup> when King Æthelstan (r. 924–39) and his brother Eadmund fought near Brunanburh (a site now unknown, though possibly to be identified with Bromborough in Cheshire)<sup>5</sup> against a confederation of Vikings, Scots, and Strathclyde Britons.

2. On the meaning of *mimus* in the early Middle Ages, see Ogilvy 1963. The etymology of Old English *scof* and Old High German *scof*, *scof* (and hence the original functions of this type of singer) has been a matter of dispute; see Wissmann 1955, Werlich 1964, and Hollowell 1979.

3. The verb *declamare* is ambiguous as to the manner of performance. As oral poetry of a narrative and eulogistic kind is generally sung, it is likely that the *mimus* performed sung poetry.

4. The manuscripts in question are MSS Corpus Christi College Cambridge 173 (Parker Chronicle) (A), BL Cotton Tiberius A.vi (B), Cotton Tiberius B.i (C), and Cotton Tiberius B.iv (D); the fifth manuscript (Cotton Otho B.xi [G]) was almost completely destroyed in the Cottonian fire of 1731, but is known through an early edition (for a critical edition see Lutz 1981, 84–87 [text], 216–24 [notes]). In G the date "938" is given; in A "937" is corrected from "938." The text is quoted from vol. 6 of the *Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records*; Krapp and Dobbie 1931–53, 6:16–20. The most comprehensive edition of the poem is Campbell 1938; for more recent editions with useful commentaries, see Muir 1989, 65–80; Mitchell 1995, 300–303. I retain (with Krapp and Dobbie and Mitchell, and against Campbell and Muir) introductory *Her*.

5. See the discussion in Campbell 1938, 57–80. On Dodgson's identification of Brunanburh with Bromborough, see Dodgson 1953–57. For a detailed earlier study of the location of Brunanburh, see Cockburn 1931; for a more recent survey, see Wood 1980.

The historical background of the battle of Brunanburh is fairly complex, but it should be recalled that the conflict between Æthelstan and the north of England was of long standing. King Edward (r. 899–924) had succeeded in bringing the Danish settlements south of the Humber securely under English rule. In 919 the Viking Rægnald assumed the rule of York and received support against Edward from his cousin Sihtric, who raided Mercia with an army from Ireland in 920. Before Edward could carry out his planned punitive invasion of Northumbria, the kings of York, Scotland, and Strathclyde submitted to Edward's overlordship at Bakewell in 920. At the beginning of Æthelstan's reign, relations with Northumbria were peaceful, but hostilities flared up again after the death of Sihtric (927), who had been king of York since 920. Æthelstan defeated Guthfrith, Sihtric's brother, who had claimed the kingship of York, and made the kings of Scotland, and Strathclyde renew their vows of submission. When Æthelstan invaded Scotland in 934, however, Constantine, king of Scotland, formed a coalition with Owen, king of Strathclyde, and with Guthfrith's son Olaf (Anlaf), who had meanwhile become king of the Dublin Norsemen. Their invasion of England in 937 is the topic of our poem.<sup>6</sup> The poem begins by stating the victory of Æthelstan and his brother at Brunanburh:

Her Æþelstan cyning,	eorla dryhten,	
beorna beahgifa,	and his broþor eac,	
Eadmund æþeling,	ealdorlangne tir	
geslogon æt sæcce	sweorda ecgum	
ymbe Brunanburh.	Bordweal clufan,	5
heowan heaþolinde	hamora lafan,	
afaran Eadwardes,	swa him geæþele wæs	
from cneomægum,	þæt hi æt campe oft	
wiþ laþra gehwæne	land ealgodon,	10
hord and hamas.		

In this year King Æthelstan, lord of noble warriors, / ring-giver of men, and also his brother, / Prince Eadmund, won eternal glory / in fighting with the swords' blades / [5] at Brunanburh. They clove the shield-wall, / hewed the battle lime-trees [i.e., shields] with the leavings of hammers [i.e., swords], / Eadward's sons, as was natural to them / from their descent that they would often in battle / defend land, treasure, and homes / [10] against all enemies.<sup>7</sup>

6. For a full discussion of the historical background, see Campbell 1938, 43 ff.

7. Modern English word order does not always allow literal translation of Old English verse, so that the slashes marking line breaks occasionally (as in line 10) deviate from the Old English text. For translations of the complete poem, see Gordon 1954, 327–28; Crossley-Holland 1982, 18–19; Swanton 1996, 100–110.

The actual battle is described in summary fashion in lines 10b to 59. Between sunrise and sunset many warriors of the Scottish host as well as of the Vikings (*scipflotan*, "sailors") lost their lives (10b–20a). In various detachments the West Saxons pursue the fleeing enemy (20b–24a), while the Mercians fight against Anlaf and his men (24b–28a). Five young kings lose their lives on the battlefield, as well as seven of Anlaf's earls and a multitude of warriors, Vikings as well as Scots (28b–32a). The Norsemen put to sea and return to Dublin, while the aged Constantine, who lost not only his kinsmen but also his young son in the fight, flees north to his native land (32b–56). The poem continues with the return of the victors (57 ff.) and ends by stressing that since the first invasion of Britain by the Angles and the Saxons, a greater number of people has never been killed in a battle on this island (65b–73):

Swilce þa gebroþer	begen ætsamne,	
cyning and æþeling,	cyþþe sohton,	
Wesseaxena land,	wiges hremige.	
Letan him behindan	hræw bryttian	60
saluwigpadan,	þone sweartan hræfn,	
hyrnednebban,	and þane hasewanpadan,	
earn æftan hwit,	æses brucan,	
grædigne gudhafoc	and þæt græge deor,	
wulf on wealde.	Ne wearð wæl mare	65
on þis eiglande	æfre gieta	
folces gefylled	beforan þissum	
sweordes ecgum,	þæs þe us secgað bec,	
ealde uðwitan,	sipþan eastan hider	
Engle and Seaxe	up becoman,	70
ofer brad brimu	Brytene sohtan,	
wlance wigsmiþas,	Wealas ofercoman,	
eorlas arhwate	eard begeatan.	

Similarly the brothers [Æthelstan and Eadmund] both together, / king and prince, returned to their homeland, / the land of the West Saxons, exulting over the war. / [60] Behind them they left to enjoy the corpses / the dark-coated one, the black raven / with horny beak, and the grey-coated one, / the eagle with a white tail, to enjoy the carrion, / the greedy war-hawk and that grey beast, / [65] the wolf in the forest. Never yet before this was there greater slaughter / on this island / of an army felled / by the edge of the sword, according to what books, / old wise men, tell us, from the time when / [70] Angles and Saxons came hither from the east to land, / invaded Britain across the wide seas, / the proud war-smiths [i.e. warriors], overcame the Welshmen, / and the earls eager for glory seized the land.



*Brunanburh* exhibits the traditional style of Old English poetry in almost exemplary fashion. It is composed in alliterative long lines and uses the poetic diction customary in poems such as *Beowulf* or the *Battle of Maldon*. In the first lines quoted we find conventional kennings and poetic compounds for the ruler (2a *beahgifa*, “giver of rings”) and the warriors’ weapons (6a *heapolinde*, “battle lime-tree,” i.e., “shield”; *hamora lafa*, “the leavings of hammers,” i.e., “swords”).<sup>8</sup> In the same passage we also find variation, the repetition of the same idea in similar words, a figure so typical of Old English verse (1b *eorla dryhten* [“lord of noble warriors”]; 2a *beorna beahgifa* [“giver of rings”]; 5b *Bordweal clufan* [“clove the shield-wall”]; 6a *heowan heapolinde* [“hewed the battle lime-trees”]).<sup>9</sup> The most striking reminder of Germanic heroic poetry in *Brunanburh* is the motif of the Beasts of Battle in lines 60ff. In Old English poetry, this powerful image of slaughter and carnage is found in a number of poems, among them *Beowulf*, the *Lay of Finnsburh*, and the *Battle of Maldon*. It testifies to the highly formulaic character of Old English poetry and is a feature undoubtedly inherited from oral tradition.<sup>10</sup> The poet of *Brunanburh* was certainly familiar with the conventions of traditional poetry. But despite its poetic diction and the vivid way in which defeat on the one side and victory on the other are stressed, the poem as a whole is only moderately dramatic. In *Brunanburh* the focus is not on the battle itself, the choices a military leader has to make, and the heroism of individual combatants, but rather more globally on the victory of the West Saxon king together with his confederates. The poem is basically celebratory, as is also underlined by the ending, when the battle at Brunanburh is put into historical perspective by stylizing it into the battle with the heaviest losses since the Germanic invasion of Britain.

*Brunanburh* occurs in a work of historiography, but with its emphasis on praise rather than narration, it seems to be at variance with the more sober prose entries in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. While the historical event appears to be mirrored only opaquely in the poem, it has nevertheless served as basis for later historiographic writing. Among these are the chronicles of Florence of Worcester (d. 1118) and Henry of Huntingdon (d. after 1154).<sup>11</sup> Florence’s account (given under the year 938) reads basically like a summary of the Old

8. On the various kennings for the ruler in Old English, see Marquardt 1938, 247ff. (*beahgifa*, p. 256); on the Old English poetic compounds for weapons, see Brady 1979.

9. On variation in Old English traditional poetry, see Brodeur 1959, 39ff.; on variation in *Brunanburh*, see Bolton 1968; on textual variation, see O’Keeffe 1990, 114ff.

10. On this motif, see Magoun 1955; Griffith 1993. Magoun’s theory of oral composition is opposed in Bonjour’s paper on this motif (1962, 135–49). On the controversy over the interpretation of Old English formulaic diction, see also Reichl 1989a.

11. For English translations of the relevant passages in various medieval historiographic works, see Allen and Calder 1976, 195–203; on the later treatment of the battle of Brunanburh in historiography and romance, see also Lendinara 1999.

English poem, but he adds an interesting detail for which there are no other sources, that Olaf and Constantine entered the mouth of the Humber (where in his account the battle takes place) with a fleet.

Hiberniensium multarumque insularum rex Paganus Anlafus, a socero suo rege Scottorum Constantino incitatus, ostium Humberæ fluminis valida cum classe ingreditur; cui rex Æthelstanus fraterque suus clito Eadmundus, in loco qui dicitur Brunanburh, cum exercitu occurrerunt, et prælio a diei principio in vesperum tracto, quinque regulos, septemque duces, quos adversarii sibi in auxilium conduxerant, interfecerunt; tantumque sanguinis quantum eatenus in Anglia nullo in bello fusum est fuderunt; et reges Anlafum et Constantinum ad naves fugere compellentes, magno reversi sunt tripudio. Illi vero summam infelicitatem de interitu sui exercitus consecuti, cum paucis redeunt in sua.

Anlaf [Olaf], the Pagan king of Ireland and many other isles, at the instigation of his father-in-law Constantine, king of the Scots, entered the mouth of the Humber with a powerful fleet. King Athelstan, and his brother Edmund the etheling, encountered him at the head of their army at a place called Brunanburh, and the battle, in which five tributary kings and seven earls were slain, having lasted from daybreak until evening, and been more sanguinary than any that was ever fought before in England, the conquerors retired in triumph, having driven the kings Anlaf and Constantine to their ships; who, overwhelmed with sorrow at the destruction of their army, returned to their own countries with very few followers.<sup>12</sup>

Henry’s account is more interesting because he gives not a mere paraphrase, but a full translation of the Old English poem. He prefaces his translation by underlining the importance of the event and the appropriateness of its retelling in poetry:

De cujus prælii magnitudine Anglici scriptores quasi carminis modo proloquentes, et extraneis tam verbis quam figuris usi, translatione fida donandi sunt, ut pene de verbo in verbum eorum interpretantes eloquium, ex gravitate verborum gravitatem actuum et animorum gentis illius condiscamus.

Of the grandeur of this conflict, English writers have expatiated in a sort of poetical description, in which they have employed both foreign words and metaphors. I therefore give a faithful version of it, in order that by translating their recital almost word for word, the majesty of the language may exhibit the majestic achievements and the heroism of the English nation.<sup>13</sup>

12. Thorpe 1848–49, 1:132 (text); Forester 1854, 97 (translation).

13. Arnold 1879, 159–60 (text); Forester 1853, 169–70 (translation).

To illustrate Henry's translation, here is his rendering of lines 1–9a, which can be compared with the original quoted above:

Rex Adelstan, decus ducum, nobilibus torquium dator, et frater ejus Edmundus, longa stirpis serie splendentes, percusserunt, in bello, acie gladii apud Bruneshurh. Scutorum muros fiderunt, nobiles ceciderunt, domesticæ reliquiæ defuncti Edwardi. Sic namque iis ingenitum fuerat a genibus cognationum, ut bellis frequentibus ab infestis nationibus defenderent patriæ thesauros et domos, pecunias et xenia.

At Bruneshurh, Athelstan the king, noblest of chiefs, giver of collars, emblems of honour,<sup>14</sup> with his brother Edmund, of a race ancient and illustrious, in the battle, smote with the edge of the sword. The offspring of Edward, the departed king, cleft through the defence of shields, struck down noble warriors. Their innate valour, derived from their fathers, defended their country, its treasures and its hearths, its wealth and its precious things, from hostile nations, in constant wars.<sup>15</sup>

As can be seen, Henry's translation is not always correct, a fact that Arnold signaled in his edition by printing incorrect passages in smaller type. It is, of course, possible that one or the other of Henry's inaccuracies is due not so much to his shaky knowledge of Old English, as to a variant version of his source poem. Henry's text does not throw any additional light on the historical event, but it does give at least a minimal contextualization of the poem: the importance of the event (*gravitas actuum*) can be inferred from the dignity of the words (*ex gravitate verborum*). Poetry is an appropriate expression of outstanding happenings in history. But poetry is nevertheless not history. At the end of his translation, Henry laconically notes: "His causa recreandi interpositis ad historiam redeamus," "Having interposed these words for the sake of refreshment, let us return to history."<sup>16</sup>

*The Battle of Brunanburh* may not have been the only vernacular poem on Æthelstan's victory. William of Malmesbury (c. 1090–c. 1143) gives an account of the battle that is clearly not based on the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, and remarks towards the end of his section on Æthelstan: "De quo bello tempus est ut illius uersifici, de quo omnia haec excerptimus, sententiam ponamus." ("On the subject of that battle, this is the moment to set down the opinions of the versifier from whom all this has been extracted.")<sup>17</sup> William then quotes a poem, consisting of thirty-three (partly Leonine, partly end-rhyming) hexam-

14. More correctly: "giver of collars to the nobles."

15. Arnold 1879, 160 (text); Forester 1853, 170 (translation).

16. Arnold 1879, 161. On Henry of Huntingdon's translation, see Rigg 1991.

17. Mynors, Thomson, and Winterbottom 1998–99, 1:220 (text), 1:221 (translation).

eters: after twelve years of Æthelstan's rule, the "pirate Anlaf" (*pirata Analauus*) and his confederate, the king of the Scots, invade and raid England. Æthelstan, at first reluctant, marches against them and wins a victory:

Nec mora: uictrices ducentia signa cohortes  
explicat in uentum, uexilla ferotia centum;  
cruda uirum uirtus decies bis milia quina  
ad stadium belli comitantur preuia signa.  
Hic strepitus mouit predatorum legiones,  
terrui insignis uenientum fama latrones,  
ut posita preda proprias peterent regiones.  
At uulgus reliquum, miseranda strage peremptum,  
infecit bibulas tetrus nidoribus auras.  
Fugit Analauus, de tot modo milibus unus,  
depositum mortis, fortunæ nobile munus,  
post Æthelstanum rebus momenta daturus.

Without delay he opens to the breeze the ensigns that lead his victorious squadrons, a hundred threatening standards. The raw valour of his troops, one hundred thousand men, accompany to the battlefield the standards that show the way. This noise sapped the courage of the pirate legions; the report of their advance terrified those famous robbers, made them drop their booty and seek their native land. But the rest of the crowd, cut down in pitiful slaughter, fouled with revolting stench the thirsty air. Anlaf escaped, alone out of what were lately so many thousands, a deposit left by death, the noble gift of Fortune, destined to shape events after Æthelstan's time.<sup>18</sup>

William's source for this poem is unknown. If it was a Latin text (which is likely), we do not know whether this text is the invention of an author writing in Latin or whether it reflects a vernacular tradition. A flourishing tradition of praise poetry in Latin is well attested, and hence there is no need to explain the existence of Latin eulogy with reference to vernacular poetry.<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, the composition of praise in the vernacular must have been less unusual in tenth-century England than the scanty textual remains suggest. There is in fact one other vernacular poem referring to the battle of Brunanburh. It has long been realized that the detailed description of the battle of *Vínheiðr* (Vin Moor) in the thirteenth-century *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar* has the same histor-

18. *Ibid.*, 1:220–22 (text), 1:221–23 (translation).

19. Michael Lapidge (1981) dates William's poem to the twelfth century but draws attention to earlier poems on Æthelstan, showing a contemporary tradition of "political" poetry in Latin. See also the discussion in Mynors, Thomson, and Winterbottom 1998–99, 2:116–18.

ical basis as the Old English poem. This is one of the best-known *Íslendinga sögur*, (sagas of Icelanders), in this case the famous skald Egil (c. 910–90). Egil came twice to England, once to take part in the battle of *Vínheiðr*, where he and his brother Thorolf fought on Æthelstan's side, and once when he fell into the hands of his enemy, King Eirik Bloodaxe, in York and was threatened with death, a threat from which he could only extricate himself by composing a praise poem on the king, the so-called *hǫfuðlausn* (head-redemption).<sup>20</sup> The description of the battle in *Egils saga* presents a number of problems for the historian on account of its many differences from other sources, in particular the poem on Brunanburh.<sup>21</sup> What is interesting for the present discussion is that the relevant chapters in *Egils saga* are, in the manner of many Icelandic sagas, interspersed with verse.<sup>22</sup> Of these, the first is a poetic assessment of Æthelstan's enemies, the second a short poem in honor of Egil's brother Thorolf, killed in combat; the third, immediately following, evokes the battle and affirms Egil's own courage; the fourth and fifth poems are composed by Egil on the topic of receiving gifts from Æthelstan in compensation for his brother's death; and the sixth poem is a praise poem (*drápa*) of Æthelstan, for which the king rewards him "with two gold bracelets each half a mark in weight and a valuable cloak that had been worn by the King himself."<sup>23</sup> Of these the closest in spirit to *Brunanburh* is the third poem (ch. 55). It merely evokes the battle in a summary fashion, which led Finnur Jónsson, one of its editors, to the belief that it was composed much later in Iceland. As skaldic poetry can become fairly involved on account of its kennings, the Old Norse text will be accompanied by a literal as well as a free translation.<sup>24</sup>

Valkostom hlóðk vestan  
vang fyr merkistangir,  
ótt vas él þats sóttak  
Aðgils blóum Naðri;  
háði ungr við Engla  
Áleifr þrimu stála;  
helt, né hrafnar sultu,  
Hringr á vápna þingi.

5

20. This saga has been translated several times into English; see, for instance, Pálsson and Edwards 1976; the chapters in question are 50–55 and 59–61.

21. See Campbell 1938, 69–78; see also Jones 1952; for parallels to the Battle of the Huns in the *Hervarar saga*, see Hollander 1933.

22. For the mixture of verse and prose in the Icelandic saga, see Harris 1997.

23. Pálsson and Edwards 1976, 130. The poems are found in translation *ibid.*, 119, 127–28, 129, 130.

24. The text is no. 18 and found in ch. 55 of *Egils saga*. It is quoted from Nordal's edition (1933, 142). See also Finnur Jónsson 1924, 159, who gives the prose word order of the poem and a literal translation (into German) in his notes; my literal translation is based on Finnur Jónsson's. The free translation is taken from Pálsson and Edwards 1976, 128. See also Campbell 1971a, 5.

With heaps of corpses I strewed  
the earth in the west in front of the standard-poles.  
Fierce was the storm in which I attacked  
Aðgils with the blue Adder [i.e., sword].  
Young Áleifr engaged in thunder of steel [i.e., battle]  
with the English.  
Hringr was busy with the thing [assembly] of weapons [i.e., battle];  
the ravens had no hunger.

5

West over water  
I wallowed in the slain-stack,  
Angry, my Adder struck  
Adils in the battle-storm.  
Olaf played the steel-game,  
The English his enemies;  
Hringr sought the raging blades,  
No ravens went hungry.

5

(According to *Egils saga*, Olaf, Æthelstan's enemy, is king of Scotland; the earls Adils and Hring of Wales are brothers and fight on Olaf's side.)

The shortness of this poem and its explicit reference to a speaker forbid a strict comparison with *Brunanburh*. There are, however, stylistic similarities between the two poems; they are both evocative rather than descriptive in nature. *Brunanburh*, although much longer, does not actually offer a detailed and clear account of the battle, and they both employ the same type of imagery and poetic diction. Metaphors like *heapolinde*, "battle lime-tree," for "shield" and *hamora lafa*, "the leavings of hammers," for "swords" in line 6 of *Brunanburh* can be compared with *blóum Naðri*, "blue Adder," for "sword" and *þrimu stála*, "thunder of steel," and *vápna þingi*, "weapon thing," for "battle" in the Old Norse poem. Furthermore, both poems share the motif of the Beasts of Battle, widespread in Old Germanic poetry. It is possible that English poetry might have influenced the poetry in *Egils saga* or that vice versa Old Norse poetry has left traces in *Brunanburh*. Dietrich Hofmann has argued convincingly that in the sixth poem mentioned above, Egil's eulogy of King Æthelstan, a number of Old English influences can be detected.<sup>25</sup> As to Old Norse influences on *Brunanburh*, the only uncontroversial item is the Old Norse loan-word *cnear* (Old Norse *knǫrr*): *cnear* (l. 35), "ship," and *nægledcnear* (l. 53), "ship with nailed sides," refer to the ships of the Norsemen and are only found in this poem.<sup>26</sup> Neverthe-

25. See Hofmann 1955, 23–26; his discussion of English influences on *Egils saga* is found *ibid.*, 22–42.

26. See Campbell 1938, 108f.; for possible further Old Norse loans, see Hofmann 1955, 165–67. On Old Norse *knǫrr*, Old English *cnear*, see Sayers 1996.

less, the influence of skaldic poetry on *Brunanburh* has been plausibly argued by Joseph Harris and elaborated upon by John Niles.<sup>27</sup> Whatever the extent of mutual influence, the Old Norse poem certainly testifies to a tradition of "Brunanburh poetry" independent of the extant Old English poem.

Egil's poems are part of a native vernacular tradition of poetry, composed in reaction to a historical event. In style and poetic diction, *Brunanburh* is, as we have seen, also part of such a tradition. But the contexts of these poems are radically different. Egil's poetry is inserted into a biographical narrative, that of the skald Egil, a historical personage whose life story is intertwined with that of other personages and with other events of his time. *Brunanburh*, on the other hand, is integrated into a historiographic record of Anglo-Saxon history. The majority of manuscripts of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle quote the poem, as the entry for the year in question, without introductory or final commentary in prose. Hence the poem is viewed on a par with prose entries of a purely historiographic kind. This equivalence to a prose entry is formally underlined by the initial *Her*, "in this year," of the poem, conforming to the annalistic style of the Chronicle. Only the later versions of the Chronicle summarize the events in prose, such as the Laud Chronicle: "937. Her Æðelstan cyning lædde fyrd to Brunanbyrig" ("In this year King Æthelstan led an army to Brunanburh").<sup>28</sup> The initial *Her* is also typical of the other verse passages in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: a short poem on the recapture of the Five Boroughs under Eadmund (942), following almost immediately after *Brunanburh*, two poems on Edgar's coronation (973) and his death (975); and finally two laments, on the death of Alfred (1036) and that of Edward (1065).<sup>29</sup> The two poems on Edgar are basically descriptive (of his coronation and of his death, with concomitant and subsequent events), but have a eulogistic tone insofar as they reflect a positive view of the king. More clearly panegyric is Henry of Huntingdon, who inserts a short Latin poem (four elegiac distichs) at the end of his account of King Æthelstan's life and justifies the presence of poetry by stating: "De cuius laude musam aliquantulum dicere pro meritis promovimus" ("in whose praise my Muse prompts some short verse, which his worth demands").<sup>30</sup>

While in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle a poetic rendering of the battle of Brunanburh is treated as a historiographic entry in its own right, for Henry of Huntingdon poetry is appropriate to a historical narrative only if called for by the importance of an event or the greatness of a historical personage. It is basically ornamental and must be distinguished from historiography proper; it is

27. See Harris 1986; Niles 1987.

28. MS Bodleian Laud 636 (E); Plummer, 1892-99, 1:107.

29. Krapp and Dobbie 1931-53, 6:20-26.

30. Arnold 1879, 166 (text); Forester 1853, 176 (translation).

the chronicler's job to record history, and he must hence not lose sight of his task as a historiographer ("ad historiam redeamus"). However, such a strict distinction between historical narrative and poetic reaction to a historical event is in itself fictitious. The works of medieval historiographers do not on the whole stand the test of "higher criticism" as propounded by Leopold von Ranke in the nineteenth century. But even for the most scrupulous historian there is an imaginative leap from the raw materials of the period he is investigating to their formulation in language and interpretation within the framework of a theory of history. One does not have to wait for the advent of the New Historicism to see that the construction of history in historiography is essentially an imaginative act. While we might therefore doubt the validity of a rigorous distinction between historiography and historical poetry, there is nevertheless a difference between the two. Historiography, however logically and philosophically remote from the event it attempts to formulate, is based on the presupposition that it is the goal of historical narrative to give a true representation of extralinguistic events.<sup>31</sup> As soon as we have an awareness of the difference between historiography and poetry (however descriptive and factual the latter might be), as in the works of writers such as Henry of Huntingdon, the presupposition of historical writing no longer holds true for "historical poetry." Poetry here comes into its own. It lingers on the confines of historiography only in those cases where the "poetic" is reduced to the outer form of language, as in metrical or rhymed chronicles.<sup>32</sup>

But what about *Brunanburh*? Is there a native tradition from which the poem comes and for which there is no difference between historiography and poetry? Herbert Grundmann begins his survey of medieval historiographic genres by stressing that *historiography*, the *writing* of history, was brought to the peoples of Europe north of the Alps from the classical literate civilizations of the Mediterranean, as these peoples had originally no writing:

They nevertheless did not lack their own historical traditions in other forms. "Old songs" were among the Germanic peoples, as Tacitus writes, the only kind of historical tradition—*carmina antiqua, quod unum apud illos memoriae et annalium genus est* (Germania 2). Tacitus records that the origin of the Ingvaeones, Ermiones, and Istvaeones from Mannus, the son of earth-born Tuisto, was the topic of such

31. This is a complex area, which has been much discussed in the philosophy of history and, more recently, in New Historicism. For a general discussion of the possibility of historical truth, see Elton 1987, 71 ff.; for a readable survey of New Historicism and its background, see Hamilton 1996.

32. The distinction between historiography and (historical) poetry in the consciousness of medieval writers is of course connected to the development of literacy; but it is to be noted, as argued by M. T. Clanchy, that orality played a large part in the recording of history even as late as the period from the Norman Conquest up to the end of the thirteenth century. See Clanchy 1993.



(apparently alliterative) songs and that still in his time (A.D. 98) Arminius, the liberator of Germania, was the hero of such songs (Annals 2. 88: *canitur adhuc barbaras apud gentes*). Nothing of this has been preserved as nobody wrote these songs down. But the tradition of such praise songs and historical poetry continues.<sup>33</sup>

One of the songs mentioned by Grundmann is the Old High German *Ludwigslied*. The *Ludwigslied* celebrates the victory of the West Franconian king Ludwig (Louis) III over the Vikings at Saucourt in 881.<sup>34</sup> In the poem, the Norsemen's invasion of the Frankish kingdom is seen as a divine ordeal by which the king's qualities are put to the test and his subjects' sins punished. God takes, however, pity on the Franks and admonishes Ludwig, who is far from the scene of action, to come to the help of his people. Ludwig approaches in haste, encourages the Franks with a stirring speech, advances against the Viking host with a song on his lips and his men singing "Kyrie eleison," and wins a glorious victory:

Thar uah't thegeno gelih, Nichein soso Hluduig: 50  
 Snel indí kuoni, Thaz uuas imo gekunni.  
 Suman thuruhskluog her, Suman thuruhstah her.  
 Her skancta cehanton Sinan fianton  
 Bitteres lides. So uue hin hio thes libes!  
 Gilobot si thiu godes kraft: Hluduig uuarth sigihafft; 55  
 Ioh allen heiligon thanc! Sin uuarth ther sigikamf.  
 Uuolar abur Hluduig, Kuning uuígsalig!  
 So garo soser hio uuas, So uuar soses thurft uuas.  
 Gihalde inan truhtin Bi sinan ergrehtin.

Every one of the warriors fought there, but none like Ludwig: 50  
 Courageous and brave —that was his nature.  
 He cut one in two, the other he pierced through.  
 To his enemies he promptly poured out  
 Bitter wine. Woe over their lives!  
 Praised be God's might: Ludwig was victorious; 55  
 And thanks be to all the saints! His was the victory.  
 Praise again to Ludwig, the king happy in battle!

33. Grundmann 1965, 7.

34. The text comprises 59 lines; for an edition with German translation, see Schlosser 1970, 274–77; for a brief commentary in English, see Bostock 1955, 201–7. On the historical background of the poem, see Berg 1964.

He was always ready to help wherever there was need.  
 May the Lord keep him in his grace.<sup>35</sup>

The poem speaks of Ludwig as of someone alive; as the king died in 882 and the battle took place in 881, the poem must have been composed fairly soon after the event. It has elements of narrative, both in the dialogues (between God and the king and between Ludwig and the Frankish people) and in short descriptive passages like lines 50 to 54 quoted above. On the other hand, it is not the drama of warfare and prowess in battle which is in the foreground, but the figure of Ludwig, the Frankish king by the grace of God:

Holoda inan truhtin, Magaczogo uuarth her sin.  
 Gab her imo dugidi, Fronisc githigini, 5  
 Stuol hier in Urankon. So bruche her es lango!

The Lord took care of him, He became his tutor.  
 He gave him retainers, a lordly company, 5  
 The throne here in Franconia. May he enjoy it for a long time!<sup>36</sup>

It is for this reason that the *Ludwigslied* is fairly unanimously regarded as a historical praise poem.

There is, however, dispute as to which tradition this poem belongs to. The text is, like most early medieval poetry, transmitted in a monastic manuscript. It is found in a late ninth-century manuscript written by the monks of St. Amand (in Hainaut), which also contains one of the oldest Old French texts, the sequence on St. Eulalia (MS Valenciennes, 150). Given the expressed Christian outlook of the poem, a clerical origin is certainly probable. It has been shown that there are Latin models on which the *Ludwigslied* may have been based, and it has been compared with medieval Latin panegyric such as a poem celebrating Pippin's victory over the Avars in 796.<sup>37</sup> The poem can, however, also be plausibly interpreted as reflecting a native Germanic tradition of praise poetry. The idea of the *comitatus* is basic to Ludwig's actions as protector of his people, and he promises rewards to his war companions according to the laws of the feudal code:

35. Schlosser 1970, 276; "uuígsalig" in l. 57 has been read and emended differently by different editors of the poem.

36. Ibid., 274.

37. The relationship of the *Ludwigslied* to similar Latin poems is studied in Naumann 1932, who argues against a derivation of the Old High German poem from the Latin tradition. The Latin poem on Pippin's victory over the Avars is printed *ibid.*, 10. On medieval Latin and German praise poetry generally, see Georgi 1969.



So uuer so hier in ellian    Giduot godes uuillion,  
 Quimit he gisund uz,    Ih gelonon imoz,    40  
 Bilibit her thar inne,    Sinemo kunnie.

Whoever does God's will here    with braveness,  
 If he survives,    I will reward him for it,    40  
 If he remains on the field of battle,    I will recompense his kin.<sup>38</sup>

The syntactic structure of the text is paratactic and asyndetic, betraying the style of an oral poem rather than that of a written composition.<sup>39</sup> But as the poem is transmitted, no definite allocation to a uniquely clerical or vernacular tradition can be made. Both traditions have come to a symbiosis in the poem, as is also emphasized by its metrical form: the poem is composed in long lines that hark back to the alliterative tradition; but in these long lines alliteration has been abandoned for the sake of internal rhyme.<sup>40</sup>

Although it seems hardly contestable that both the *Ludwigslied* and *Brunanburh*, given their respective dates of composition, have come under the influence of Latin writing, they can also be seen as continuing a native tradition. The precise nature of this tradition, however, is difficult to ascertain as all the evidence of earlier poetry is only indirect. Andreas Heusler defined the original genre as follows:

A poem in praise of a patron consists of many verses, is composed in advance of performance, and is delivered from memory by one person. It relates the predominantly warlike deeds of the praised person, as well as his liberality. Factual enumeration alternates with descriptive and eulogistic passages. The poem's matter is viewed at close range and has not been transformed into a (dramatic) plot; hence the poem is without speeches. It vacillates between verse chronicle and lyric (hymn).

Its Janus-like character is unambiguously expressed by the term *Preislied-Zeitgedicht* (praise poem/topical poem). The second element of this term signi-

38. Schlosser 1970, 274.

39. On the interpretation of the poem as reflecting Germanic praise poetry, see de Boor 1966, 91 f.; on the paratactic style of the poem, see Willems 1954.

40. See also Beck 1974, who compares the *Ludwigslied* with the Old Norse *Hákonarmál* and the Old English *Battle of Maldon*; and Wolf 1995, 34–57, who sees both *Brunanburh* and the *Ludwigslied* as representatives of early vernacular praise poetry. Max Wehrli (1969) interprets the *Ludwigslied* as the oldest vernacular example of a Christian heroic poem. For a discussion of *Brunanburh* in the context of Old English heroic poetry (and with reference to the genre of praise poem), see Harris 1985, 248 ff.

fies that “praise” is not only lyric effusion; it stresses the poem's historical nature. We do not posit “historical songs” as a separate third genre in addition to the praise poem and the heroic lay in the alliterative poetry of the Germanic tribes.<sup>41</sup>

Leaving aside controversial questions of performance—whether there was one or more performers, whether the poetry was composed in performance, improvised, or memorized, and so on—most scholars agree with Heusler that his characterization of what he terms *Preislied-Zeitgedicht* does basically fit the Old High German and Old English poems we have discussed so far (though the dialogues in the *Ludwigslied* cause some embarrassment for a strict application of Heusler's definition). When one extrapolates with Heusler from later poetry and interprets the indirect evidence we have (in particular Priscus's account of the singing of historical/eulogistic poems at Attila's court),<sup>42</sup> his assertion that there were no historical songs distinct from (historical) praise songs cultivated in Old Germanic poetry seems also well founded. As the quotation shows, Heusler does, however, posit a second genre of Old Germanic narrative poetry, the heroic lay. In a framework of literary archaeology, scholars have wondered whether the one cannot be derived from the other.

Jeff Opland repeatedly stressed in his study of Anglo-Saxon oral poetry that narrative poetry developed from praise poetry: “Eulogies are not primarily narrative in intent or content; though they can contain sequences of coherent narrative, they are more commonly allusive and elliptical, assuming a knowledge of the narrative content on the part of the audience. Narrative is thus embryonically present in eulogy. . . .”<sup>43</sup> It is therefore easy, according to Opland, to imagine a transition from a eulogistic tradition of poetry to a tradition of nar-

41. Heusler 1943, 123.

42. *Ibid.*, 113–14, 124. A translation of the passage in question is found in Chadwick and Chadwick 1932–40, 1:575–76: “The historian Priscus was a member of an embassy which visited Attila, king of the Huns, in the year 448. After describing the banquet given by the king to his guests, he proceeds as follows: ‘When evening came on torches were lighted and two barbarians stepped forth in front of Attila and recited poems which they had composed, recounting his victories and his valient deeds in war. The banqueters fixed their eyes upon them, some being charmed with the poems, while others were roused in spirit, as the recollection of their wars came back to them. Others again burst into tears, because their bodies were enfeebled by age and their martial ardour had perforce to remain unsatisfied’. If we are right in taking these poems to be Gothic rather than Hunnish—it is stated that both languages were used during the evening—the passage may be compared with the duet mentioned in *Widsith*. . . .” For the Greek text and a new translation see also Blockley 1981–83, 2:286, 287. From this account it follows that the poems performed referred to warlike events in the life of Attila and his retainers, in other words that they were probably a mixture of historical, heroic, and praise poetry. Although it is generally assumed that the two *barbaroi* were Goths, they could have been Huns; it is at any rate clear that the singers of the dirges that were sung at Attila's funeral were Huns; see Žirmunskij and Zarifov 1947, 7–8.

43. Opland 1980, 63.

rative heroic poetry. Opland adduces evidence for the “narrative potential” of eulogy from Southern Bantu (Xhosa) praise poetry, an oral tradition he has studied extensively.<sup>44</sup> In the *Ludwiglied* and *Brunanburh* the boundary between praise and narrative is certainly blurred, and hence the transition from one to the other almost natural. Keeping in mind what Opland said about the embryonic presence of narration in eulogy, it is tempting to adopt the Romantics’ view of the rise of the heroic lay (and later the heroic epic), as expressed in the “theory of cantilenas” vis-à-vis the Old French *chanson de geste*. It constructs the following familiar scenario: a historically grounded praise poem becomes in the course of transmission and the passing of time a narrative poem, a heroic lay about the days of yore, which in turn—by “swelling,” as Heusler would have it, or “stringing together,” as the proponents of Lachmannian *Liedertheorie* assert—develops into the heroic epic. On the basis of the evidence we have, however, it is very difficult if not impossible to prove such a hypothesis. Heusler’s theory that the Germanic tribes cultivated both praise poetry and the heroic lay (but not the heroic epic) must remain just as hypothetical as any genetic theories deriving the one from the other, or both or any one of them from an even more remote archetype. Alfred Ebenbauer, who has written a detailed study of Latin historical poetry in the Carolingian age, came to the conclusion, in a subsequent review of the literature on the distinction between heroic lay and historical song (or *Preislied-Zeitgedicht*) in Old Germanic poetry, that in this area there are more questions to ask than answers to give and that we might have to content ourselves with an agnostic stance.<sup>45</sup>

#### Historical Poetry in Epic Style: *Nāmāz*

Rather than explore the possible genetic relationship between heroic poetry and historical song, I propose to tackle the question of relationship from a generic perspective and within a comparative framework. In many oral traditions that cultivate the epic, historical vernacular poetry is a late phenomenon, while the epic is generally supposed to be much older. The situation is fairly clear and uncontested in the case of Russian oral narrative poetry. While many *byliny* are believed to have a historical nucleus, few scholars if any (not even of the so-called “historical school”) would claim that the *byliny* in their transmitted form are instances of historical epic poetry. The *istoričeskie pesni* (historical poems), on the other hand, are unambiguously related to particular historical

44. See Opland 1983.

45. See Ebenbauer 1978 and 1988.

events. Although the genre developed fully only as late as the sixteenth century, the earliest songs might go back to as far as the middle of the thirteenth century.<sup>46</sup> But even if some early historical songs might be older than some of the later *byliny*, there can be no doubt that in the Russian case the genre of the historical song as such postdates the genre of epic.<sup>47</sup>

Much the same is true for modern traditions of oral epic poetry in the Turkic-speaking world. A heroic epic such as the Uzbek *Alpāmiš* dates according to conservative estimates from at least as early as the sixteenth/seventeenth century, but is possibly much older (see chapter 1). The historical songs of the Uzbeks, on the other hand, are much later; the events they reflect lie for the most part in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A typical example of such a song is the poem *Nāmāz*. Its topical background is the rising of a group of rebels under the leadership of Nāmāz Primkulov in Samarkand at the beginning of the twentieth century (1905–7). Nāmāz Primkulov was born in 1865 in Ešan-qišlāq in present-day Uzbekistan (near Kattaqorgān). He traveled widely and ended up as adjutant and translator in the office of the governor of Russian Turkestan. Because of intrigues, Nāmāz was posted to the district of Dahbit in 1905 where his dissatisfaction with the political and social situation in Turkestan led him to organize raids against the local bays, whose possessions he distributed in Robin Hood fashion to their serfs. Nāmāz was caught, together with thirty companions, at the end of 1905 and thrown into the notorious Samarkand dungeon. On February 6, 1906, he managed to break out, and sixty prisoners fled with him. Nāmāz was, however, betrayed and murdered on June 1, 1907.<sup>48</sup>

The singer from whom this song was taken down was a contemporary of the famous rebel. Nurman Abduwāy-oqli was born in 1862 not far from Kattaqorgān. He came from a poor peasant family of the Uzbek Nayman tribe. Although interested in music and poetry since his youth, he first became the pupil of a singer at age forty. Nurman stayed for two years with Abduxaliq-baxši, from whom he learned a number of *dastans*. Nurman belongs to the “singer school of Narpay,” whose most famous representative is the singer Islām Nazar-oqli (1874–1953). It is typical of this group of singers that they modernize traditional poetry. Nurman’s repertoire, which has been recorded only partially,

46. For a discussion of historical and unhistorical elements in the *byliny*, see Chadwick and Chadwick 1932–40, 2:101ff.; for a brief characterization of Russian *istoričeskie pesni*, see Ignatov 1969 (in Russian); Costello and Foote 1967, 149–52 (in English).

47. The classic study of the Russian *byliny* according to their chronological classification is Propp 1955; for a short summary of the development of the *bylina*, see Akimova 1969, 206ff. (in Russian); Costello and Foote 1967, 64ff. (in English).

48. The poem and its historical background are discussed in Džumanazarov 1989, 50–57; Džumanazarov’s text (which is not complete) differs in a number of readings from the text given below.

comprised the *dastans Xālbika* (or *Kuntuǵmish*), *Alpāmiš*, *Goroǵli*, *Rustam*, and others, as well as a number of *terma*, among them *Namaz*. He died in 1940. The text of the song, as published by Hadi Zarif in 1939, is as follows.<sup>49</sup>

Bedāw minip saǵrisini silatdi,  
Murādini bir xudādan tilatdi,  
Yaqin dedi Qārši čolin talatdi,  
Amir, pādšāhni taxt ustida yiglatdi,  
Heč kormadim Nāmāzday azamatni. 5

Keča-kunduz yurgani dala-dašt boldi,  
Ottuz yigitlarga ozi bāš boldi,  
Nikolayga neča kun kengaš boldi,  
Tā olgunča, Nikolay bilan ǵaš boldi.  
Nāmāzdayin bir zor otdi džahānda. 10

Nāmāzbek deydilar ash ātini,  
Dahbit deydi osgan vilāyatini,  
Bir fasl qilayin ta'rifātini,  
Gazet bilan ešitib edi Nikolay,  
Zār yigladı ordadagi xātini. 15

Burgutdayin qāwāǵini uygandir,  
Bār kučim bilagiga yiqqandir,  
Nāmāz desa, yātgan bāylar uyǵandi,  
Tort hakimga ozi tanhā tekkandir,  
Nāmāzday wallamat otdi džahānda. 20

Āti Nāmāzbek edi, ozi šer edi,  
Qāzāqorusga āč boriday dārīdi,  
On tort bolus ušlayālmay qarīdi,  
Nāmāzday qarčigay bārdir džahānda. 25

Āstiga mingani učar quš edi, 25  
Sayr etdi mana bu ikki daštini,  
Šul buzgandir Maxāwxāna rašini,  
Qamāqdan āzād qib āltmiš kišini,

49. Zarif 1939, 288–89. On the singer and the “school of Narpay,” see Zarif 1939, 365–67; Mirzaev 1979, 46–50. *Kuntuǵmish* is a romance-like *dastan*, related to the Middle English and Old French romance of *Octavian*; see Reichl 1992a. *Rustam* is a heroic *dastan*; on the *Goroǵli*-cycle and *Alpāmiš*, see above, pp. 20 and 21 ff.

Rustam qilālmaydi qilgan išini,  
Nāmāzdayin pālwan bārdir džahānda. 30

Sawaš boldi sazaǵanni darasi,  
Quwǵanda kormaydi dušman qārasi,  
Ozi Saray Awazdayin džorasi,  
Awazdayin bātir bārdir džahānda.

Bāšiga yarašgan zarrin daštari, 35  
Korganda ketadi dušman eslari,  
Ozi qipčāq Šerniyāzday dostlari,  
Šerniyāzday arslan bārdir džahānda.

Hawā yāǵsa tāǵniñ beti tumandir,  
Āstiga mingan āt učqur džiyrāndir, 40  
Suw ornigā āǵizdi qizil qānni,  
Sirgalidan hamrah qildi Džumanni,  
Džumandayin pālwan bārdir džahānda.

Miršawlar uradi sahar dāwulni,  
Hamrah qildi Dawur bilan Qāwulni, 45  
Sorab yātir Dahbit bilan Dāwulni,  
Nāmāzday toqsabā bārdir džahānda.

Āstida oynaydi argımaq āti,  
Āqpāššāga ketgandir arza xati, 50  
Džilāwida Kendžadayin džallādi,  
Kendžadayin qānxor bārdir džahānda.

Samarqand šahrida dawrān surgandir,  
Āldiga sālgandir ottuz merganni,  
Xuftān bola buzdi Kattaqoǵānni,  
Heč kormadik Nāmāzdayin sultānni. 55

Bāšiga taqqanni tilla tādž qildi,  
Makka bārmay Miyankalda hadž qildi,  
Sawdāgaru džallāblarni bādž qildi,  
Nāmāzdayin bir bek otdi džahānda.

He mounted the racing horse and stroked his rump;  
He asked the One God to grant his wish;  
He called the steppe of Qārši his own;

He made the emir [of Bukhara] and the padishah [the tsar] on their thrones weep:  
I have never seen another brave man like Nāmāz. 5

Day and night he rode through field and steppe;  
He alone was the leader of thirty *yigits* [young men].  
Tsar Nikolai had to hold counsel for many days [because of Nāmāz];  
He was till his death Nikolai's enemy:  
Nāmāz lived as a strong man on earth. 10

His name was originally Nāmāzbek;  
The name of the *vilayet* [district] where he grew up is Dahbit.  
I would like to describe him for a little while.  
Tsar Nikolai heard of him from the paper;  
His wife wept bitterly in the palace. 15

Like an eagle he knit his brows,  
All his strength he gathered in his arm.  
When the name of Nāmāz is pronounced, the bays wake up from their sleep.  
He alone was able to do harm to four *hākims* [district heads]:  
Nāmāz lived as a ruler on earth. 20

His name was Nāmāzbek, he was a lion.  
Against Cossacks and Russians he was like a hungry wolf.  
Fourteen *botus* [district heads] were unable to catch the old man:  
There lived a hawk like Nāmāz on earth. 25

The horse on which he rode was a flying bird;  
He rode up and down these two steppes;  
He destroyed the wall of the Māxāwxāna [the dungeon in Samarkand];  
He freed sixty men from prison;  
Not even Rustam<sup>50</sup> could accomplish this feat:  
There lived a hero like Nāmāz on earth. 30

The mountain pass of Sazağan became a place of battle.<sup>51</sup>  
The enemy never saw his silhouette in flight.  
Belonging to the clan of Saray, he had Awaz as his companion:  
There lived a hero like Awaz on earth.

50. The hero of Ferdowsi's *Shāhnāma* as well as of the Uzbek *dastan Rustam*.

51. The translation of this line is uncertain.

A golden turban suited his head. 35  
The enemy fainted [from fear] when he saw him.  
He had Šerniyaz from the tribe of Qipčaq as his friend:  
There lived a lion like Šerniyaz on earth.

When it rains, the face of the mountain is covered by mist.  
The horse on which he rode was a flying chestnut horse. 40  
Instead of water he made red blood flow.  
He made Džuman from the clan Sirgali his companion:  
There lived a hero like Džuman on earth.

The *miršab* [head of the night patrol of the emir] beats the drum in the early  
morning. 45  
Nāmāz made Dawur and Qāwul his companions;  
He demanded [the districts of] Dahbit and Dāwul:  
There lived a *toqsabā* [official of the khanate] like Nāmāz on earth.

The thoroughbred stallion under him is prancing—  
A petition was sent to the White Padishah [the tsar];  
Its rein was held by Kendža the henchman: 50  
There lived a bloodthirsty tyrant like Kendža on earth.

He [Nāmāz] had the town of Samarkand under his rule.  
He took thirty marksmen with him;  
At the time of the night prayer he destroyed Kattaqorğān:  
I have never seen a sultan like Nāmāz. 55

He put the golden crown on his head.  
He did not go to Mecca, but made a pilgrimage in Miyankal.  
He asked for tribute from merchants and middlemen:  
There lived a *beg* like Nāmāz on earth.

This short *terma* combines praise and description, not unlike the medieval poems discussed earlier. There is no consecutive narrative relating the progress of the action, nor are the various incidents to which the poem alludes explained in detail. The hero's name and place of origin are given, as well as the names of some of his companions. He fights against the tsar as well as the emir of Bukhara and his officials. The bays (rich men) tremble when they hear the hero's name mentioned. The particular incidents singled out in the poem are Nāmāz's feat of freeing sixty prisoners from the dungeon of Samarkand and the distribution of the wealth of a judge who lived near Kattaqorğān among the poor, a heroic



exploit which is described in the poem as the destruction of the town of Kattaqorgān.<sup>52</sup>

Stylistically and metrically the *terma* conforms to Uzbek epic poetry. It is composed in eleven-syllable lines, which are combined somewhat irregularly (as is often the case in Uzbek *dastans*) to four-line and five-line stanzas, rhyming for the most part as a-a-a-X, where X is a refrain-like line. The hero's raids in the steppe may be based on historical fact, but their linguistic expression is doubtless taken from epic poetry, where the hero's ride through the desert is a favorite type-scene.<sup>53</sup> To take just this traditional element in the poem with its various motifs: the hero is riding day and night (l. 6); his horse is comparable to a bird in flight (ll. 25, 40); and his thoroughbred horse prances in its eagerness to advance (l. 48). In the Uzbek versions of *Alpāmiš* discussed in chapter 1 (above, pp. 21–36) we find, for instance, the following parallels:

Yollarda Bāyčibār quşdayin uçdi / Āstida Bāyčibār quşdayin uçdi (Saidmurād Panāh-oğh)<sup>54</sup>  
(On the roads/ under him, Bāyčibār [Alpāmiš's horse] flew like a bird)

Āstida dāl bedāw irgigan quşday (Berdi-baxši)<sup>55</sup>  
(Under him the elegantly curved runner was bounding ahead like a bird)

Yā keča tinmaydi kunduz (Fāzil Yoldāš-oğli)<sup>56</sup>  
(He rested neither night nor day)

Mulla Hakim āt čāpadi,  
Tinmasdan kečayu kunduz (Berdi-baxši)<sup>57</sup>  
(Mullah Hakim [Alpāmiš] galloped along,  
Never resting night or day)

Maydānda oynatdim [tulpār] ātimni (Berdi-baxši)<sup>58</sup>  
(On the battlefield I made my [winged] steed prance)

Other elements also found in the epic are nature images (as in l. 39: "When it rains, the face of the mountain is covered by mist"; see chapter 1) and com-

52. The judge's name is given as Muhammad-Yusuf Said Qasimxodža-oğli in Džumanazarov 1989, 54. Džumanazarov has for line 54: Xuftān bilan bāsdi Kattaqorgāndi (At the time of the night prayer he invaded Kattaqorgān).

53. See Reichl 1989b, 105ff.; compare also the examples given above, pp. 30–34.

54. Mirzaev and Zarif 1972, 64, 67.

55. Mirzaev 1969, 90.

56. Mirzaev, Abduraximov, and Mirbadaleva 1999, 135.

57. Mirzaev 1969, 75.

58. Ibid., 91.

parisons of the hero to various wild animals, such as the eagle (l. 16), the lion (ll. 21, 38), the hungry wolf (l. 22), and the hawk (l. 24). In a similar way Alpāmiš and other epic heroes are compared to the lion (*šer, arslan*), the tiger (*yoľbars*), the leopard (*qāplān*), the falcon (*šunqār, lāčīn*), the hawk (*qarčīgay*), the camel (*nār*), and the dragon (*adždarhā*). Also the various designations of Nāmāz and his companions as "brave man" (*azamat*, l. 5), "strong man" (*zor*, l. 10), "ruler" (*wallamat*, l. 20), "hero," "wrestler" (*palwān*, ll. 30, 43), "hero" (*bātir*, l. 34), and "sultan" (*sultān*, l. 55) are traditional. Unquestionably, the singer modeled his historical song on the diction and style of epic poetry, which is not surprising for a *baxši* in whose repertoire there were a number of *dastans* including *Alpāmiš*. The style of the *terma* can hence be shown to be derived from that of the epic, and in view of what we know of the development of both epic and historical song in Uzbek, this fact reflects the anteriority of epic in that tradition (and certainly for this particular song, which is obviously of fairly recent date). But is this true of Turkic oral epic and historical poetry in general? What about the earliest oral epic and historical poetry in an extant Turkic language?

The earliest Turkic poetry that is incontestably both oral and narrative is found in a lexicographic work of the eleventh century, the *Dīwān luğāt at-turk* (Divan of Turkic languages) by Maḥmūd of Kashgar (b. between c. 1029 and 1038). This work, the oldest Turkic dictionary, was written in Arabic, completed between 1072 and 1077 (and after a further revision finally completed in 1083) at Baghdad, and dedicated to the Abbassid caliph al-Muqtadī.<sup>59</sup> Apart from its value as a source for linguistics, Maḥmūd's *Dīwān* is also a mine of information on Turkic popular poetry. As illustrations for individual words Maḥmūd quotes from a number of poems, which according to one editor can be classified into dirges and laments, heroic songs, drinking and hunting songs, praise and blame poems, love lyrics, nature poems, debates, and gnomic poetry.<sup>60</sup> The Turkic language Maḥmūd analyzes and illustrates is mainly the Karakhanid literary language of his time, which he calls "Turk" (or "Türk"). He does, however, supplement his description by information on other Turkic dialects known to him.

The heroic songs identified among Maḥmūd's illustrations consist of a poem of twenty four-line stanzas on a battle with the Tangut, a poem of six four-line stanzas on a military expedition against the Uighurs, and two poems (of eight and four four-line stanzas respectively) on a battle with the Yabaqu. There are also a number of fragmentary, unspecifiable poems (eleven in all). As the poems are quoted by stanzas in the *Dīwān*, and not as complete poems, there is some

59. See Bombaci 1968, 68–76.

60. This is Brockelmann's classification; see the editions by Brockelmann 1924 and Stebleva 1976.



uncertainty as to the number of stanzas per poem and their sequence in the four specified poems. To exemplify the style of these poems, three stanzas from the poem entitled (by Carl Brockelmann and other editors) *The Battle with the Tangut* will be quoted, in Brockelmann's arrangement:<sup>61</sup>

İqilačim ärig boldi,  
ärig bolgu yari kördi.  
Bolıt ürüü kök örtüldi,  
tuman turub tolı yağdı.

Uđu barıb öküş iwdim, 5  
tälim yürüb küči kâwdim.  
Atım birlä tägü iwdim,  
mäni körüb yini ağdı.

Ärän alpı oquštılar, 10  
qıñır közin baqıştılar.  
Qamuğ tolmun toquštılar,  
qıñıç qınqa küçün sigdı.

My steed was strong,  
It saw the occasion where it had to be strong.<sup>62</sup>  
A cloud mounted and the sky was covered,  
Fog arose and hail fell.

Following [the wolf] I was in a great hurry, 5  
By hurrying along, I diminished his strength.  
With my horse I followed him,  
When he saw me, his skin became pale.

The heroes challenged one another, 10  
Looked askance at one another.  
They fought with one another with all their weapons,  
The sword hardly fitted into the sheath any more.<sup>63</sup>

The historical background to this poem is not entirely clear. In a number of stanzas the enemy is identified as the Tangut and their ruler. The Tangut are a people related to the Tibetans, who conquered the territory of the Uighurs in Gansu

61. Brockelmann 1924, Proband: 6–7; my transliteration and translation also follow Brockelmann and his dictionary (1928); for a different arrangement and transliteration, see Stebleva 1976, 204–6.

62. Stebleva 1976, 129, translates “fast” instead of “strong” and “place” instead of “occasion” (the latter due to her substituting *yari* for *yari* in her text edition, 205).

63. According to Brockelmann the sword does not fit into its sheath any more because it is covered with blood.

in 1028. It is possible that the poem reflects this episode in the history of the Uighurs, but it could also refer to an earlier conflict; one of the runic inscriptions already mentions an expedition against the Tangut in about A.D. 700–701.<sup>64</sup>

What is interesting about this and the other poems and fragments of heroic poems found in the *Dīwān* is their meter and their style. The meter is one that is widespread in Turkic oral poetry, including in particular epic poetry, i.e., a line of seven or eight syllables (eight in the present case). As in lyric poetry, the lines are combined into four-line stanzas, rhyming a-a-a-x; all stanzas have the same rhyme in their last line (x). A further trait of these poems is their pervasive parallelism. A number of lines in the extract given have the pattern: XX V-*ib* in their first half, where XX are two syllables, V is a one-syllable verb stem and -*ib* (with variants conditioned by vowel harmony) is the gerund of the verb: *bolıt ürüü*, “the cloud rising” (l. 3); *tuman turub*, “the fog getting up” (l. 4); *uđu barıb*, “after going” (l. 5); *tälim yürüb*, “much walking” (l. 6); *mäni körüb*, “me seeing” (l. 8). Similarly, the rhyme word of lines 9 to 11 is an identically structured verb form: V-*iş-ti-lar*, where the verb stem (V) is augmented by the suffixes -*iş*, marking reciprocity; -*ti*, marking the past tense; and -*lar*, marking the third person plural. Even this short extract illustrates the characteristically parallelistic and generally highly patterned structure of the heroic poems that Maḥmūd quotes in his work.

The poem shows a combination of first-person narrative (stanza 2) and third-person description (stanzas 1 and 3). This change of perspective is typical of the poem as a whole and is also found in the other heroic poems transmitted by Maḥmūd. While the descriptive passages reveal a closeness to the heroic epic (also in imagery and motifs: the sky is darkened by the cloud of dust the galloping horse's hoofs raise; the heroes challenge one another and choose their weapons), the “personal” passages put the poem in the vicinity of praise or boast poetry, a type of poetry that is also found in Turkic traditions (see below, pp. 84–85) but as such is quite distinct from the epic. Much as the narrator might take sides in the heroic epic, exalting the prowess on “our” side, “our” heroic ancestors, and so on, his narrative is not a personal narrative. In the heroic epic he does not report an event, however recent, that he himself experienced or in which he took part. Although the heroic poems intercalated into Maḥmūd's *Dīwān* doubtless show a number of traits characteristic of the heroic epic of the Kirgiz, Kazakhs, Karakalpaks, Uzbeks, and other Turkic peoples, they are nevertheless not themselves heroic epics, on however small a scale.<sup>65</sup> They are heroic poems with a “personal voice”: poems that refer to a specific historic event (which is specific even if it is unidentifiable for us), in which the

64. See Brockelmann 1924, Proband: 6.

65. For an interpretation of another of these heroic poems in the context of Turkic oral epic poetry, see Reichl 1992c, 40–43.

narrator is involved as a protagonist or at any rate as an immediately concerned party. The specificity of the event on the one hand (since it is known to the audience), and the involvement of the narrator on the other, probably account for the allusive style of these poems, although their fragmentary and doubtful transmission does not allow a definitive interpretation.

Looking back on the Old English and Old High German poems discussed above, we find that the Turkic examples confirm our general impression of these poems: they refer to a particular point in history, which is somewhat elusively treated and without a consecutive narrative thread; they reflect a personal point of view, whether narrated in the first person or not; and they are couched in the language and style characteristic of (heroic) epic poetry. While the narrative elements put these poems in the vicinity of heroic narrative poetry (heroic lay or heroic epic), their personal voice affiliates them with such genres as eulogy, lament, or heroic boast. Moreover, historical songs like *Nāmāz* or *The Battle of Brunanburh* do not belong to an archaic period of genre formation: they are late and quite obviously postdate the development of heroic narrative poetry, whose existence their style presupposes. But these late poems seem also to continue an older tradition of historical poetry, which in the Turkic case can be substantiated. How pristine the heroic poems quoted by Maḥmūd are, however, is a question difficult to answer. The narrative elements seem so well developed in their imagery and poetic/metric form that a long tradition of oral narrative poetry lying behind them is not unlikely. When we compare the poems, we notice both their similarity and their dissimilarity to epic.

The idea that narrative heroic poetry developed from eulogy—or from other forms of personal narrative such as lament or boast—or from historical song (reflecting a personal point of view and verging on eulogy or lament) cannot be disproved, but neither can Heusler's suggestion that the heroic lay and the historical eulogistic poem (*Preislied-Zeitgedicht*) were from the beginning two independent forms of older Germanic poetry (linked in Heusler's view to the rise of the court poet in early Germanic society). However, the poems discussed also show that neat genre distinctions might not always be possible. *Brunanburh*, the *Ludwigslied*, but also *Nāmāz* and the poems quoted by Maḥmūd all reveal a certain syncretistic nature. This generic syncretism of the shorter poetic forms clustered around the epic will be even more striking in the example to be discussed in the following chapter. As genre transitions are found in individual poems they might also be expected on the diachronic scale. Perhaps the search for just one alternative is therefore illusory.

If then, instead of looking for clearcut genres either developing from one another or flourishing side by side, we recognize a certain generic fuzziness,

these shorter historical poems can be appreciated in their syncretistic (or, if one prefers, hybrid) nature: as personal records of historical events cast in the manner of heroic narrative as well as eulogy or heroic boast. In this respect *Brunanburh* is quite different from the *Battle of Maldon*, although we might want to classify both as "historical poems." Like *Brunanburh*, the *Battle of Maldon* refers to a well-recorded historical event, in this case the fight of Ealdorman Byrhtnoth and his men against a group of Viking invaders near Maldon in Essex in 991. Comprising 325 alliterative long lines (fragmentary at the beginning and the end), the *Battle of Maldon* is composed in the style of Old English heroic poetry and imbued with the warrior ethic of Germanic *comitatus* society. In narrative scope, form, and treatment of the underlying event, the poem is comparable to what few testimonies of the South Germanic heroic lay we have: poems such as the Old High German *Hildebrandslied* or the Old English *Lay of Finnsburh* (see chapter 3). The *Battle of Maldon* lacks in its singlemindedness the characteristics of the historical song we have enumerated above. Although a historical poem like *Brunanburh* and *Ludwigslied*, it is modeled on the heroic lay and is a late reflection of this genre. But despite its traditional style, *Maldon* is not a traditional heroic lay. What makes *Maldon* an anomaly is that it is historically focused but not a historical song; in its style, narrative technique, and spirit it resembles, but in its nontraditional subject matter it differs from a heroic lay.<sup>66</sup>

The *Battle of Maldon* also stresses the point made by Henry of Huntingdon: historical poetry is not primarily historiography but poetry. It does have its legitimacy, even in a work of historiography, but the work of the chronicler must be the work of a prosaist and not of a poet. This does not apply to oral societies, but it does apply to societies like that of the Anglo-Saxons of the tenth century, where orality, although still present, was being pushed further and further into the realm of popular entertainment. It is a tribute to the value of poetry in general and oral poetry in particular that the highly literate compilers of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle deemed a poem like *Brunanburh* worthy of standing on its own as an entry in a serious work of historiography. This makes *Brunanburh* neither a historical document nor a great poem. Although some critics have, especially in recent years, attempted to draw attention to the artistry of the poem, others are more inclined to agree with Frederick Klaeber's opinion that the poem "is not a fair specimen of Anglo-Saxon, or Old Ger-

66. The millenary of *Maldon* in 1991 has given rise to two collective volumes on the poem and the historical event: Scragg 1991 (which also contains an edition) and Cooper 1993. For a general discussion of history and poetry in the poem, see Gneuss 1976. The heroic style is discussed, inter alia, by Clark 1968; Frank 1991; and Irving 1961; on the genre of *Maldon*, see Szarmach 1993 (who compares the poem to the *Ludwigslied*).

manic, poetry of the heroic order.”<sup>67</sup> *Brunanburh* does indeed create the impression of a poet parading, rather than naturally using the style of Old English poetry, and it is possible that the poem’s origin should be ascribed to a clerical author, perhaps, as recently suggested, working in the Worcester scriptorium at the time of Bishop Cenwald and King Edmund (r. 939–46).<sup>68</sup> But despite these intimate links to Latinity and literacy which can be established for both the *Ludwigslied* and *Brunanburh*, the very facts that these poems are composed in the vernacular, and that they exhibit both the style and the ethos of vernacular poetry about kings and heroes, allow us to look beyond their immediate context. As in the case of the Uzbek example, these features point to roots in a tradition of preliterate, and preliterate, historical song.

67. Klaeber 1925, 7; for interpretations mostly from a stylistic point of view, see Lipp 1969; Addison 1982; and Frese 1986.

68. Walker 1992.

## In Search of the Heroic Lay

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. . . . The classification into cycles is modern. The native tradition classified the stories by types, and we have two old lists of sagas so arranged. The types there recognized are Destructions, Cattle-Raids, Courtships, Battles, Cave Stories, Voyages, Tragedies, Adventures, Banquets, Sieges, Plunderings, Elopements, Eruptions, Visions, Love Stories, Hostings, and Invasions. 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>1</sup>

What Miles Dillon notes about medieval Irish genre distinctions could also be said of other traditions: the concerns of modern theory are not necessarily those found in native reflections on genre. *Dastan*, as we have seen, is underdifferentiated in many Turkic traditions, comprising oral narratives (in verse or a mixture of verse and prose) of both a heroic and a romantic nature. The most celebrated Old Irish heroic tale, the *Táin Bó Cuailnge*, belongs according to native taxonomy, as its title (*The Cattle-Raid of Cooley*) indicates, to the “genre” of cattle raid or *táin*. It is the story of the attack of the Connacht army on Ulster in order to gain the famous bull of Cooley, Donn Cuailnge, and of Cú Chulainn’s heroic defense of Ulster.<sup>2</sup> Old Irish *táin*, literally “the driving-away,” is the verbal noun from *t-agid* “to drive away,” which in turn is a compound verb derived from *agid* “to drive,” a verb related to Latin *agō* or Greek *ágō* “to lead.” There is a very close Kazakh parallel to Old Irish *táin*, both linguistically and cultur-

1. Dillon 1948, 1. Compare also the discussion of genre categories in the Irish tradition in Dunn 1989, 19–33.

2. Dillon 1948, 3–13.

ally, in the word *barimta*. This word, which exists also in other Turkic languages (such as Kirghiz, Karakalpak, Bashkir, and Noghay), is generally interpreted as a loan word from Mongolian *bar-ix* "to take (with one's hands)," which also yielded Old Turkic *bar-im* "possessions" (and from there Hungarian *barom* "cattle").<sup>3</sup> The great nineteenth-century Turkologist Wilhelm Radloff glossed the Kazakh term (which he spelled *baramta*) as follows:

*Baramta* means not only a horse raid in general, but a horse raid that has been undertaken (1) with the intention of wreaking vengeance; or (2) to make good some deed of injustice or tribal quarrel; or (3) (most frequently) to try one's hand at an adventurous expedition. This is the reason that among the Kazakh the *baramta* is a matter of honor, and that young people who do not go on expeditions are regarded with contempt.<sup>4</sup>

The poem for which Radloff explains the word *barimta* (*baramta*) tells of a Kazakh *žigit* (young man) by the name of Qožamberdi, who rode out one day on a horse-raiding expedition but soon became a captive. The narration is in the first person; the young man himself relates his unfortunate expedition and his seven years' captivity:

Üyimnen šigip edim boylay, boylay,  
Aqboz at, qizil nayza külip oynay.  
Aqtılı qoy, alalı žilqı bar üyimde,  
Onan šiqtim men közim toymay.

Astıma mingen atım qula žorğa,  
Özim bolmay šigip edim osi žolğa.  
Qırıq bes žigit işinde qolğa tüstim,  
Amal qayda bolar ma qalıñ sorğa?

I left my home, riding along,  
On my white-speckled horse, smiling and playing with the red spear,  
I had plenty of sheep and a great herd of horses in my possession.  
I left from there, full of greed for more.

The horse I had mounted was a light-brown ambler with black mane and tail;  
I went on this journey on my own and without announcement.

3. Sevortjan 1978, 72–73.

4. Radloff 1870 (translation volume), 68 n. 1.

I fell into the hands of forty-five žigits:  
From where will I get help for my great misfortune?<sup>5</sup>

There is a second poem in Radloff's collection on the subject of a *barimta*, "Qoygeldi."<sup>6</sup> Here, too, the hero of the poem narrates the events in the first person. Qoygeldi, a member of the Kerey tribe, rides out to seek revenge for his older brother, whose leg has been wounded by a Kalmuck while on a horse-stealing expedition. Before setting out on his revenge journey, Qoygeldi reminisces in his monologue about an earlier successful raid of his. After the end of the monologue we are told in third-person narrative (in prose) that Qoygeldi completed his raid by killing one of the pursuing Kalmucks with his gun.

Radloff printed these poems under two different headings, the first (on Qožamberdi) together with a number of quite different texts: two praise songs; a dialogue between a lover and his beloved, who has passed away and is speaking from the grave; a lying poem and other poems under the rubric "diverse songs." The second (on Qoygeldi) is found together with historical songs and epic poems in the group of "songs and narratives about earlier Kazakh heroes." In a recent Kazakh reedition of Radloff's text volume (1994), the two poems are printed next to one another in the section "legends (*añuzlar*) and historical (epic) songs (*tariyxiy žirlar*)." It seems, at least at first sight, reasonable to interpret these poems as types of historical songs, with some connections to the heroic epic. This can be made clear by a third poem of the same type, which I would like to look at in more detail.

#### Flying and Boast: *Tawke-batır*

The poem in question was recorded by me in Kulja (Yining) in Xinjiang in 1989 from the Kazakh singer Müslimbek Sarqıtbay-uli. Müslimbek was born in 1946 (in the Ili province of northwestern China). He belongs to the Nayman tribe or tribal confederation (more specifically, within the Nayman, to the Žañbirši clan of the Qarakey tribe). Müslimbek's father Sarqıtbay was also a singer; he was illiterate and knew more than ten narrative poems. From his father Müslimbek learned his own repertoire, which consists of the epic *Qiz*

5. The German translation of this poem is found *ibid.*, 68–72 (translation volume); the complete text is found *ibid.*, 53–55 (text volume) and in Radloff 1994, 288–90; I am quoting from the latter (*ibid.*, 288).

6. I am using the name form as given in the 1994 reedition; Radloff's title is "Köigöldü"; see Radloff 1870, 103–8 (translation); 80–84 (text) = 1994, 290–93.



*Žibek*, two long contest songs between singers (*aqin*) of the nineteenth century, and the poem in question, called *Tawke-batir* (Tawke the Hero).<sup>7</sup> *Qiz Žibek* is one of the best-known Kazakh epic poems. It is basically a bride-winning epic with, however, a tragic ending: Tölegen wins the hand of the beautiful Qiz Žibek (Silk Girl) but is killed on his return journey by a rival.<sup>8</sup>

The song-contest, termed *aytis* in Kazakh (from *ayt-*, “to speak”) is possibly the most beloved genre in Kazakh folklore. Like the Old Provençal *tenso* (and related forms), the *aytis* is a poetic debate on a wide range of topics between two (or more) opponents, who in Provençal and other medieval traditions are generally poets. According to the speakers of the *aytis*, to their topics, their form, and the occasion of their singing, various subtypes are differentiated: contest songs among singers (*aqindar aytisi*) or between a girl and a young man (*qiz ben žigit aytisi*), quarrels (*qağisuwlar*), jest songs between a girl and a young man (*qayimdasuwlar*), and others.<sup>9</sup> While these poems are basically improvised, just like other folk poetry in dialogue form such as the Malay *pantun* or the South German and Austrian *Schmadahüpfl*, some longer verbal contests, in particular between famous singers, have also been preserved in oral transmission. Among these are those that Müslimbek performs, “Biržan men Sara aytisi” (The Contest between Biržan and Sara) and “Äset pen Rišžan aytisi” (The Contest between Äset and Rišžan). The first one is a singing contest between two nineteenth-century singers from different tribes, the *aqin* Biržan from the Argin tribe and the girl singer Sara from the Nayman tribe, each one praising his or her own skill as well as the merits of his or her tribe.<sup>10</sup> The second one, from the beginning of the twentieth century, is also a singing contest between a male and a female *aqin*, between the young singer-poet Äset and the well-known and experienced poetess Rišžan.<sup>11</sup>

Müslimbek’s performance of *Tawke-batir* took place at a gathering of poets, singers, and musicians in an apartment in Kulja that was arranged at my request by the Kazakh branch of the Xinjiang Academy of Social Sciences and the Ili Writers Union. According to Müslimbek’s information, he learned this poem from his father at the age of twenty. It was, like his other poetry, performed as a song and to the accompaniment of the Kazakh *dombira*. Later Müslimbek par-

7. According to the transliteration system used here, <äw> symbolizes a diphthong which can be phonetically transcribed as [äw] and corresponds roughly to English <ow> as in *tower*.

8. Müslimbek’s version has been published in the journal *Mura*; see Sarqitbay-ulı 1982; a reliable scholarly edition of various Kazakh versions is Auezov and Smirnova 1963.

9. On this genre, see the chapter on *aytis* (by M. Karataev and O. Nuragambetova) in Smirnova 1968, 324–51; see also Emsheimer 1956. A scholarly collection of *aytis* songs has been published in two volumes in the series *Qazaq xalıq ädebiyeti* (Kazakh folk literature) by A. Almanov (1988).

10. See Smirnova 1968, 335–36.

11. See *ibid.*, 337.

ticipated in an expedition to an encampment of nomadic Kazakhs on Lake Sayram, where he performed various songs (mostly *aytis* ones) to a native audience of about twenty, thronging into the yurt.

Before giving a translation of the poem, a few general remarks may be helpful. The following poem is called a *xiysa* by the singer (l. 152). This term is an Arabic loan-word (*qişsa*), meaning “tale, narrative” in Arabic. According to N. Smirnova, the word *qişsa* was mostly used in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and generally denotes in Kazakh a narrative of written origin, often of a religious character.<sup>12</sup> A type of *qişsa* popular among oral singers comprises poetic narratives based on various tales of the *Arabian Nights* and similar tale collections. Typically the *qişsa* is in four-line stanzas, with lines of eleven or twelve syllables, rhyming a-a-b-a (a form termed *öleñ*). While the *qişsa* in the strict sense of the term is derived from a written source or at any rate influenced by written literature, it can also denote any oral narrative poem, at least according to the use of the term in Xinjiang.<sup>13</sup> A multivolume series of Kazakh oral narrative poems has been published under the title “Kazakh *qişsas*” (*Qazaq xiysalari/qiysalari*), which contains all types of oral narrative poems and epics.

In the present case, the narrative is in the characteristic form of the *qişsa* but is not based on a written tradition. It also differs from the typical *qişsa* derived from tale collections such as the *Arabian Nights* in that it purports to deal with historical characters. The poem tells of the warlike expedition of a young man of the Tobiqti clan, Tawke, as part of a tribal conflict between the Nayman and the Kerey, two large tribes or tribal confederations (*taypa*) of the Middle Horde (*Orta žüz*).<sup>14</sup> It belongs basically to the “cattle raid” genre; more particularly it deals with a horse raid. The poem describes in Tawke’s words a raid by a group of Tobiqti, said to belong to the Nayman tribe, on a Kerey encampment (*aul*), in the course of which one Kazakh *žigit* from the opposed Kerey tribe, Žekabay, is shot down by Tawke.<sup>15</sup> The Tobiqti clan (*ruw*) belongs to the Argin tribe (*taypa*) and is actually not a clan of the Nayman; in the poem, however, Tawke is apparently both a Tobiqti and a Nayman (ll. 6, 11).<sup>16</sup> Seventy Tobiqti gather, old and young, with Tawke as their leader. They approach an *aul* (l. 25), but it

12. *Ibid.*, 102–3.

13. Wilhelm Radloff published a number of these “Bücher-Gesänge,” as he called them (book songs) in his Kazakh volume; see Radloff 1870, 408 ff. (translation volume).

14. The Nayman comprise three clans (*ruw*), the Teristañbali, the Saržomart, and the Tölegetay, which are again subdivided into subclans; see Qarataev et al. 1972–78, 8:261–62 (article “Nayman”); Mukanov 1974, 38–46. The Kerey comprise two branches (*tarmaq*), the Abaq Kerey and the Ašamaylı Kerey, with further division into clans and subclans; see Qarataev et al. 1972–78, 5:390 (article “Kerey”); Mukanov 1974, 28–38. See also Krader 1963, 178–286.

15. For the text of the poem with variants, see appendix 1.

16. See Qarataev et al. 1972–78, 11:70 (article “Tobiqti”).



is on the far bank of a river which they cannot ford in the dark of the night. Tāwke chooses twenty-one young men with whom he makes for the village at dawn. They find a ford, where Tāwke stations his men; two of them, Säbit and Qaramolda [Black Mullah], are mentioned later (l. 87). Then he sees a woman approaching with a water jug.

A rather large part of the song is taken up by the ensuing dialogue between Tāwke and the Kerey woman (ll. 43 to 100). In this dialogue the woman tries to dissuade the young man from attacking her *aul*. She taunts him with his exile to Aqmola in northern Kazakhstan (Tselinograd in the Soviet era; l. 71), apparently brought about by Tāwke's scandalous behavior: he had, according to the woman's words, attacked an opponent named Er Kebek from the Qalqaman clan (or family) in broad daylight, bound him, and tied him to a horse to be dragged to death. This clinches her case and Tāwke declares himself defeated, although he does not abandon his plan to rob the *aul* of its herd of horses.

When driving away the horses, Tāwke is pursued by Žekebay, the woman's husband, a valiant *žigit*. From Tāwke's conversation with the woman it emerges that he is planning to steal Bay Seyit's herd of horses (l. 59). Presumably this is the herd he is taking away. Who is Bay Seyit? The poem is not entirely clear on this point. When Tāwke asks the young woman who she is and whom the horses belong to, she gives him various items of information: (1) she got up from bed when "our *mirza*" came back at the crack of dawn (ll. 47–48); (2) the name of her husband is Žekebay (l. 55); (3) "our grandfather" has gone to Mecca on a pilgrimage (l. 56). It seems likely that Žekebay is "our *mirza*": why else should she want to get up at his return? She does not say that Žekebay is the owner of the horses, although it is him she calls her husband in answer to Tāwke's question about the owner of the horse herd. If Tāwke takes Bay Seyit's horses as he intends to do, then Žekebay cannot be the (sole) owner of the horses. This leaves the absent grandfather as a possible candidate for the identification of Bay Seyit. There is not enough information in the poem to substantiate this claim, but it would explain why the woman mentions the grandfather at all.

Among the other names mentioned in the poem some can be identified. Tāwke's *uran* or war cry is "Abilay!" at the beginning of the poem (l. 7), but later "Žobalay!" (ll. 118, 142); at that point "Abilay!" is the war cry of his Kerey opponent (ll. 117, 129). Abilay is a famous khan of the Kazakhs, who lived from 1711 to 1781 and was khan of the Middle Horde between 1771 and 1781. His reign and military exploits were celebrated by a contemporary singer, Buqar-žiraw Qalqaman-ulī (1693–1787), and there are numerous historical narrative poems about Abilay extant in Kazakh oral tradition.<sup>17</sup> As both Tāwke and

17. See Qarataev et al. 1972–78, 1:35–36 (article "Abilay"); for a recent collection of historical narrative poems on Abilay see Seydimbek, Äzizbaeva, and Šafiqi 1995.

Žekebay, although from different tribes, belong to the Middle Horde, they can both legitimately appeal to Abilay in their war cry.

Žekebay has, however, another mark of identification, the banner of Er Qosay (l. 130). Er Qosay is the protagonist of a number of Kazakh epic poems. In the poem *Er Kökšü*, edited and translated by Radloff, he is Er Kökšü's son and associated with the Kirghiz *Manas* cycle, while in a later poem, entitled *Er Qosay*, Qosay's father is called Er Bökše, one of seven Noghay brothers.<sup>18</sup> By taking Er Qosay's banner into his hand, Žekebay shows that he is a descendant of Er Qosay. This links our poem also to the Noghay cycle of Kazakh epics, to heroes who are purported to have lived at the time of the Noghay Horde, i.e., two hundred years before Abilay (see below, p. 104). As to Tāwke himself, we are told that his *arğı ata* ("forefather") is called Saptiayaq (l. 67). Unfortunately, nothing is known of Saptiayaq, but there is other evidence to help place the protagonist of the poem, which will be presented below.

As we have the poem, it celebrates the heroic exploit of a young man in the form of a first-person narrative and, incorporated into this narrative, of a contest-dialogue. As a first approximation, *Tāwke-batır* might be classified as a boast-poem, comparable to the hero's boasting in heroic narrative and epic, as for instance in Beowulf's boasts about how he will kill Grendel (Old English *bēot*) and his self-praise with respect to former adventures (*gylp*).<sup>19</sup> Heroic action is presented in the last part of the poem when Tāwke is pursued by Žekebay and his men. The only means of saving his life is by first shooting down Žekebay's horse and then shooting down Žekebay himself from the second horse he has meanwhile mounted. Žekebay's downfall stops Tāwke's pursuers, who stop to take care of their brave leader. It is actually unclear whether Žekebay has been killed or whether he has only been knocked unconscious; Tāwke had only aimed at his thighs and bottom (ll. 135ff.). The Tobiqtı manage to drive five hundred horses away and Tāwke's expedition can be called a success. Whatever blemish might once have adhered to his name and that of his clan (ll. 79ff.), the successful raid has certainly exonerated him from all blame.

Before we look at the poem from the point of view of genre and in a comparative context, here is its translation (for the text and further notes see appendix 1):

Many kinds of cotton cloth come from the bazaar,  
The arrow, shot off, meets him who is doomed to die.

18. Radloff 1870, 112–29 (translation volume); 88–101 (text volume) = 1994, 156–67. *Er Qosay* was taken down in 1938 and published in 1961; see Gumarova et al. 1961, 15–74. An epic poem on Er Qosay is also extant in Murin-žiraw's (1860–1952) repertoire; it is entitled *Kökšeniñ ulı Er Qosay* (Kökše's son Er Qosay) and edited in Sidiyqov, Nurmağanbetova, and Qudaybergenov 1990, 114–34.

19. On Beowulf's boast-speeches and the distinction between *bēot* and *gylp*, see Schücking 1933, 5–11.

If you listen and pay attention, assembled people,  
For a little while you will hear from Tāwke the Hero.

“At the time when there was a quarrel between the two tribes,  
When there was fighting between the Nayman and the Kerey,  
In broad daylight we attacked the [enemy] people, shouting ‘Abilay!’  
Protected by the exalted position of my forefather.

We gathered, seventy people, old and young,  
Plotting an attack on the Kerey.  
After doing honor to the dead ancestors of the Tobīqti  
I became the head of the seventy men.

We gathered, seventy people from Toganaq.  
‘Be proud, if you have not spoken a meaningless word!  
While you drive the cattle away, don’t be afraid to kill a man,’  
With these words my forefather gave the blessing from our side.

The Kerey kept guard over their cattle and over themselves,  
They kept their spears and their arms ready.  
Lying in wait for the expedition of the oncoming Tobīqti,  
They galloped their horses all over the place and stood prepared.

That day the young men came back after having searched through their land,  
Having had no rest they were worn out from their ride.  
Riding along this place with great expectations,  
Filled with resentment, we doled out a lot of punishment.

The *aul* [encampment of the Kerey] was situated next to the River Qalba,  
The numerous people had settled in the midst of their horse herd.  
Not finding the entry of the ford in the darkness of a moonless night,  
We were not able to get anywhere near the *aul*.

That night we stayed lying there, hobbling our horses.  
I chose twenty-one young men.  
When dawn rose, we started our attack on the Kerey,  
Hoping to be successful on a young man’s expedition, shouting  
‘Quday!’ [God].

I reached the *aul*, thinking that I would reconnoitre,  
Intending to take the entry of the ford, if it was free.  
From the *aul* someone was visible coming out on foot.  
I decided to approach and moved forward.

It was a young woman who was carrying a water jug in her hand.  
Good people recognize the bearing of a hero without having to be told.  
Jokingly I spoke a few words with her.  
My horse, on which I was sitting, did not want to stand still under me.

Dawn was breaking, the sunlight was beginning to sparkle from the east,  
The chestnut horse under me was prancing playfully:  
‘With your black coat over your shoulder and a water jug in your hand,  
Before the break of dawn, what kind of person are you, mincing your steps?’

(Then the woman speaks the following words:)

‘The chestnut horse under you is prancing,  
I am she for whom the young men long when they see me.  
When our *mirza* [lord] came back from the horse herds at the crack of dawn,  
I got up again from bed, all disheveled.’

(Then Tāwke says:)

‘You came out toward me, like a red fox.  
If someone has a quarrel, do not then his possessions get squandered?  
I have come to ask where the *aul* is.  
Whose is the horse herd before me?’

(Then the woman speaks the following words:)

‘Who is it you are looking for, whom do you desire?  
This transient world is faithful to nobody.  
Žekebay is the name of my husband.  
Our grandfather has gone to Mecca to become a hadji.’

(Then Tāwke speaks the following words:)

‘I have come to your *aul* to make a raid,  
Intending to wreak destruction in broad daylight.  
I do not know the open way to Bay Seyit.  
I intend to take his horse herd, turning everything upside down.’

(The woman:)

‘Don’t disturb [the people of] the *aul*, lying there all peacefully,  
Who have hobbled their animals in fear of the enemy.  
You seem to be a person of proud bearing and heroic conduct.  
Speak and give first of all your name!’

(Then Tāwke speaks the following words:)

'If you don't know it, my name is Tāwke the Hero. 65  
I don't grudge a reply to anybody.  
Saptiayaq is my forefather, if you ask for his name.  
Don't ask for more now!'

(Then the woman speaks the following words:)

'O hero, I have been longing to hear your voice, 70  
I am amazed about your raid in broad daylight.  
Scandalously exiled to Aqmola,  
Are you moving about to the honor of the Tobīqtī?

You are moving about calling the Tobīqtī your relatives,  
Intending in a state of drunkenness to drive away the booty. 75  
Didn't you come from Aqmola, having respect for your birthplace,  
Saying that there your navel cord was cut and you were washed clean  
from dirt?<sup>20</sup>

O hero, what you have been thinking is shortsighted.  
Qaramolda is riding along the river careful of his safety.  
It was shameful for the five clans of the Tobīqtī 80  
That you caught and bound your man in broad daylight.'

(Thus speaking, Tāwke says the following words:)

'I won't leave even one two-year-old foal for your *aul*.  
When I take the horse herd, prodding it on with the spear, my heart will be pleased.  
Scandalously exiled to Aqmola,  
The tribe of your Kerey will make me fat.

I will show my ability on this expedition, 85  
When I hold my gun, loaded with ten bullets, in my hand.  
Sābit and Qaramolda are watching at the ford.  
You will see my ability on this expedition.'

(Then the woman speaks:)

'O hero, don't lean on your companion! 90  
Don't seek refuge from the words that I have spoken!'

20. This phrase means "birthplace" in Kazakh; see Keñesbaev 1977, 296, s.v. *kindik kesip, kir žuwan žer*.

Don't you know the ancient law of your people?  
What did you do day and night to the Qalqaman clan?

You really are so childish.  
For what reason were you exiled to Aqmola?  
You tied [Er Kebek] to a horse when he was still alive and let him be 95  
dragged to death.  
What guilt did you see in Er Kebek to take his life?'

(After these words, Tāwke the Hero says:)

This woman was about to defeat me with words under all circumstances,  
She spoke with reason, saying everything without fault.  
Turning round to the horse herd, I trotted away,  
Saying: 'Woman of my own age, you speak rightly, your word is correct.' 100

Driving away the horse herd, we ascended the top of a hill.  
The weapons of a hero are excellent for a man.  
Although a man, I did not get my vengeance on the people;  
The woman humiliated me with her words.

Six of us led the horse herd away, fifteen stayed. 105  
The pursuer did not turn back and give in.  
Prodding with the spear he threatened him who rode away.  
The *žigit* Žekebay was equal to me.

The grey, five-year-old horse under him was playful,  
The anger about the animals did not let him think about anything else. 110  
He had in his hand a twin-tasseled spear;  
When his turn came, he threw it, without being able to drive it in.

The grey, five-year-old horse under him shakes his head,  
But he injures nobody, stirring like a swan.  
When my turn came, intending to shoot his horse 115  
I took my double-barreled gun into my hand and took aim.

Suddenly he rushed on me, shouting 'Abilay!  
I for my part galloped, shouting 'Žobalay!  
Not one man who could have saved [me] was to be seen;  
There was no other way for me but to shoot his horse with a bullet. 120

I stopped short and pointed the gun to shoot,  
While he stopped his horse still and pulled his head back.  
I shot his grey, five-year-old horse in the liver.  
The hero's successful turn had come.

His grey, five-year-old horse collapsed after being hit by the bullet, 125  
 After a stream of blood had been flowing from his intestines.  
 He jumped onto his companion's horse and galloped along,  
 Attacking, with his heart burning from his anger about the animals.

He comes again, rushing forward with the war cry 'Abilay!'  
 With Er Qosay's banner fastened to his arm. 130  
 Not one man who could have saved [me] was to be seen;  
 There was no other way but for me to shoot Žekebay with a bullet.

My pursuers come in great number from all sides,  
 Your hero did not turn back from [their] side.  
 Intending to aim at the two cheeks of his fat behind 135  
 I shot the hero in his fat flesh.

He collapsed, falling head over heels, after having been hit by the bullet,  
 Falling without consciousness into a pool of blood.  
 Surrounding him, the numerous Kerey stopped still.  
 I was just barely saved, by shooting my gun. 140

We selected five hundred horses and drove them away,  
 We separated, gathered our wits, and shouted 'Žobalay!'  
 Not only will the animals be in no further danger,  
 [But I would have been in danger] had I not shot Žekebay with a bullet.

It is my place where the Kerey's robbed animals were taken, 145  
 It is my place where I have gone to the shame of the [Kerey] people.  
 Not only will the animals be in no further danger,  
 [But I would have been in danger] had I not shot Žekebay the wise."

Your name I implore, my God Almighty,  
 Your refuge that reaches to the seventeen thousand worlds. 150  
 The fight between the Kerey and the Tobıqtı,  
 The *xiysa* about Tawke the Hero is finished.

The reader will probably be struck by the space given in this poem to the dialogue between Tawke and Žekebay's wife (ll. 45–100—no fewer than fourteen stanzas). One might at first classify this poem as basically an *aytis* that is provided with a narrative frame (ll. 1–44 and 101–152—eleven plus thirteen stanzas). This was apparently the opinion of A. Almanov, editor of the *aytis* volumes in the Kazakh Folk Literature series. In the first volume, he edited the dialogue part of our poem from a different version under the heading "Contest

Songs between Girls and Young Men." This text, "Tawke and the Young Woman" ("Tawke men kelinšek"), is preserved in the archives of the Manuscript Department of the Kazakh Academy of Sciences in Alma-Ata, and contains, in addition to the twenty four-line stanzas printed by Almanov, another twenty-five stanzas of primarily narrative character.<sup>21</sup> To see this poem as an extended *aytis* is, however, not quite as arbitrary as it might seem. There is in fact another Kazakh *aytis* that consists of a dialogue between Tawke and a young woman called Urqiya.<sup>22</sup> Tawke, who is also the narrator, is lying in prison and sees from his window a young woman pass by on her way to the fountain. He starts a conversation with her, in the course of which both reveal their identity and Tawke tries to persuade the young woman to help him. But he is out of luck; she closes the dialogue with the words:

Aytıstım, batır, sizben qazaqşılap,  
 Ketti goy aytqan söziñ mağan unap.  
 Kezdessek tağı dağı aytısarmız,  
 Qaldı goy art žağımda balam žılap.

Qamalıp sen žatırsıñ bul žumısta,  
 Köbiñniñ dāwletiñ žoq, qoliñ qısqa.  
 Bolğanda siz—aqıyıq, bizder—tülki,  
 Topşıñdı sindirarmın qapılısta.<sup>23</sup>

I conversed with you, hero, in Kazakh,  
 And certainly liked the words you spoke.  
 If we meet again, we'll talk again with each other;  
 [Now] I have a crying infant on my back.

As to this affair, you are lying imprisoned;  
 You haven't got many possessions and your arm is short.  
 In any case, you are an eagle, I am a fox:  
 I will break your upper arm unexpectedly.

In its entirety, *Tawke-batır* conforms not so much to the generic conventions of the *aytis* but rather to those of the heroic lay. The term "heroic lay" or, in German, *Heldenlied*, is familiar from Older Germanic poetry; according to Andreas Heusler, this genre is represented by poems such as the *Lay of Aili* (*Atlakviða*) or the *Lay of Hamdir* (*Hamðismál*) in the Edda, and, in the poetic tradi-

21. Almanov 1988, 2:56–58. For further information, see appendix 1.

22. Almanov 1988, 2:51–56.

23. Ibid., 55–56.



tions of the South Germanic tribes, by the Old High German *Hildebrandslied* and the Old English *Lay of Finnsburh*. Characteristic of the Germanic heroic lay is, as to its form, the mixture of third-person narrative and direct speech (what Heusler termed "doppelseitiges Ereignislied") and, as to its content, the focus on heroic qualities:

The Germanic heroic lay (of old or more recent date) is no poetry "for the praise of the forefathers and the tribe." It is neither of a dynastic or patriotic persuasion nor concerned with praise. . . . The soul of the Old Germanic heroic lay is the *heroic*: this is a term that is not synonymous with "warlike," and which contrasts with adventurous, sentimental, or burlesque elements that arose in a variety of forms in the works of minstrels, saga men, knights, and clerics.<sup>24</sup>

Heusler's opinion has, however, not remained uncontested. In view of the fragmentary nature of the only two surviving examples of the genre in South Germanic poetry, the Old High German *Hildebrandslied* and the Old English *Lay of Finnsburh*, Eric Stanley has questioned the feasibility of comparing *Finnsburh* with the *Hildebrandslied* in the first place, and of deducing the genre of heroic lay from these poems: "All we have is a fragment: it is best not to generalize from this isolated piece of verse about the nature of the Old English 'heroic lay' as a poetic genre; it is too different from *Hildebrandslied* to allow of generalizations about the West Germanic 'heroic lay.'" <sup>25</sup> There is much good sense in Stanley's argumentation, and it is not my intention to refute the various points he is making. There is certainly need for caution, and it is a sobering experience to submit well-worn assumptions to skeptical reasoning. But skepticism can also lead to purely negative conclusions, which in this case do not seem to be warranted. The *Hildebrandslied* and the *Lay of Finnsburh* (if a lay it be) might be a small empirical basis for postulating the genre of the heroic lay for the West (and South) Germanic peoples. The genre of the heroic lay as such, however, is well attested in oral literature, and when seen against a wider background these two fragmentary poems, however different from one another, seem to conform to a general type of narrative poetry.

### *Finnsburh* and the Germanic Heroic Lay

Before we address questions of genre, it is as well to have a brief look at the poems themselves. I will first look at *Finnsburh* in some detail and then com-

24. Heusler 1943, 154.

25. Stanley 1987, 297.

pare the *Hildebrandslied* with the Old English poem in a more summary fashion.<sup>26</sup> By a happy coincidence we have two versions of the legend of Finnsburh in Old English, the *Finnsburh Fragment* and the *Finnsburh Episode*. The fragment, consisting of forty-eight alliterative lines, of which the first and the last are incomplete, is only known from George Hickes's publication of 1705; the original manuscript is lost. The episode occurs in *Beowulf*. During the feast in Heorot, King Hrothgar's hall, after Beowulf's victory over Grendel, Hrothgar's singer (*scop*, l. 1066b) sings a narrative that is undoubtedly a version of the legend of Finnsburh. The actual content of this legend is not entirely clear; the two sources complement one another but contain at the same time a number of textual cruxes and difficult passages. The basic plot, however, can be reliably reconstructed from the episode. Finn, king of the Frisians, is married to Hildeburh, a Danish princess. When her brother Hnæf visits her in Finnsburh, he and his men are attacked. In the course of the fighting, both sides suffer heavy losses; on the Danish side Hnæf is killed, and on the Frisian side Finn's and Hildeburh's son. Finn and Hengest, the new leader of the Danes, are forced to conclude a peace treaty, which is designed to guarantee a peaceful stay for the Danes in Finn's domain over the winter. The following spring, however, hostilities flare up again; Finn and his retinue are killed and Hildeburh (together with rich booty) is taken back to Denmark.<sup>27</sup>

Although the text of the *Finnsburh Fragment* is riddled with difficulties, there is a consensus among scholars on most points of the form of the text. As in the case of *Brunanburh*, the edition found in the *Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records* can serve as a basis for the following discussion:<sup>28</sup>

*homas byrnað?"*

Hnæf hleoþrode ða, heaþogeong cyning:  
"Ne ðis ne dagað eastan, ne her draca ne fleoged,  
ne her ðisse healle homas ne byrnað.

26. An obvious example of an Old English heroic lay is the *Battle of Maldon*. I have refrained from including this poem in my discussion for two reasons. One is that I consider *Maldon* an anomaly as stressed above, p. 71: unlike other Germanic lays, it has a definite historical point of reference and is thus similar to historical songs like *Brunanburh*; but unlike the latter its style is that of the lay, especially as regards point of view (objective rather than subjective) and narration (sequential and circumstantial rather than summary). The second reason is that *Maldon* has been extensively discussed, both as a heroic and as a historical poem; see the references in chapter 2, note 66.

27. Editions of the fragment and episode include Klaeber 1950; Fry 1974; and Tolkien 1982. Fragment and episode have been much discussed; among older criticism, see Williams 1924; Lawrence 1928, 107-28; Hoops 1932, 132-46; Chambers 1959, 245-89; for a recent detailed reinterpretation see North 1990; see also the editions, in particular Tolkien's, and the survey in Reichl 1994.

28. Krapp and Dobbie 1931-53, 6:3-4. In the critical apparatus Hickes's text is symbolized by *H*; in a few cases (marked in italics) I have preferred the text found in other editions to that given in *ASPR*; these editions are quoted by the following sigla: *F* = Fry 1974; *K* = Klaeber 1950; *T* = Tolkien 1982.



Ac her forþ berað; fugelas singað, 5  
 gylleð græghama, guðwudu hlynned,  
 scyld scefte oncwýð. Nu scyneed þes mona  
 wadol under wolcnum. Nu arisað weadæda  
 ðe ðisne folces nið fremman willað.  
 Ac onwacnigeað nu, wigend mine, 10  
 habbað eowre linda, hicgeaþ on ellen,  
 winnað on orde, wesað onmode!"  
 Ða aras mænig goldhladen ðegn, gyrde hine his swurde.  
 Ða to dura eodon drihtlice cempa,  
 Sigeferð and Eaha, hyra sword getugon, 15  
 and æt oþrum durum Ordlaf and Guþlaf,  
 and Hengest sylf hwearf him on laste.  
 Ða gyt Garulf Gudere styrde  
 ðæt he swa freolic feorh forman siþe  
 to ðære healle durum hyrsta ne bære, 20  
 nu hyt niþa heard anyman wolde,  
 ac he frægn ofer eal undearninga,  
 deormod hæleþ, hwa ða duru heolde.  
 "Sigferþ is min nama," cweþ he, "ic eom Secgena leod,  
 wreccea wide cuð; fæla ic weana gebad, 25  
 heardra hilda. Ðe is gyt her witod  
 swæþer ðu sylf to me secean wylle."  
 Ða wæs on healle wælslihta gehlyn;  
 sceolde cellod bord cenum on handa,  
 banhelm berstan (buruhðelu dynede), 30  
 oð æt ðære gude Garulf gecrang,  
 ealra ærest eorðbuendra,  
 Guðlafes sunu, ymbe hyne godra fæla,  
 hwearflícra hræw. Hræfen wandrode,  
 sweart and sealobrun. Swurdleoma stod, 35  
 swylce eal Finnsburuh fyrenu wære.  
 Ne gefrægn ic næfre wurþlicor æt wera hilde  
 sixtig sigebeorma sel gebæran,  
 ne nefre swanas hwitne medo sel forgyldan  
 ðonne Hnæfe guldan his hægstældas. 40  
 Hig fuhton fif dagas, swa hyra nan ne feol  
 drihtgesiða, ac hig ða duru heoldon.  
 Ða gewat him wund hæleð on wæg gangan,  
 sæde þæt his byrne abrocen wære,  
 heresceorp unhror, and eac wæs his helm ðyrel. 45

Ða hine sone frægn folces hyrde,  
 hu ða wigend hyra wunda genæson,  
 oððe hwæþer ðæra hyssa . . .

1 homas] K, F, T; H nas (= ASPR) 2 Hnæf] H Næfre heaþogeong] H hearo geong  
 3 eastan] H Eastun 11 linda] H landa hicgeaþ] H Hie geaþ 12 winnað] H Windað  
 18 Garulf] K, T; H Garulf (= ASPR) styrde] H styrode 20 bære] H bæran  
 25 wreccea] H Wrecten weana] H weuna 26 heardra] H Heordra 29 celled bord]  
 H Celas bord cenum on] H Genumon 34 hwearflícra hræw] H Hwearflícra hrær  
 39 swanas hwitne] K, F, T (with additional emendation); H swa noc hwitne; ASPR swetne  
 45 heresceorp unhror] H Here sceorpum hror ðyrel] H ðyrl

. . . Are the gables burning?"  
 Then Hnæf spoke, the battle-young king:  
 "Neither is day breaking from the east nor does a dragon come flying here  
 nor are the gables of this hall here burning.  
 But [they] are carrying forth [arms] here;<sup>29</sup> the birds are singing, 5  
 the grey-skinned one [wolf] is howling, the battle-wood is resounding,  
 the shield answers the shaft. Now the moon is shining,  
 wandering under the clouds. Now deeds of woe will arise,  
 which will bring to an end this enmity of the people.  
 But wake up now, my warriors, 10  
 take your shields, put your thoughts on heroic deeds,  
 fight in the first row, be of one mind!"  
 Then many a gold-decked warrior arose, girded on his sword.  
 Then there went to the door the noble warriors,  
 Sigeferð and Eaha, drew their swords, 15  
 and at the other doors [were] Ordlaf and Guþlaf,  
 and Hengest himself went at last.  
 At that time Gudere was still holding Garulf back,  
 (saying) that he should not risk such a noble life by bearing for the first time  
 to the doors of this hall armor,<sup>30</sup> 20

29. Tolkien emends the text to two lines here, which makes good sense but is completely hypothetical: *ac her forþ berað* [*feorhgeniðlan/fyrðsearu fuslic*]. He translates: "nay, mortal enemies approach in ready armour." The problem here is that *beran* is a transitive verb and lacks an object; Klaeber points out "that the war equipments specified afterwards are the object of *beras*" (1950, 250).

30. There are several problems with these lines. Editors are divided on whether *Garulf* is to be taken as nominative (and hence the subject of the sentence) [*ASPR, F*] or (in the emended form *Garulf*) as dative [*K, T*]. A second problem is the verb: should Hickes's *styrode* be retained, meaning "to stir up, incite" [*F*] or should the verb be emended to *styrde*, meaning "to steer, hold back" [*ASPR, K, T*]? Accordingly we have as alternative translations to the one adopted here: "Garulf held Gudere back" and "Garulf incited Gudere." As Garulf is killed later (l. 31) and as *ac* in l. 22 suggests that whoever tried to

as the [a] warrior brave in battle would take it away,  
 but he asked [raising his voice], above everything openly,  
 the brave-minded hero, who it was who held the door.  
 "Sigeferþ is my name," said the other, "I am the lord of the Secgan,  
 an exiled hero<sup>31</sup> widely known; I have suffered much sorrow,  
 many hard battles. For you it is destined here now  
 which one of two things<sup>32</sup> you are seeking for me."  
 Then there was in the hall the din of battle;  
 The round shield would burst<sup>33</sup> in the hands of the keen fighters,  
 as well as their armor (the floor of the *burh* resounded),<sup>34</sup>  
 till Garulf fell in this battle,  
 as the very first of men,  
 Guðlaf's son, and around him many good warriors,  
 the bodies of the agile fighters.<sup>35</sup> The raven roamed [the battle-site],  
 black and dark-brown. The gleam of the swords shone out,  
 as if all Finnsburh were on fire.  
 I have never heard that at a war among men  
 sixty victorious warriors had carried themselves any better  
 or that young men had paid back better the white mead  
 than his young retainers did to Hnæf.  
 They fought for five days, while none of their companions in battle  
 fell, but rather held the doors.  
 Then a wounded warrior started to go away,  
 he said that his coat of mail was broken,  
 that his armor was useless<sup>36</sup> and also his helmet pierced through.  
 Then the lord of the people asked him immediately  
 how the warriors endured their wounds,  
 or which one of the young men . . .

influence whom, this endeavor was without success, it seems more natural to see Garulf as a young warrior, eager to fight, who cannot be restrained and pays for his courage with his death. In the following lines *bære* has two objects: *freolic feorh* and *hyrsta*; see Klaeber 1950, 251. Tolkien translates: "that in his armour he should not risk so precious a life in the first attack on the hall-door" (1982, 147).

31. Old English *wrecca* (Modern English *wretch*) means both "exile" and "adventurer"; it is unclear which meaning dominates in this context.

32. I.e., victory or death; see Klaeber 1950, 252, and the similar formulation in the Old High German *Hildebrandslied*, ll. 60ff.

33. *Celod bord* is a *crux*; Hickeys has *celæs bord*, which is generally emended to *celod bord* on the basis of the occurrence of this phrase in *Maldon*, l. 283. Fry (1993) suggests the meaning "decorated in low relief"; see also Breeze 1992 (who supports the emended form *celced*, glossed as "lime-white").

34. A *burh* is generally a fortified place; on the location of Finnsburh, see note 37 below.

35. This is one of several interpretations; see Klaeber 1950, 252.

36. Fry (and some other editors) keep Hickeys's text: *heresceorþum hror*, "strong in his armor"; Klaeber's text (shared by most editors) makes better sense.

The fragment describes the attack of Finn's men on Hnæf and his retinue, who are spending the night in a hall set apart from other buildings.<sup>37</sup> This attack comes as a surprise to the Danish warriors: the guard mistakes the glittering of the weapons carried by the approaching host at first for a fire, but is enlightened by Hnæf as to the true nature of the brightness. Hnæf rouses his men and puts five warriors, among them Hengest (who has apparently a special status), at the doors of the hall. Outside Garulf, unwilling to let himself be restrained (in one interpretation), rushes at one of the doors and asks who his opponent is. Sigeferð, the prince of the Secgan, answers him and the fighting begins. Garulf is the first victim, but others, on the side of Finn's men, follow soon. Hnæf's sixty retainers put up a valiant defense, holding out for five days without casualties. Then, however, a wounded warrior leaves one of the doors and is asked by "the lord of the people," presumably Hnæf, how the other defenders endure their wounds. At this point the fragment breaks off.

Although, as has been pointed out, there are a number of textual problems, the summary given is on the whole well founded. There is some difficulty as to the interpretation of line 18 as explained above (is Garulf being restrained or incited or is Garulf the one who is egging on or restraining Guðere?), and Hnæf himself is not actually mentioned in Hickeys's text. But the emendation in line 2 makes sense (*Næfre* > *Hnæf*), and as the poem presents the action from the point of view of the Danes, "the lord of the people" must also be Hnæf.<sup>38</sup> At this stage Hnæf cannot have been replaced yet by Hengest as leader of the Danes, as this is quite clearly the first hostile encounter between Danes and Frisians, when none of the Danes has as yet been killed.

The fragment then describes the beginning of the fighting between Danes and Frisians. To speak of Danes and Frisians is not entirely correct. In the episode in *Beowulf* the Danes are also called (*Here-*) *Scyldingas*, descendants of Scyld, the mythical ancestor of the Danish royal house, and *Healf-Dene* (for Hnæf, l. 1069a).<sup>39</sup> Finn's men are called Frisians (*Fresena cyn*, l. 1093b; *Frysna hwylc*, l. 1104), but are also referred to as *Eotan* (*Eotena treowe*, l. 1072a; *Eotena bearn*, ll. 1088a, 1141a; and *mid Eotenum*, l. 1145a). These *Eotan* are generally identified as the Jutes, a Germanic people who according to Bede were among the original invaders of Britain. Leaving aside problems of identification connected to Bede's account (whether there were just these three tribes invading Britain

37. On the evidence of ll. 1125ff. in *Beowulf* (in the episode) there has been dispute over the exact location of Finnsburh. Some scholars maintain that Finnsburh lies outside Frisia (which seems on the whole unlikely). For two readings of this passage (and an indication of other interpretations), see Malone 1945-46; Fry 1970-71.

38. See Greenfield 1972.

39. On the "Half-Danes," see Klaeber 1950, 130.

and how they related to tribes on the Continent), there is some uncertainty as to the exact affiliation and location of the Continental Jutes. They seem to have lived in the North Sea coastal region, probably somewhere between the Frisians and the Angles.<sup>40</sup> While most commentators see the Frisians and Jutes in the episode as being identical (a view that is supported by a passage in the treaty between Finn and Hengest, where *Eotena bearn* [l. 1088a] and *Fresena cyn* [l. 1093b] seem to be synonymous), some maintain that we have to differentiate between the two. According to R. W. Chambers, the Jutes, living close to the Frisians, are Finn's subjects and the actual cause of the conflict; according to J. R. R. Tolkien there were Jutes on both the Danish and the Frisian side, the latter being exiles living among the Frisians, who pick a quarrel with the Jutes under Hengest in the Danish party.<sup>41</sup> To make matters even more confusing, *Eotena* and *Eotenum* (ll. 1072, 1088, 1141, and 1145) could also be the genitive or, respectively, dative plural of Old English *eoten*, "giant" (Old Norse *jǫtun*). This meaning is favored by Robert Kaske, who translates "giants" in all these passages, maintaining that "giant," meaning "enemy," is a standing epithet for the Frisians.<sup>42</sup>

Apart from enlightening (and confusing) us on the tribal affiliations of the warring parties, the episode in *Beowulf* gives us an idea of the continuation of the narrative. It focuses at one stage, when the burial of the dead is described, on Hildeburh, who loses both brother and son, the one on the Danish, the other on the Frisian side; and at a later stage on Hengest, who is made to break the peace treaty he had contracted with Finn. He is put in a situation of conflict that can eventually only be solved by violence: on the one hand he is obliged to keep to the treaty, and on the other there are the demands for vengeance. When a warrior named as the son of Hunlaf puts a sword on Hengest's lap (ll. 1142–45) and when two of his retainers, Guðlaf and Oslaf, incite him to vengeance, he can no longer hold back and hostilities break out anew. The outcome is the slaughter of Finn and his people in his own *burh*.

The various figures in this drama of loyalty and breach of faith are partly known also from other sources. It emerges from the episode in *Beowulf* that Hnæf and Hildeburh are Hoc's children. According to *Widsith*, Hnæf ruled the Hocingas, the descendants of Hoc; according to Continental sources, Hildegard, Charlemagne's wife, had a grandfather by the name of Nebi, son of Huoching (corresponding to Old English Hnæf, son of Hocing).<sup>43</sup> In *Widsith* also Finn

40. Colgrave and Mynors remark on Bede's Saxons, Angles, and Jutes: "This much-discussed distinction stands up fairly well to modern archaeological evidence, even when we include parties of Frisians, Franks, and others among the earliest settlers" (1969, 22). On the Jutes, see also Chadwick 1924, 100f.

41. See Chambers 1959, 272–76; Tolkien 1982, 60ff., 100ff.

42. See Kaske 1967.

43. Malone 1962, 172–73.

and Sigeferð occur: Finn, the son of Folcwalda (*Finn Folcwalding*), is said to have ruled the Frisians (*Fresna cynne*, l. 27), just as Hnæf ruled the Hocings (l. 29a) and Sigeferð the Secgan (*Sæferð Syggum*, l. 31a). The precise identification of the latter is uncertain, but it seems clear that they lived on the North Sea coast.<sup>44</sup> Whether the Hengest of the *Finnsburh* fragment and episode is the Hengest of Bede's account of the Germanic invasion of Britain has been much discussed. It is a possibility, no more.<sup>45</sup> Finally, the two warriors Ordlaf and Guþlaf, who according to the fragment are among the defenders of the hall's doors, are most probably identical with Oslaf and Guðlaf of the episode, urging Hengest to wreak vengeance on Finn and his men. It cannot be ruled out that this Guðlaf is the same as Guðlaf, father of Garulf. This would support the theory that there were exiled Jutes among the Frisians as well as Jutes among the Danes.

Returning to the fragment, one might wonder whether the whole poem is indeed a lay—or a short narrative poem, to avoid the term "lay" for the time being—and not part of an epic on the scale of *Beowulf* with its 3,182 lines. Two characteristics speak for the shorter narrative poem, its length and its style. Its length can only be guessed. As we learn from *Beowulf*, a narrative song on the legend of Finnsburh could be sung in the course of an evening's entertainment, when other songs and poems were also performed. But could not a poem that devotes forty lines to the first encounter be spun out to "epic proportions"? Heusler, I think, gives the correct answer to this question: "the English fragment describes the fight at Finnsburh in such detail that one might think of book-epic breadth—till the phrase 'They fought for five days, while not a single one fell' omits a long stretch of foreground action and reminds us that the tempo of the lay predominates."<sup>46</sup> Extrapolating from the episode, it is clear that the poem must give more details on the continuing fighting, relating Hnæf's fall as well as that of Hildeburh's and Finn's son. We can furthermore expect sections on the truce, the burial of the dead, and the treaty between Finn and Hengest. And there will of course have to be a passage on the final battle and the conclusion of the feud. Even if we assume "Liedtempo," as Heusler puts it, the poem can hardly have comprised less than about 300 lines.<sup>47</sup> A poem of 300 lines, however, is still—comparatively speaking—a short poem. *Maldon*, which

44. See Chambers 1912, 199; Malone 1962, 204.

45. See Tolkien 1982, 169ff.

46. Heusler 1943, 168.

47. This is, of course, only a rough estimate. The fragment of forty-eight lines neither gives us the beginning of the story nor does it stretch as far as Hnæf's death; the first section must have comprised a minimum of one hundred lines, but was more likely longer. The burial and the treaty are given comparatively much space in the episode; if the episode is a faithful reflection of the basic structure of the poem, this section too should have comprised about one hundred lines at least. Finally, there must have been a concluding section, probably no shorter than one hundred lines, on the renewal of the fighting and the Danish victory.

comprises 325 lines and is also fragmentary, is also classed as a short narrative poem, even if we assume that it was somewhat longer (though most scholars think that not a considerable amount has been lost, perhaps 100 lines at the most).

It is unlikely that the fragment as we have it is part of a longer narrative poem on the scale of *Beowulf* or beyond. Heusler's comment on the jump in line 41 is an important clue. But are there other stylistic characteristics distinguishing the *Finnsburh* fragment from epic? Levin Schücking has noted some syntactic differences between *Beowulf* and the fragment, but they are of a rather specific nature and cannot carry too much weight on their own.<sup>48</sup> Schücking's observations (for instance about the predominance of asyndetic clauses) do, however, tie in with the general characteristics Heusler enumerates: "Common to these lays is a transparent word order, which diverges often from prose, but shows little complexity. In syntax, there is a lot of coordination, and complex sentences seldom comprise more than three layers. Together with this a (free) end-stopped style effects a clear, structurally well-balanced language, which nowhere swells to become long-winded."<sup>49</sup> Heusler also underlines the stylistic difference between lay and epic in an earlier work, where he contrasts the brevity and conciseness of the shorter narrative poem with the "epic breadth" of longer narrative poetry.<sup>50</sup>

Important as these stylistic traits might be, the scanty remains of shorter narrative poetry in England and Germany, and their fragmentary nature, do not allow extensive and detailed syntactic and stylistic analysis with statistically significant results. When looking at the poetic diction, formulaic make-up, and motif structure of these poems, we can notice many correspondences and similarities with longer narrative poems like *Beowulf* or the epics on Christian themes. There is, for instance, a wealth of synonyms for the combatants in the fragment: the nouns *wigend* (ll. 10, 47), *ðegn* (l. 13), *cempa* (l. 14), *hæleþ* (ll. 23, 43), *wreccæ* (l. 25), *eorðbuend* (l. 32), *sigebeorn* (l. 38), *hægsteald* (l. 40), *drihtgesið* (l. 42), and *hyse* (l. 48), as well as the substantivized adjectives *nipa heard* (l. 21) and *cene* (l. 29). *Hnæf* is called *folces hyrde* (l. 46), just like the kings Hygelac and Beowulf in *Beowulf* (ll. 1832a, 1849a, 2644b, 2981). This is, of course, as the Chadwicks have pointed out, an exact parallel to the Homeric *ποιμῆν λαῶν*.<sup>51</sup>

48. See Schücking 1904, 148–49.

49. Heusler 1943, 169.

50. "Where, then, lies the main difference between a 'lay' and an 'epic'? In the first place, undoubtedly, in the style of narration. On the one side a compressed, allusive, jumping style: the 'lay-like terseness.' On the other side a leisurely, lingering, embroidering style: the 'epic breadth.' However distant the eddic *Lay of Atli* might be from the Old High German *Lay of Hildebrand* or from the English ballad *The Battle of Otterburn*, however great the difference between the epics of *Beowulf*, *König Rother*, and the *Nibelunge Nôt*, the general characteristics of these respective genres are found in all lays on the one hand and all epics on the other." Heusler 1905, 21–22.

51. Chadwick and Chadwick 1932–40, 1:22.

Prominent motifs in the *Finnsburh Fragment* are the shining of the weapons and the battle din. Both motifs are widely distributed in Germanic heroic poetry. The collocation "(the floor/building) *dynede*" as in line 30b of the fragment (*buruhðelu dynede*) occurs in *Beowulf* alone three times: *dryhtsele dynede* (l. 767a) "the retainers' hall resounded" (during the fight between Grendel and Beowulf); *healwudu dynede* (l. 1317b) "the hall-wood resounded" (when Beowulf and his men enter Heorot after Grendel's dam had killed Æschere); and *hruse dynede* (l. 2558b) "the ground resounded" (when the dragon approached). A striking parallel to the gleaming of weapons at the beginning of the fragment is the scene in the *Nibelungenlied* when at Etzel's (Attila's) court the Burgundians Hagen and Volker guard the hall at night and recognize an approaching detachment of attackers by their gleaming helmets, while these in turn realize that the hall is guarded by the shining armor of watchmen:

Des nahtes wol enmitten,    ine wéiz iz ê geschach,  
daz Volkêr der küene    einen hêlm schînen sach  
verre üz einer vinster.    die Kriemhilde man  
die wolden an den gesten    schaden gerne hân getân.

Ein der Hiunen recken    vil schiere daz gesach,  
daz diu túr wás behüetet.    wie balde er dô sprach:  
«des wir dâ heten willen,    jan' mag es niht ergân.  
ich sihe den videlære    an der schiltwahte stân.

Der treit úf sînem houbte    einen helm glanz,  
lûter unde herte,    stârc únde ganz.  
ouch lohent im die ringe:    sam daz fiwer tuot.  
bî im stêt ouch Hagene:    des sint die geste wol behuot.»

In the middle of the night—I doubt whether it was earlier—bold Volker saw the gleam of helmet far out in the darkness somewhere. Kriemhild's vassals would dearly have loved to harm the guests! . . .

But one of the Hunnish knights was quick to see that the door was guarded and promptly said: "We cannot carry out our plan. I see the Fiddler standing sentinel there. On his head he wears a flashing helmet, hard, burnished, strong, and unscarred, while his chain-mail darts flames like fire. At his side stands Hagen—the foreigners are well guarded."<sup>52</sup>

In the *Finnsburh* fragment the recognition of the approach of the enemy by their gleaming armor is couched in terms of the so-called "Slavic antithesis."

52. Stanzas 1837, 1840–41. Text from Bartsch and de Boor 1956, 289–90; translation from Hatto 1969, 227–28.



As its name implies, this is a common device in South Slavic epic poetry. A number of heroic songs in the famous collection of Vuk Stefanović Karadžić (1787–1864) begin with a question of the type “Is this so-and-so?” to be answered: “No, it is not so-and-so, but rather such-and-such!” Among the heroic poems on Marko Kraljević, for example, we find at the beginning of “Marko Kraljević and General Vuča”:

Ili grmi, il' se zemlja trese?  
Niti grmi, nit' se zemlja trese,  
već pucaju na gradu topovi,  
na tvrdom gradu Varadinu . . .

Is it thundering or is there an earthquake?  
It is not thundering nor is there an earthquake,  
but rather cannonballs are flying to the citadel,  
to the strong citadel of Varadin . . .<sup>53</sup>

This type of beginning is also found in Russian *byliny*, as well as in non-Slavic traditions. Parallels can be found in the Karelo-Finnish *Kalevala* and also in the Old Irish saga.<sup>54</sup>

From the point of view of plot, the central element of the fragment is the defense of the hall—what Alois Brandl termed “das altheroische Lieblingsmotiv der Saalverteidigung.”<sup>55</sup> Based on this motif, the fragment is in W. P. Ker’s opinion the heroic poem par excellence:

The two great kinds of narrative literature in the Middle Ages [epic and romance] might be distinguished by their favourite incidents and commonplaces of adventure. No kind of adventure is so common or better told in the earlier heroic manner than the defence of a narrow place against odds. Such are the stories of Hamther and Sorli in the hall of Ermanric, of the Niblung kings in the hall of Attila, of the Fight of Finnesburh, of Walter at the Wasgenstein, of Byrhtnoth at Maldon, of Roland in the Pyrenees.<sup>56</sup>

The wider issues of the legend of Finnsburh also involve, however, questions of allegiance and of moral and legal obligations: faith and the breach of faith,

53. Đurić 1977, 227.

54. On the Slavic antithesis, see Kravcov 1985, 266f. For parallels in the *Kalevala*, see Magoun 1960; for parallels in Old Irish, see Henry 1962 (who cites in particular *Togail Buidne Da Derga*) and Sims-Williams 1976–78 (who cites both Irish and Welsh parallels).

55. Brandl 1901–9, 983 (“the favorite old heroic motif of the defense of the hall”). On this motif in *Finnsburh*, see also Fry 1966.

56. Ker [1908] 1957, 5.

peace and vengeance, duties toward bonds of kin and marriage. In this the legend shows some affinity with other Germanic legends, in particular the legend of the Nibelungs.<sup>57</sup>

As mentioned earlier, it is possible that there is an additional tragic conflict present in the fragment: the fight between father and son, should Guþlaf, the defender of the hall, be the father of Garulf the attacker. In this, there would be an obvious link between the legend of Finnsburh and the *Hildebrandslied*. But even without this motif, the two poems share a common style. Apart from poetic diction, they share the boastful and scornful dialogue between opponents—what in Scots is called “flyting.”

The *Hildebrandslied*, like *Finnsburh*, is only fragmentarily transmitted. We have the beginning, but the poem breaks off after the first half of line 68. It is found in a manuscript from the second half of the eighth century, written on the empty spaces on the first and last pages by two scribes at the beginning of the ninth century. The text as we have it has a complex history behind it, which cannot be dealt with here.<sup>58</sup> The story is basically that of the combat between father and son: Hildebrand, who has fled from Odoacar together with his lord Dietrich to the court of Attila, returns with his warriors and is met at the border by his own son Hadubrand, whom he had to leave behind thirty years earlier. When Hadubrand gives his name, Hildebrand reveals his identity and

want her do ar arme . . . wuntane bauga,  
cheisuringu gitan, so imo se der chuning gap,  
Huneo truhtin . . . 35

he then took from his arm . . . wound [coiled] rings,  
made from imperial gold, which the king had given him,  
the lord of the Huns . . . 35

But he is rebuffed by his son, who sees in this gesture the tactics of a wily, deceitful Hun:

Hadubrant gimahalta, Hiltibrantes sunu:  
“mit geru scal man . . . geþa infahan,  
ort widar orte.  
du bist dir, alter Hun, . . . ummet spaher;

57. See Ayres 1917 and Boer 1904.

58. The text is quoted from Schlosser 1970, 264–67. My translation is modeled on Schlosser’s German translation. For a succinct interpretation, see de Boer 1966, 65–71. For a comparative analysis of the motif of the combat between father and son, see Hatto 1973b. For this motif in Ferdowsi’s *Shāhnāma*, see Davidson 1994, 128ff.

spenis mih mit dinem wortun, wili mih dinu speru werpan. 40  
 pist also gialtet man, so du ewin inwit fortos . . ."

Hadubrand spoke, Hildebrand's son:  
 "A man shall receive [such] gifts with a spear,  
 point against point.  
 You are, old Hun, very cunning;  
 you beguile me with your words, you want to throw your spear on me. 40  
 You are such an old man, and yet you always cherish deceit . . ."

For the sake of honor, Hildebrand has no alternative but to take up Hadubrand's defiance:

"welaga nu, waltant got," quad Hiltibrand, "wewurt skihit!  
 ih wallota sumaro enti wintro sehstic ur lante, 50  
 dar man mih eo scerita in folc sceotantero.  
 so man mir at burc enigeru banun ni gifasta.  
 nu scal mih suasat chind suertu hauwan,  
 breton mit sinu billiu — eddo ih imo ti banin werdan . . ."

"Alas, almighty God," said Hildebrand, "fate takes its course!  
 I have lived for sixty summers and winters abroad, 50  
 where I have always been put in the troop of bowmen.  
 As in none of the fortresses I have met my death,  
 my own son shall now slay me with the sword,  
 fell me with his weapon — or I shall become his slayer . . ."

The fragment does not give the end of the fight, but there is little doubt that the latter alternative comes true, that Hildebrand becomes his son's slayer.

Coming back to *Finnsburh* (fragment and episode), we can say in short that there are a number of elements that this poem has in common with other heroic poetry; these concern poetic diction, motifs, narrative style and pace, as well as content (feud and peace treaty, conflict and divided loyalties, and so on). But apart from these parallels, the fragment also shows an affinity to other heroic poetry in its conciseness and concentration on one event. It has a kind of dramatic unity, which would presumably also characterize the poem as a whole had it been preserved. Heusler's idea of the heroic lay was taken up and placed in a comparative context by Arthur Hatto in a paper delivered at the Vuk Karadžić symposium in London in 1987. Hatto revives Heusler's view by defining the heroic lay as a "short dramatic-narrative poem of heroic content transcending all balladry by virtue of its high seriousness and appropriate lan-

guage."<sup>59</sup> In the course of his paper, Hatto compares the Germanic heroic lay, exemplified by the *Atlakviða* and the *Lay of Hildebrand*, with Fulani heroic poems on *Silámaka and Poullóri* and on *Ham-Bodédio*, and with some of the Serbo-Croat heroic songs collected by Vuk. Hatto finds that all of these works "are linked by one salient feature, namely their varieties of the heroic ethos which are *tenser* than average, a salient feature which makes in turn for *brevity* of verbal expression rather than prolixity." He notes further that in the heroic lay this tense ethos "breeds laconism and pregnant 'moments' in which visual gestures condense much action."<sup>60</sup>

Clearly, these moments include the sudden attack on a hall and its defense, visually symbolized by the gleam of armor and weapons and auditorily by the battle noise, and dramatically brought to a head by the flyting of heroes. In a similar vein Sir Maurice Bowra characterizes the shorter heroic poem as a narrative with a single-stranded plot, concentration on the main event, and emphasis placed on a courageous decision in a situation of danger and hopelessness: "The art of the short lay consists largely of creating this sense of crisis and leading rapidly to the single dramatic moment. For this reason much is omitted that might be attractive but would interfere with the direct march of events."<sup>61</sup> It is interesting to note that the decisive moment in the Kazakh poem on Tawke, when Tawke decides to oppose his pursuers and to shoot down Žekebay's horse and finally Žekebay himself, is paralleled by one of the examples Bowra (quoting from a poetic translation by William Blunt) adduces for heroic decisions:

We cannot but admire a hero who turns a threatening situation to victory by taking the boldest possible course in dealing with it. So in *The Stealing of the Mare*, when Abu Zeyd finds himself pursued by a host of enemies, he makes his heroic decision and at once turns and attacks them:

And I turned my mare and sprang, like a lion in the seizing,  
 And I pressed her flank with my heel and sent her flying forward,  
 And I charged home on their ranks, nor thought of wound nor danger,  
 And I smote them with my sword till the air shone with smiting,  
 And I met them once or twice with stark blows homeward driven.<sup>62</sup>

While the main motivating force for heroic action is honor, the actual form the heroic exploit takes in *Tawke-batır* is that of a cattle raid. This, as Radloff's re-

59. Hatto 1994b, 124.

60. *Ibid.*, 124, 125.

61. Bowra 1952, 335.

62. *Ibid.*, 59.

marks quoted above show, is common practice among the nomadic Turks; but it is also a widespread type of heroic action, found not only in nomadic societies the world over, but also in the heroic narratives of medieval Ireland. It is, as A. Hatto points out, one of the recurrent themes of epic poetry: "The existential nature of Old Irish Reavings and Destructions needs no emphasis, for the Cattle-raid is one of the most widespread and fundamental themes of heroic/epic poetry, grounded as it is in economic activity."<sup>63</sup>

It is certainly true that even similar poems exhibit a surprising variety: *Finnsburh* is quite distinct from the *Hildebrandslied* and both differ from Old Norse heroic poems like the *Atlakviða* or the *Hamðismál*. There is no room for purism and dogmatism in genre studies. Individual traditions (and singers, one might add) develop their own dynamism. While flyting, for instance, is an important element of this kind of poetry, it can be elaborated quite differently in different traditions. An agonistic element is typical of much epic poetry, whether Homeric, Germanic, or of other traditions.<sup>64</sup> In Old Norse, the genre (or sub-genre) of the *senna* ("jibing, taunting speech") is represented by a number of well-known poems, such as, for instance, *Locasenna* in the Elder Edda. It has been shown that the *senna* is characterized by a number of generic conventions, such as mutual identification of the antagonists, their boastful self-characterization, and their scornful depreciation of the enemy.<sup>65</sup> In the *Finnsburh Fragment* there is barely an intimation of it in Guðere's response to Garulf, while in the *Hildebrandslied* (as incidentally also in the *Battle of Maldon*) it plays a pivotal role in the unfolding of the story.<sup>66</sup> In *Beowulf* the flyting between Unferth and Beowulf is expanded into an episode ("digression") on its own.<sup>67</sup> In *Tawke-batır* the flyting between the hero and his antagonist is transferred to a verbal contest between man and woman, in other words it has been further developed under the influence of the native genre of *aytis*. But despite these variations, the basic narrative conciseness and singleness of the shorter heroic narrative, its dramatic unity and highlighting of a single event, give these poems a kind of generic unity, which is further increased by the traditionality of content and hence the nearness of these poems to the extended heroic narrative poem, the epic proper. There is no reason to deny this type of poetry a name; "short heroic narrative poem" might do, but so might German *Heldenlied* or—in English translation—"heroic lay."

63. Hatto 1989, 173.

64. For a comparison between flyting in the Homeric poems and in Old English, see Parks 1990.

65. See Harris 1979.

66. On flyting in *Maldon* and the *Hildebrandslied*, see Elliott 1962; Anderson 1970.

67. The Unferth episode has been much discussed; on the Germanic flyting conventions on which this episode is based, see Clover 1980.

## CHAPTER FOUR

## Heroic Epic and Tribal Roots

Sing ich dien liuten mîniu liet,  
sô wil der êrste daz  
wie Dieterîch von Berne schiet.  
der ander, wâ künc Ruother saz,  
der dritte wil der Riuzen sturm, sô wil der vierde Ekhartes nôt,  
der fünfte wen Kriemhilt verriet . . .

When I sing my songs to the people,  
Then the first wants to hear  
How Dietrich parted from Berne.  
The second wants to hear where King Rother lived and reigned,  
The third wants to hear the battle of the Riuzen, the fourth Ekhart's distress,  
The fifth who was betrayed by Kriemhild . . .

This is the beginning of a well-known *Spruch* of the Middle High German poet "Der Marner," a *clericus vagans* of the thirteenth century (c. 1230–c. 1280).<sup>1</sup> The term *Spruch* (or *Sangspruch*) denotes basically a poem in a topical, didactic, political, or moralizing strain, which is definitely not a love lyric, whether of a courtly or more popular nature.<sup>2</sup> In this poem the Marner provides us with one of the best Middle High German indications of the repertoire of a public singer and narrator. He complains that when he sings his *liet*,<sup>3</sup>

1. For the complete *Spruch* in the standard reading, see Strauch 1965, 124–25; for a more recent critical text, see Haustein 1995, 222, and his discussion, 222–26. For basic information on the Marner, see Wachinger 1987; compare also Wachinger 1985.

2. There is some controversy on the meaning of this term; for a recent general discussion of the Middle High German *Spruch* (in the sense of *Sangspruch*, i.e., sung poetry), see Tervooren 1995.

3. Middle High German *liet* has a number of meanings, such as "stanzaic poem," "song," "didactic poem," and "epic."

his listeners have very different wishes: some want to hear narrative poetry related to the cycle of Dietrich (l. 3), the legend of the Nibelungs (ll. 5, 6) or to the minstrel epic *König Rother* (l. 4). Others, he says later in the poem, want to hear some pretty love lyric, and again others are bored by all this or do not know what they want.

It is not entirely clear to which poems precisely (and in which form) the Marner is referring, and whether all the poems mentioned are part of his repertoire. It is possible that the Marner does not have complete epics in mind but rather individual episodes, or at any rate shorter narrative units, which might have been performed in the course of an evening.<sup>4</sup> This would tally with a number of oral traditions where epics are only rarely performed in their entirety. While it is possible that according to the Marner's poem the audience wishes to hear individual episodes rather than complete epics, it seems clear that we are dealing here with a singer listing his repertoire. This has, however, been contested by Burghart Wachinger, who contends that the Marner's intention is not to list his repertoire but to criticize the audience's taste.<sup>5</sup> Although the Marner complains that the audience is difficult to please, this does not mean that he was unable to do so. It seems strange that a singer like the Marner would list these poems if it was unlikely that a *Spruchdichter* like himself would ever perform heroic epics.<sup>6</sup>

Descriptions of minstrels' performances and catalogues of works performed at feasts of various sorts are repeatedly found in medieval texts. One of the earliest works explicitly describing the singing of poetry is the Old English *Beowulf*. The *Lay of Finnsburh* was recited by King Hrothgar's *scop* during the banquet following Beowulf's victory over Grendel. Earlier in the epic (ll. 867ff.) a retainer of the king (*cyninges þegn*), possibly the same singer, composed a poem in honor of Beowulf, in which he compared the Geatish hero to Sigemund, the dragon slayer.<sup>7</sup> Even earlier, Grendel's wrath was incited by the sound of the harp (*hearpan sweg*) in Heorot and the "clear song of the *scop*" (*swutol sang scopes*), who was described as singing a song about the Creation (ll. 86ff.). When Beowulf returns home, he reports to King Hygelac on the singing in the hall,

4. Some scholars are of the opinion that as the Marner is talking about singing, he cannot be referring to epics (which are thought to be too long and bookish for singing) but rather to cantilena-like pre-forms of epic. In view of the widespread singing of epics in the world's oral tradition, such an opinion seems to me obsolete. I agree with Joachim Heinzle, who maintains the singability of Middle High German (popular) epic poetry; see Heinzle 1978, 72ff. See also Curschmann 1986.

5. Wachinger 1985, 80.

6. See Hausteil 1995, 224.

7. Sigemund's dragon fight might be identical with that of his son Sigurðr in Old Norse or Siegfried in Middle High German legend; see Hoops 1932, 108–11; Kläber 1950, 159–61. For a skeptical view of the praise poem (which I do not share), see Eliason 1952; see also Opland 1976; Campbell 1971b, 289–90.

where even the old Danish king himself recited poetry, possibly of an elegiac character (ll. 2105–14). The term for poetry used in these passages is *gidd*, a genre term which in Old English is similarly underdifferentiated as *dastan* is in the Turkic languages. It comprises narrative poetry of a heroic kind (such as the *Lay of Finnsburh*), praise poetry (such as the praise poem about Beowulf), elegiac poetry, but also poems like the *metra* in the Old English translation of Boethius's *De consolazione philosophiae*.<sup>8</sup> While there is clearly a relationship between heroic feat and poetic praise on the one hand, and between "joy in the hall" (*dream*) and heroic song on the other, the actual performance of oral poetry does not seem to follow a strict act sequence in the way that oral epics in Turkic traditions are preceded by shorter didactic or historical poems.<sup>9</sup>

A closer parallel to the sequencing typical of Turkic traditions is probably found in ancient Greece. The so-called Homeric Hymns—hymns in hexameters about various gods (Dionysus, Demeter, Apollo, Hermes, Aphrodite, and others)—were called *prooimía* in classical antiquity (for instance by Thucydides), because they (or at least some of them) were performed by the rhapsodes as introductions to their recital of the epic. It is to be assumed that this "prelude to epic" fulfilled a basically ritual function in the framework of a public festival or a religious feast:

Thucydides speaks of the great Delic festival (3.104) and in so doing furnishes us with the first mention of one of these [Homeric] hymns, which he calls *prooimion Apollōnos*. This designation of the hymns as *prooimía* ("pre-songs") is also found elsewhere, and the fact that they often close with a reference to another song is in accordance with this (as in the Hymn to Demeter with its repeated formula). Wolf, in his *Prolegomena ad Homerum*, has probably drawn the right conclusion, namely that these hymns were used by the rhapsodes as a prelude to their epic recitations.<sup>10</sup>

As pointed out in chapter 1, Turkic singers also preface the epic by one or more shorter songs. One of the genres occurring in this context is the *tolgaw*. A representative of this genre is also found in the repertoire of the Karakalpak singer Žumabay-žiraw Bazarov, whose "autobiography" was quoted earlier.<sup>11</sup> As will be argued below, this *tolgaw* not only precedes the epic in the act sequence of the performance, but also prefaces the epic on a deeper level of meaning.

8. On the various senses of Old English *gidd*, with further bibliographical references, see Reichl 1992b.

9. Icelandic *rímur*, however, are prefaced by *mansöngur*. I am grateful to Joseph Harris for bringing this Germanic parallel to my attention.

10. Lesky 1971, 107. Compare also Schmid and Stählin 1929, 231–46; for a discussion of the Homeric Hymns as *prooimía* in the context of performance, see also Nagy 1990, 353ff., and Foley 1995, 143ff.

11. For the introductory songs, see above, p. 40–43; for Žumabay's autobiography, see pp. 37–38.



Prelude to Epic: *Ormanbet-biy*

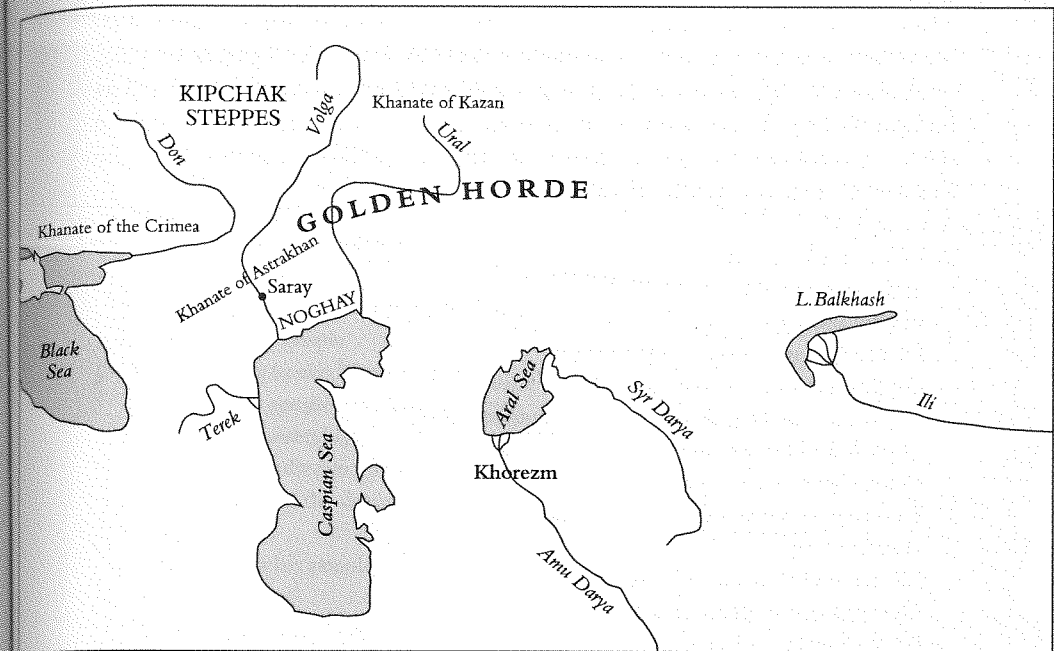
The term *tolgaw* is a derivation from *tolga-*, a verb found in various Turkic languages. The basic meaning of Kazakh, Kirghiz, Uzbek, Uighur *tolga-*, Turkish *dola-*, is “to turn, wind (something)”; the reflexive verb *tolgan-*, “to turn oneself,” is already found in Old Turkic and has in a number of Turkic languages the derived meaning “to turn over in thought, to ponder, to think.” It is unclear whether the semantic development of *tolgaw* as a type of song takes its origin from the turning of the body of the singer (in trance?), or the “turning” of words and melody, or possibly from the derived meaning “ponder.”<sup>12</sup> As a genre term, *tolgaw* is only found in Kazakh, Karakalpak, and Noghay. In Kazakh it designates a meditative poem, not unlike the *terme*, and also a historical poem; in Karakalpak it is now mainly used for a type of historical poem, in particular the poem *Ormanbet-biy*.<sup>13</sup> The verbal noun *tolgoo* (which corresponds morphologically to *tolgaw*) exists also in Kirghiz, where it means the turning of an object, like the peg of an instrument, and is used for different types of melodies. There seems to be an old connection between “turning,” “thinking,” and “singing” in this word.<sup>14</sup>

The historical background to the *tolgaw* of *Ormanbet-biy* is the time of the Noghay Horde. This horde or tribal confederation emerged from the Golden Horde at the end of the fourteenth century (see below, p. 117–18). Its center was in the basin of the Volga and Ural Rivers north of the Caspian Sea (see map 4), and at that time the Karakalpak tribes (or rather the tribes that later contributed to the formation of the Karakalpaks as an ethnic entity) were part of it. In the sixteenth century the Noghay Khanate was split up and finally destroyed by the Western Mongols (or Oirat); they had been driven from their home in Mongolia by the Eastern Mongols, who had expanded their realm to the west. The Oirat—called Kalmuck by the Turkic peoples—crossed the Kazakh steppes and journeyed north of the Aral Sea and the Caspian Sea to present-day Kalmuckia, where they founded a powerful nomadic realm. The bloodshed caused by this migration was horrendous; it also led to the annihila-

12. On the etymology, see Räsänen 1969, 486 (s.v. *tolga-*); Abylkasimov 1984, 10; Mämbetov 1995, 3.

13. On the Kazakh genre see Abylkasimov 1984; on the Karakalpak *tolgaw* see Maqsetov and Täžimuratov 1979, 96–102; Ayımbetov 1988, 57–67; Mämbetov 1995. The latter includes in his collection of *tolgaws* also nonhistorical poems of the *näsıyhat* type (advice poetry). In Noghay, a language closely related to Karakalpak, the verb *tolga-* means, as in Karakalpak, “to sing in a recitative”; *tolgaw saz* denotes a melody of a melancholy character (as is typical of the *tolgaw*); cf. Baskakov and Kalmykova 1963, 356, s.v. *tolgaw* II.

14. See Judaxin 1985, 2:247, s.v. *tolgoo*. In Karakalpak *tolga-* only means “to sing in the way a *tolgaw* is sung”; see Esemuratova et al. 1982–92, 4:335, s.v. *tolgaw* II f. It is interesting to note that in the following poem both the verb *tolga-* and the noun *tolgaw* appear, both obviously meaning “recite, recitation” and “advise, advice.”



Map 4. The Golden Horde and Its Successors

tion of the Noghay in 1593. One of the rulers (*mirza*) of the Noghay in the second half of the sixteenth century was Ormanbet-biy, after whom the *tolgaw* is named.<sup>15</sup> The title *biy* has different denotations. W. Radloff writes at the end of the nineteenth century that the Kazakhs call their lay magistrates *biy*, persons who possess “riches, intelligence, a sense of justice, and numerous relatives”; in the khanate of Khiva the *biy* was one of the khan’s higher officials, whose duty and privilege it was to stand at the khan’s right hand in battle.<sup>16</sup>

I have recorded three versions of this *tolgaw* from Žumabay-žiraw; in the following the 1994 version is translated. The poem is sung to basically one melody, repeated (with slight variations) at every line. This melody is called the *tolgaw* melody and is also used by the singer for the performance of epic.<sup>17</sup> The singing

15. On the historical background, see Grousset 1952, 599–602; Hambly et al. 1969, 144–45; Kamalov and Qoščanov 1993, 123–24; Mämbetov 1993, 86–91. See also Kalmykov, Kerejtov, and Sikaliyev 1988, 24ff. This episode in the history of the Karakalpaks has also been treated in a historical novel by Kamal Mämbetov, *Posqan el* [The annihilated people] (Mämbetov 1988, 502ff.).

16. Radloff 1893, 1:513; Vámbéry 1865, 268. Baskakov defines *biy* in his Karakalpak–Russian dictionary as “head of a small tribal subdivision, who is subordinated to the *ataliq* in the former khandom of Khiva” (Baskakov 1958, 103, s.v. *biy*).

17. On Žumabay-žiraw’s musical style (with musical transcriptions), see my chapter in Reichl 2000. See also the brief remarks on the music of epic in the conclusion, below.

is interrupted by short pauses (symbolized by two strokes [//] in the text), during which he plays one or more melodic phrases on the *qobiz*. Apart from song, symbolized by [S], there are also passages performed in a kind of recitative, symbolized by [R]. These passages are punctuated by short chords played on the *qobiz*, symbolized by single strokes in the following translation (for the Karakalpak text and further textual notes, see appendix 2).

[S] In the days long passed,  
 In the days of yore,  
 In Oyił and Qiyil,  
 On the high mountains of Qumkent,<sup>18</sup>  
 On the shores of the Volga and the Ural River, 5  
 There lived the Noghay people of the thousand clans,<sup>19</sup>  
 There lived Ormanbet-biy. //  
 When Ormanbet-biy died,  
 The Noghay people of the thousand clans broke up.  
 Ormanbet-biy 10  
 Left no son behind, he left only daughters behind.  
 The orphaned Noghay started to migrate. //  
 All the Noghay gathered.  
 Ormanbet-biy  
 Left three daughters of equal character behind. 15  
 The youngest of the three daughters,  
 The claw of a bird of prey,  
 Was called Sariša-ayim,  
 The claw of a bird of prey.<sup>20</sup> //

18. The River Qiyil (Russian Kyil) flows into the River Oyił (Uil) about 200 km southwest of Aqtöbe (Aktjubinsk) and 40 km north of the town of Oyił (Uil) in northwestern Kazakhstan (northeast of the Caspian Sea and northwest of the Aral Sea). Qumkent, meaning "desert place," is the name of a town in the Šimkent (Čimkent) region of Kazakhstan (in southern Kazakhstan, about 160 km north of Šimkent; Šimkent is about 100 km north of Tashkent); it must refer to a different place here, probably in the region of the Qiyil and Oyił; according to the singer, Qumkent is in the Ukraine. Qumkent in Kazakhstan lies in a mountainous area; the region designated by the rivers Qiyil, Oyił, Ural, and Volga (i.e., the Caspian Depression north of the Caspian Sea) is, of course, flat. According to the Kazakh version of *Edige* summarized below, there is also a clearly fictitious town of Qumkent on the Nile. There are no direct variants of lines 3–4 in other versions; one version speaks, however, of high mountains, which the Noghay have to cross on their migration: "Artiw-artiw tawlardan, / Asa kösti köp Noğay, / Edil menen Žayıqtan, / Žabila kösti köp Noğay" (ll. 1–4). ("Over the mountains with the mountain passes / Marched many Noghay, / Away from the Volga and the Ural River / Marched many Noghay in bands"). Ayımbetov 1988, 61; cf. also l. 50.

19. The singer has *miñ san Noğay*, "the Noghay of the thousand clans (tribes)," while all other versions speak of *on san Noğay*, "the Noghay of the ten tribes." See also l. 35, "the Noghay of the thousand yurts."

20. On the name "Sariša" and the possible significance of calling her "claw of a bird of prey," see below, p. 114.

The youngest daughter of that saintly man said:<sup>21</sup> 20  
 —My people of a thousand clans were to migrate,  
 [R] The Qara [Black] Noghay to disperse;  
 They had all come together— /  
 "Come closer, my people!"  
 The girl called them together and asked them to listen. / 25  
 She was the eye of the true prophet,  
 She was [his strong] arm for the present. /  
 She called them together and said: "My people, come!" /  
 "Ask for advice and hear the answer!" she said. /  
 She advised her people 30  
 [S] And said: "Orphaned Noghay, migrate!" //  
 The orphaned people would be dispersed.  
 In front of the assembly,  
 When she had called her people together,  
 To the Noghay of the thousand yurts, 35  
 That lady Sariša  
 Gave advice to her people.  
 Sariša spoke:<sup>22</sup> //  
 "O my Noghay, my Noghay!  
 When God has withdrawn his grace, 40  
 What was easy for you has become bad.  
 You see me without strength.  
 My tears were not accepted by God."  
 [In order to give] advice and counsel  
 She called her people together. 45  
 "If you now ask for advice,  
 I will tell you what lies ahead of you,  
 I will prophesy what lies ahead of you. //  
 After your dispersion, my people, you will be further dispersed,  
 You will cross the high mountain pass. 50  
 You will reach the River Džayxun [Amu Darya], my people,  
 The white river, flowing without pity.  
 You will bend down and drink the water,  
 You will bow down and harvest the wheat. //  
 Your mats will be made of rags, 55  
 Your houses will be made of tamarisk wood.  
 From common people, who don't know their forebears,

21. The Karakalpak text has *waliy*, which denotes a holy man with the gift of foreseeing the future; because of her father, Sariša is herself endowed with prophetic gifts. See l. 26, where she is described as "the eye of the true prophet."

22. The verb for "advise" is *tolğa-*; the verb is also found in ll. 48, 173, and 174.

From common people will be your *biys*.  
 From the black Sart,<sup>23</sup> who doesn't know his descent,  
 From the Sart will be your *biys*. 60  
 When I tell you what lies before you:  
 Know that your brains will boil like cauldrons,  
 Your brains will boil like cauldrons. //  
 Humiliating your own elder brother,  
 In the knowledge that the evil Sart is strong, 65  
 You will suffer the might of the Sart.  
 Don't you know this, my people?  
 Your *häkim* [district ruler] will be Oyazbay.<sup>24</sup>  
 The yearly tax will be five times the amount,  
 When he will wreak fivefold destruction on your house, 70  
 It will fall on your back like frost,  
 It will fall on your back like frost. //  
 Putting tax on your house,  
 He will double it and take one portion,  
 He will say, 'The house is my money,' and take one portion, 75  
 He will say, 'It is what I have dug out,' and take five portions.  
 In one year he will thus wreak fivefold destruction.  
 After he has wreaked fivefold destruction, what will remain for you?  
 After he has wreaked fivefold destruction, what will remain for you? //  
 Although you can, like a *häkim*, use your own discretion, 80  
 If you have an only daughter,  
 You will give her to the Sart,  
 You will recognize the Sart as bridegroom.  
 The bridegroom's place will be narrow.  
 They will stretch a rope on your land [to divide it], 85  
 Your portion of land will dry out.  
 For your one milch goat  
 There will be no pastureland, my people.  
 It will be your lot to tie up the goat and milk it. //  
 You will not be left in peace, Noghay people, 90  
 But you will migrate away from here, dispersed.  
 You will raise your feet with even step.  
 With your house, your yurt opened up,  
 With dust on the sole of your shoe,

23. On the Sarts, see below, p. 112.

24. Oyazbay is according to the singer a proper name; it consists of *oyaz*, an obsolete term for the head of a district (Russian *uezdnyj načal'nik*), and the name element *bay* (lit. "rich man").

You will go away and call your pasture 95  
 This place, trodden down from beginning to end  
 And left behind by everybody. //  
 You will always dig irrigation canals,  
 You will never see light.  
 Crying, crying, my Noghay people, 100  
 You will migrate away from here, dispersed.  
 You will graze your cattle on the river, my people,  
 And you will again move further on. //  
 You will experience what you have never experienced.  
 With the man of no noble lineage, who doesn't know his forebears, 105  
 You will live as close neighbor.  
 Isn't that what you will do, my people?  
 Your *ulama* [higher clergy] will have no honor,  
 The bays no generosity,  
 The girls no life. 110  
 You will experience a lifeless people. //  
 Isn't that what you will see, my people?  
 The [young men's] blue belt will have  
 Two cut-off ends," she said.<sup>25</sup>  
 "The young man, when walking about, 115  
 Will have no belt round his waist.  
 He will be walking around in his house  
 And then lie down sprawling,  
 With his shoulder on a pillow," she said. //  
 "You will harvest the hay [rushes] without band. 120  
 Doesn't your daughter walk around without kerchief?  
 Your daughter-in-law, who came the day before,  
 Will say: 'Did you see me, father-in-law,  
 Father-in-law?' your luckless one,  
 And she will go barefoot, bareheaded, 125  
 Past you without greeting. //  
 To whom will you have given your daughter in marriage?  
 When you go and visit her husband,  
 Your only [grand-]son born of your daughter,  
 God's creature given you, 130  
 Will run toward you  
 And say, 'My uncle is coming!'

25. According to the singer's explanation, the wearing of belts cut off (*tuyiq*) at their two ends (*eki baši*) is a sign of decadence.

- When he throws his arms around your neck,  
Your chest will be too small for your joy,  
And you will take him and say, 'My nephew.'
- [R] You will take him and love him, 135  
You will love him and burn with love,  
[S] You will lean your back on the wall. //  
My words will always be recited.  
Will there be no change in language?<sup>26</sup> 140  
From the Karakalpak will come a *naqira* player,  
From the Kazakh will come a *sirnay* player,  
A player of *dap*, *baraban*, and *dayra*  
Will come from the Kazakh," she said.<sup>27</sup> //  
"The meaning of the words 145  
'From the Kazakh will come a *sirnay* player' is:  
That the ship of the Noghay living here  
[R] Is made of oak wood.  
What is the meaning of 'ship'? /  
There will be a ship 150  
[S] With two curved prows," she said. //  
"Fitting for that ship  
Was Mönke-biy,<sup>28</sup> who has died before.  
[R] My people of a thousand clans,  
There will be plenty of fish," she said. 155  
"Intending to catch these fish  
[S] There will arise a people," she said. //  
["On this people 157a  
Tax will be levied," she said.] 157b  
"A year's twelve-monthly earnings  
Will be given away," she said.  
[R] "When the father rises, the son speaks,  
When her mother rises, the daughter speaks. / 160  
From her mother the daughter  
Will be well instructed," she said. /  
The meaning of 'well instructed' is:  
When she reaches her fifteenth year, / 165  
She will say to the young man, walking in the street:

26. Translation according to the singer's commentary; lit.: "a sign in language."

27. The *naqira* is a kind of drum; the *sirnay* is a kind of oboe; *dap*, *baraban*, and *dayra* are also types of drum.

28. On Mönke-biy, see below, pp. 137-38.

- 'This is my wish,'  
And butting once like a bull<sup>29</sup>  
She will herself do the cooking," she said. //  
Ormanbet's youngest daughter, 170  
The claw of a bird of prey,  
Prophesied to the Noghay of a thousand clans  
What lay before them.  
This was her well-spoken advice (*tolgaw*),  
This was her well-spoken advice (*tolgaw*). // 175

This is a complex poem. Linguistically, there are a number of cruxes in the text that would merit discussion. Philologically, one would like to compare the various edited and recorded versions of this *tolgaw* with one another and attempt some kind of textual criticism, even if the notion of a critical text as entertained by philologists must be viewed with suspicion when it comes to oral poems (see appendix 2). Historically, a number of points are far from clear in this poem; a careful sifting of historical sources and documents would be needed to clarify the historical background to this *tolgaw*. The question that concerns us here, however, is neither linguistic, philological, nor historical; it is literary, and simply amounts to this: What sort of poem is this? Is it meant to be some kind of historical poem, sketching an episode in the history of the Karakalpak people? Or is the historical garb merely secondary and does the "meaning" of the poem lie in a different direction?

Although the interpretation of the *tolgaw* as solely a historical song misses, in my opinion, the point of the poem, the historical dimension of the poem is not irrelevant. The *tolgaw* is centered on a particular situation in the history of the Noghay tribal confederation, namely their dispersion in the wake of the Mongol invasion. Because of the death of their leader Ormanbet-biy and the lack of a powerful khan, the Noghay are in a position of weakness, which makes their migration all the more humiliating and painful. It is to be noted that the poem is at first about the Noghay, but as Sariša's speech continues, it becomes clear that she is foreseeing the future of the Karakalpaks. The ethnogenesis of the Karakalpaks is complex. It is generally accepted that their name means "black hat" (*qara qalpaq*), and it is possible (but by no means incontestable) that the term *černye klobuki*, "black hats," which occurs in Russian chronicles of the

29. This passage describes also the loss of traditions; "well instructed" is quite obviously meant ironically: when the father stands up to talk, the son does not speak; when the mother stands up to talk, the daughter does not speak; and the girl certainly does not accost a young man in the street and utter her wishes.



twelfth century, refers to this people.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, the name *qara bōrkli* ("black caps") for one of the Kipchak tribes of the Golden Horde might designate the Karakalpaks. The presence of the Karakalpaks in Central Asia is first recorded for the seventeenth century, and it is only at the end of the sixteenth century that the formation of the Karakalpaks as an independent ethnic group reached its final stage. Hence the poem is about the ethnogenesis of the Karakalpaks: their breaking loose from the Noghay tribal confederation, and their (forced) migration to the Amu Darya and later, in the eighteenth century, to the Syr Darya and the shores of the Aral Sea.<sup>31</sup>

The formation of the Karakalpaks as a people is seen as the result of expulsion and migration, and hence the feeling of ethnic identity is intimately linked to a view of their existence as a life in foreign parts. This entails a loss of traditions and tribal customs and the need to live under the rule of others. In the poem the nomadic Karakalpak is contrasted with the sedentary Sart, who will force the nomad to live in huts rather than yurts and to work on the land rather than graze his cattle, and who will rob him of his earnings by taking an exorbitant tax. Even worse, honor and dignity will disappear through intermarriage with "the black Sart, who doesn't know his descent," because he is not able—like any self-respecting Karakalpak—to name at least seven generations of his forefathers. "Sart" is a somewhat ambiguous word. In the nineteenth century it was often used indiscriminately for the sedentary inhabitants of what is today Uzbekistan. According to H. Vámbéry, the Persians of Khiva, who have adopted the Uzbek language, are called "Sart," a term that was generally employed for the Uzbek-speaking Iranians of Central Asia, and by extension for the settled as distinct from the nomadic Uzbeks.<sup>32</sup> Therefore the contrast here is between the world of the nomad and that of the city dweller, a contrast still deep-seated in the self-estimation of the Karakalpaks of today, despite the (enforced) loss of nomadism in an increasingly industrialized society.

The poem is about the sorrowful migration and dispersion of a people. The geographical context for this migration is only lightly sketched: from the Volga and Ural Rivers their journey will be eastward, over high mountains, to the banks of the Amu Darya, which is described as "the white river without pity."

30. See Menges 1947, 5; Muminov et al. 1974, 1: 95ff.; see also Vasmer 1953–58, 1: 571, s. v. *klobúk*. The question has been discussed recently by Peter Golden, who came to the conclusion that the term *černye klobuki* "should, perhaps, be viewed initially not as an ethnonym, but as a social term. Their name, the 'black hats' (whether real or figurative), was a symbol of their subordination to the princes of Kiev" (1996, 107).

31. On the history of the Karakalpaks in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Muminov et al. 1974, 1: 102ff.; Kamalov and Qoščanov 1993, 125ff. For a general discussion of ethnogenesis in Central Asia, also in the light of oral and written traditions, see Heissig 1985.

32. See Vámbéry 1867, 5 n. 2; von Gabain 1945, 6; Magrufov 1981, 2:25, s.v. *sart*.

The new physical surroundings are hostile and bring about a change of lifestyle. Instead of the felt yurt, there will be the wooden house; instead of the felt carpet, the mat made of rags (and rushes). Instead of rich pastures, there will be desert, and instead of a life of roaming over the steppes and grazing one's livestock there will be a life of growing wheat, digging irrigation canals, and catching fish. And there will be the additional burden of heavy and unjust taxes. But what is worse than the hardships of physical existence is the loss of dignity in a foreign environment. The "Sart" not only oppresses the descendants of the Noghay, he also marries their daughters. And with intermarriage the old code of honor disappears: no decent clothing, no welcoming, no greeting, no silence in front of one's parents, no reticence toward the other sex. The Karakalpaks have definitely entered the Iron Age, in Ted Hughes' paraphrase of Ovid:

Modesty,  
Loyalty,  
Truth,  
Go up like a mist—a morning sigh off a graveyard.<sup>33</sup>

This message is set in a historical framework: Ormanbet-biy has died; his only descendants are three daughters; one of them, Sariša, calls the people ("my Noghay") together to tell them what is in store for them. As we have the poem, it is basically a prophecy. It is surprisingly similar to Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Prophetiae Merlini*, a series of prophecies incorporated (as book 7) into his *History of the Kings of Britain*. King Vortigern sees a battle between a red and a white dragon and asks Merlin what this means:

Merlin immediately burst into tears. He went into a prophetic trance and then spoke as follows:

"Alas for the Red Dragon, for its end is near. Its cavernous dens shall be occupied by the White Dragon, which stands for the Saxons whom you have invited over. The Red Dragon represents the people of Britain, who will be overrun by the White One: for Britain's mountains and valleys shall be levelled, and the streams in its valleys shall run with blood.

"The cult of religion shall be destroyed completely and the ruin of the churches shall be clear for all to see.

"The race that is oppressed shall prevail in the end, for it will resist the savagery of the invaders. . . ."<sup>34</sup>

33. Hughes 1997, 11. Similar sentiments, cast in a Muslim framework, are expressed in one of the Kazakh poems edited and translated by Radloff (1870, 802–13 [translation volume]).

34. Quoted from the Penguin translation by Lewis Thorpe (1966, 171). On this text and more generally on prophecy in medieval England, see Taylor 1911.

There is a similar elegiac tone in both prophecies, a lament on the decay of cultural values under barbarous oppression, but also a similar tendency to use an allegorical mode (the boat with two curved prows and the musicians in the Karakalpak poem).<sup>35</sup> The speakers, too, are more alike than one might suppose. Of course, Sariša is not a magician like Merlin, but what is she? According to the poem, she is the "arm" of her father, a *wāliy*, that is, a saint, a prophet. She might even be a shaman. Her name might originally mean "buzzard," and the epithet "claw of a bird of prey" could reflect the fact that a metal representation of the claw of a raptor is regularly attached to a shaman's costume.<sup>36</sup> Although the name "Sariša" has no meaning in contemporary Karakalpak, there is good reason to connect it with cognate words in other Turkic languages, meaning either "bird of prey" (in particular "buzzard") or some other bird (such as "golden oriole" in Karachay-Balkar).<sup>37</sup> Hence Sariša is a supernaturally inspired prophetess, who foresees a grim future for her people; her words will always be repeated among her and her compatriots' descendants, even if these words will change with time (ll. 139–40). Sariša's prophecy is therefore a legacy to the Karakalpak people, to be cherished and further handed down.

This is the key to the understanding of the poem. The *tolgaw* of Ormanbet-biy is a historical poem, but history is used for a purpose. The historical reflection about the formation and dispersion of the Karakalpaks sets the tribal "we" off from the forces that threaten the preservation of ethnic tradition and identity. Hence, in its focusing on this particular point in the history of the Karakalpak people, the poem is not only a reminder of their past but more importantly an integrative act: the listeners are invited to share in their cultural and tribal identity, an identity that is permanently endangered in a hostile environment. It is certainly not accidental that this *tolgaw* is also found among those Karakalpaks who live in small pockets in southern Uzbekistan.<sup>38</sup> It is also significant that some of the heroic epic poetry found among the Karakalpaks is centered on heroes belonging to the period of the Noghay Horde: this is the "heroic age" of the Karakalpaks (as well as some other Central Asian Turkic

35. It is interesting to note that according to this version the ethnogenesis of the Karakalpaks is closely linked to that of the Kazakhs. They both have the same origin: they come from the oaken ship of the Noghay with *two* curved prows. They share Mōñke-biy as their forefather, and they will both bring forth players of various drums and of the *şirnay*, a kind of oboe (ll. 141 ff.).

36. This was suggested to me by Arthur Hatto (in a letter of November 12, 1995), who pointed to Tatar *sariča*, "kind of buzzard," for the etymology of the name and to the shaman's costume with its metal bird claws; on the latter, see also Hatto 1994a.

37. Cf. Kirghiz *žaman sarī*, "kite; buzzard"; Uzbek *sār*, "kite; buzzard"; Tuvinian *sarī*, "buzzard"; Tatar *sariča*, *sarič*, "buzzard". The word *saryč*, "buzzard," in Russian is a Turkic loanword; cf. Vasmer 1953–58, 2:582, s.v. *saryč*.

38. See Tolstova 1961.

peoples, in particular the Kazakhs), the time before disintegration and dispersion. The *tolgaw* is therefore not only a prelude to epic in the temporal sense, as one of the first elements of the act sequence, but also a prelude to epic in the sense that it anticipates one of the main functions of the heroic epic: the celebration of tribal history.

### The Epic of Edige and the Golden Horde

According to Karakalpak tradition, Ormanbet-biy is a descendant of Edige, an important figure in the history of Central Asia. He has a prominent place in historical documents relating to the Golden Horde and their relationship, mostly hostile, to their neighbors. He is also the protagonist of a rich oral tradition: epics in Karakalpak, Kazakh, Noghay, Tatar, as well as tales in Uzbek and other Turkic languages. While Ormanbet-biy is the symbol of the breakup of the Noghay Horde and the coming into being of subsequent ethnic groups like the Karakalpaks, Edige is the symbol of a powerful past within the tribal confederation of the Golden Horde. The epic of *Edige* is therefore shared by a number of Turkic peoples who have their roots in the Golden Horde.

The oldest transmitted version of *Edige* is a Kazakh text, which was written down in 1841 by the Kazakh prince and scholar Šoqan Šiñgīsulī Wālixanov (Čokan Valixanov, 1835–65) from the recitation of a singer by the name of Žumagul (or Žamanqul). The text was first published in Russian translation in 1904 by N. I. Veselovskij and edited (in the Arabic script) in the following year by P. M. Melioranskij; an edition in Cyrillic has come out only recently.<sup>39</sup> Before Wālixanov, there appeared only a prose summary in Russian of a Kazakh variant of the epic and an English translation of some verse extracts of a Noghay version.<sup>40</sup> Wālixanov's version, which is in a mixture of verse and prose, may be summarized as follows.

The epic is set in a time long ago, when there lived a holy man (*awliye*) by the name of Baba Omar. One day he desires a young woman who in consequence becomes pregnant and at the appointed time gives birth to a boy. The boy is named Baba Tükti Šašti Āziz. (There is no explanation in Wālixanov's version for this name, but we know from other versions that Baba Tükti Šašti Āziz was a holy man and hermit, hence *baba*, "grandfather; patron saint," who was covered all over with hair, hence *tükti* and *šašti*, "hairy," *tük* denoting the hair on one's body and *šaš* the hair on one's head. Thus Baba Tükti Šašti Āziz means

39. See Veselovskij 1904, 233–64; Melioranskij 1905, 1–39; Medewbekuli et al. 1996, 51–82.

40. For the summary, see Spasskij 1820; for the Noghay extract, see Chodzko 1842.

"the Dear (*āziz*) Hairy Saint.") At the age of twenty-five years, Baba Tükti Šašti Äziz sees one day on the bank of the River Ägun a girl who is combing her golden hair. When she dives into the river, Baba Tükti Šašti Äziz, who has fallen in love with the girl, dives after her and finds sixty white tents on the riverbed. It turns out that the girl is a river fairy, who is willing to be married to Baba Tükti Šašti Äziz, provided he obeys three injunctions: he is not to look at her feet when she takes off her boots; he is not look at her armpits when she takes off her shirt; and he is not to look at her head when she combs her hair. Baba Tükti Šašti Äziz breaks these taboos: when he sees her foot he realizes that it is not the foot of a human being; when he sees her armpit he can look through and see her lungs; when he watches her comb her hair he notices that she takes off her scalp. As Baba Tükti Šašti Äziz has broken the taboos, the fairy leaves him, not, however, without informing him that she is six months pregnant and that he will be able to find his child in the town of Qumkent on the Nile.

Baba Tükti Šašti Äziz departs for Qumkent and finds the promised child, a boy whom he names Edige. With this boy Baba Tükti Šašti Äziz travels to the land of the Noghay Khan Tokhtamysh.<sup>41</sup> At the age of three Edige is given into the care of a mullah, at which stage his father disappears from the narrative.

Edige is a clever and intelligent boy. He displays his wisdom at an early age by proposing wise judgments for a number of quarrels that are brought to his attention. He is only a shepherd, but his judgments are subsequently approved by the khan. The khan is eager to get to know the boy and takes him into his court when he is only eight years old. The khan's wife, however, is not happy with having Edige at court. She notices that Tokhtamysh is afraid of Edige, without realizing it himself. She proves her point by fixing the khan's coattail to the ground with a needle. When Edige enters the yurt, the khan starts to tremble so much that the needle jumps into the air. Now Tokhtamysh is convinced that nothing good can come from Edige and starts planning his death.

The khan attempts to make Edige drunk, but Edige is warned by one of his friends and pours the alcohol, on his friend's advice, into a wineskin hidden under his coat. Having escaped from this trap, Edige flees from the land of the Noghay with seventeen companions. Tokhtamysh is furious, and after having taken counsel with his advisers, sends seven heroes to bring Edige back. Edige, however, refuses the gifts they offer him and drives them back to their khan.

As he pursues his journey, he reaches the land of Sätemir (Shah Temir). Sätemir's daughter had been abducted by a giant by the name of Qabantin Alip. Edige goes into service with the giant and, when Sätemir's daughter signals the

41. The form of this name in Kazakh (and Karakalpak) is Toxtamis; for simplicity's sake I will in the following use the Anglicized form of the name.

right moment, kills the abductor. Edige then proceeds to the khan's court and receives Sätemir's daughter in marriage. She bears him a son, called Nuralin (Nur-ad-din, Light of Religion).

At the age of twelve Nuralin, while playing with his friends, is one day insulted by a malevolent crone, who reproaches him with his father's cowardly flight from Tokhtamysh. When Nuralin takes his father to task, Edige decides to gather an army against Tokhtamysh. Edige and Nuralin depart with Sätemir's soldiers on a military expedition against Tokhtamysh, in the course of which Tokhtamysh is killed by Nuralin and Tokhtamysh's two daughters are captured by Edige. Edige's seizure of both daughters, although one of them is destined for Nuralin, leads to a quarrel between father and son. In the ensuing quarrel Nuralin even wounds Edige, but when it becomes clear that Edige's seizure of both girls was not meant as a slight against his son's rights, Edige and Nuralin make their peace.

Tokhtamysh has a son by the name of Qadirberdi. He wreaks vengeance for his father's death by attacking Edige and insulting him. Edige and Nuralin are unable to survive this attack and die of grief and shame. The epic ends with Qadirberdi becoming ruler.

In order to facilitate comparison both with the historical background of the epic and with other versions, it might be useful to segment Wälixanov's version into five parts: (1) Baba Tükti Šašti Äziz, his marriage to a fairy, and the birth of Edige; (2) Edige's persecution at the court of Khan Tokhtamysh and his flight to Sätemir; (3) Edige's and Nuralin's military expedition against Tokhtamysh and their victory; (4) the quarrel between father and son and its solution; (5) Edige's death and the end of the tale.<sup>42</sup> There is no need to stress that in this epic we are in the presence of a number of fabulous elements: the figure of Baba Tükti Šašti Äziz hardly looks like a historical personage; the premature wisdom of the hero can be matched with a number of folktale motifs, and so can the khan's wife's persecution of the hero or the crone's accusing Nuralin of his father's cowardice. But are there also historical elements in this epic, in addition to the names of Edige and perhaps a few others? A brief sketch of the historical background will help delineate the historical grounding of this epic.

Tokhtamysh was a descendant of Orda, Batu's elder brother and hence one of Genghis Khan's grandsons. In 1381 Tokhtamysh, Khan of the White Horde, also became Khan of the Golden Horde. The year before, on September 8, 1380,

42. I am not proposing this fivefold division of the epic's plot as an analysis of its narrative structure. In order to discuss narrative structure, a consideration of narratological principles and techniques would be necessary, which lies, however, beyond the limits of my present concerns.

the Golden Horde under Emir Mamay was defeated by the Russian Grand Duke Dimitri on Kulokovo Pole on the Don, a victory that gained Dimitri the sobriquet "Donskoj." In the summer of 1382, Tokhtamysh took revenge for the Tatar defeat and besieged Moscow, which surrendered after three days. While Timur (Tamerlane; 1370–1405) had supported Tokhtamysh in his struggle for the throne of the White Horde and the Golden Horde, relationships between the two rulers cooled down in the following years, as they were both striving for supremacy in the Caucasus and in Iran. In a prolonged struggle, Tokhtamysh was finally defeated by Timur in 1395 on the banks of the River Terek in the Caucasus and deposed as khan. After his fall, the most important figure in the Golden Horde was Emir Edige, a Noghay from the clan of the Mañgīt, who, though not the khan of the Golden Horde, was in effect its ruler.<sup>43</sup> His rule was at first characterized by continued fights with Lithuania on the western frontier. Witold, the Lithuanian grand duke, supported Tokhtamysh's efforts to regain the throne of the Golden Horde, which had meanwhile been transferred to Temir Qutluğ (Temür Qutluğ; 1398–1400). The decisive battle was fought on the River Vorskla (a tributary of the Dnepr, between Kharkov and Kursk) on August 12, 1399, when Witold and Tokhtamysh were defeated by Temir Qutluğ and Edige. After Temir Qutluğ had died of the wounds received in this battle, he was succeeded as khan by Shadi Beg (Šadi Beg), who finally overcame Tokhtamysh and killed him in Tümen in Siberia in the winter of 1406–7. In the same year Shadi Beg had to leave his throne to his brother Pulad Khan (Bolod Khan; r. 1407–12), who in turn was succeeded by Temir (Temür), Temir Qutluğ's son (1412–23). During this entire period, from 1395 to 1419, it was Edige, not the various khans, who wielded power over the Golden Horde. Edige invaded Khwarezm in 1405–6, after Timur's death, and brought this region under the dominion of the Golden Horde. From the Russian point of view, his most important campaign was his attack on Moscow in 1408. Although this attack was successful it did not lead to the devastation of Moscow as the Tatar siege had done in 1382. When Edige died in 1419, the Golden Horde had already passed the zenith of its power.<sup>44</sup>

Looking at Wälixanov's text, it emerges that the struggle between Edige and Tokhtamysh is based on historical fact. As to Edige's flight to Sätemir (Shah

43. As with other names, there are different forms of this one, depending on language and source, notably Edigü, Idiku, and Idige. The Kazakh and Karakalpak form, transliterated as "Edige," is actually pronounced "Yedige."

44. On the historical background, see Spules 1965, 121–36 (Tokhtamysh), 136–54 (Edige); Hamblly et al. 1969, 122–24; Žirmunskij 1974b, 360–78; DeWeese 1994, 336–52; Schmitz 1996, 115–33. See also the discussion and summary of the Kazakh version of *Edige* by Orlov (1945, 128–47).

Temir) and the latter's support in overthrowing Tokhtamysh, this reflects the antagonism between Tokhtamysh and Timur. The historical picture is somewhat confusing as there are two Temirs: Temir Qutluğ, who defeated Tokhtamysh in 1399, and Temir, Temir Qutluğ's son. The latter's relationship with Edige was strained and marked by hostility. In their conflict, according to some sources, Edige's son Nuraddin (Nüreddīn, Nuralin) was also involved. "According to these sources the ambitious Nüreddīn is said to have claimed the khan's throne for himself after Šādī-Beg's death. When Edige refused him this on account of his lacking dynastic legitimacy and gave the throne to one of Temür-Qutluğ's sons (Bolod?), Nüreddīn is said to have instituted the latter's younger brother (Temür?) as anti-khan and to have declared war on his father."<sup>45</sup> This implies that the conflict between father and son is historical, although neither the (historical) reason for this conflict nor its actual course are preserved in the epic. As to Edige's death, there are some sources that assert that one of Tokhtamysh's sons, named Qadirberdi, killed Edige, which means that here, too, the epic might reflect history.

While it is possible, by a detailed analysis of the historical sources on the one hand and the different versions of the epic on the other, to relate a number of events and traits recorded in various historiographical writings to plot elements of the epic (only the most obvious are listed above), it is also incontestable that the epic as we have it is anything but a reliable historical record. Viktor Žirmunskij has aptly characterized the historicity of *Edige*:

The epic about Edige, which reflects these [historical] traditions, expresses in a foreshortened perspective the main elements of the struggle between Edige and Tokhtamysh: Edige's flight to Tokhtamysh's enemy Timur, when the khan suspects the emir of treason; his participation in a military campaign against Tokhtamysh, together with Timur's army; Tokhtamysh's death, and the return and vengeance of his sons. However, the political motives for the fight, the conflicting interests of the various parties, the rivalry of the dynasties, and the intrigues of the pretenders to the throne are not conserved in popular memory. They are replaced by the personal relationships between Tokhtamysh, the unjust and cruel khan, and Edige, his wise official and brave commander, on whose side lies the sympathy of the people. . . . The personal conflict between the unjust khan and his honest vassal, typical of the epic of the feudal period . . . , is given a motivation that is not any less typical of popular tradition: the envy of the khan's entourage or the persecution of the rebuffed khan's wife (compare the biblical tale of Joseph, the Yusuf of Muslim legends), or the fear of the weak and in-

45. Schmitz 1996, 129.



capable ruler of the popular high official or commander. The historical role of Timur-Qutluġ as pretender to the throne is not preserved in oral tradition; even the great Timur appears only in the role of Edige's helper; all attention in the epic is concentrated on the hero (*batır*), and even the historical events become only elements of his epic biography.<sup>46</sup>

Žirmunskij's statement applies not only to the Kazakh version of the epic that was summarized above, but also to other versions, even if one or the other of them might have preserved this or that historical element better than Wälixanov's text. There is no space here for a comparative analysis of these various versions. I will just very briefly characterize one other version, that of the Karakalpak *žiraw* Žumabay Bazarov (which I recorded in 1993 in Šomanay, Karakalpakistan, the singer's home town). Žumabay's version comes, like all the epics in his repertoire from his teacher Esemurat-žiraw (see his "autobiography" above, pp. 37–38). Esemurat was in turn the son and pupil of Nurabilla-žiraw, one of the most important Karakalpak singers of his time (1862–1922). Nurabilla's *Edige* has not been recorded, but that of another of his pupils, Erpolat-žiraw (1861–1938), whose favorite epic it was, has been taken down and edited. The famous Karakalpak folklorist and ethnologist Qallı Ayımbetov wrote down Erpolat's version in 1929 and 1934 and published it in 1937; it was reedited only after glasnost had reached Uzbekistan, namely in 1990.<sup>47</sup> As both Žumabay's and Erpolat's version stem ultimately from the same source (Nurabilla-žiraw), I will consider them here together. There are other Karakalpak versions, of which only one has been edited to date, that by Qiyas-žiraw (1903–74). It belongs to a different chain of transmission and will therefore not be considered here (although I will return to some passages in it).<sup>48</sup>

If we compare the Karakalpak version of *Edige*, as transmitted by Erpolat-žiraw and Žumabay-žiraw, with Wälixanov's text, we find that the first narrative unit, the introduction of the figure of Baba Tükti Šašti Äziz, his marriage to a *peri* (fairy), and the birth of Edige, is represented in a somewhat different form. The epic begins with Baba Tükti Šašti Äziz—or, in the name's Karakalpak linguistic form, Baba Tükli Šašli Äziz—who is introduced as a holy man, covered in hair. One day at a pond, he sees three pigeons take off their bird dis-

46. Žirmunskij 1974b, 378.

47. On Nurabilla-žiraw, see Ayımbetov 1988, 83–84; Maqsetov 1983, 26–41; on Esemurat-žiraw, see Ayımbetov 1988, 88–89; Maqsetov 1983, 77–92; on Erpolat-žiraw, see Ayımbetov 1988, 84. His version is edited in Ayımbetov 1937 and Ayımbetov and Maqsetov 1990, 12–106.

48. See Ayımbetov and Maqsetov 1990, 138–396. The latter's version has been (partially) learned by another Karakalpak *žiraw*, Žaqılıq Sırımbetov; his version has been recorded by the Karakalpak radio station.

guises and plunge into the water as beautiful maidens. He takes their clothes away and hands them back only on condition that one of them becomes his wife. The youngest one agrees but imposes four taboos: he is not to touch her armpit when she is lying down; he is not to look at her heels when she is walking; he is not to come near her when she comes out from the water; and he is not to look at her when she washes her head on Friday. When Baba Tükli Šašli Äziz breaks the taboos, he realizes (as in the Kazakh version summarized above) that her behavior is not human: she takes off her head for combing her hair after washing, and so on. The *peri* leaves Baba Tükli Šašli Äziz, but reveals to him where he can find the child with which she is pregnant. After she has given life to a boy in a tree, the child is found by Tuman Hodža, one of Khan Tokhtamysh's officials. The child is handed over to Tokhtamysh, who gives him the name Edige.

The second part of the narrative, Edige's persecution at the court of Khan Tokhtamysh and his flight to Sätemir (Timur), is developed along somewhat different lines in Žumabay's and Erpolat's Karakalpak versions. Edige, who is made guardian of horses, incurs the khan's and especially the khan's wife's disfavor when he shows his wisdom in deciding difficult law cases. He survives their attempt to poison him and flees from Tokhtamysh's court. At the time that Edige flees, he is already married (according to Žumabay's version he marries Qaraqaş at the age of fourteen) and leaves his wife, six months pregnant, behind in the land of the Noghay. He instructs her to give his son, should she give birth to one, the name of Nuraddin. Kenžembay, the khan's vizier, follows Edige with eight companions to call him back, but Edige refuses to return and reaches the court of Sätemir. Here Edige is given the task of freeing Sätemir's daughter Aqbilek from her bondage to the giant Qara Tiyin Älip Däw. Edige kills the *däw* (a word derived from Persian *div*, "giant, monster") but is cursed by the dying giant: Edige's own son will one day wound him. Having successfully completed his exploit, Edige is given Aqbilek in marriage and presented with rich possessions in Sätemir's realm.

Meanwhile (in part three), Edige's first wife gives birth to a boy, who is called Nuraddin. Like Edige, Nuraddin is also persecuted at Khan Tokhtamysh's court. Nuraddin is able to escape from the traps laid for him and flees with the help of his father's friends (Añġisın and Tiñġisın) to Edige. When Edige hears what Nuraddin had to suffer at the hands of Tokhtamysh, he decides to prepare a military campaign against the Noghay Khan. Sätemir supports Edige and Nuraddin, and after a number of hostile encounters Tokhtamysh is defeated at last.

The fourth part begins as a close variant of Wälixanov's text but continues differently in the Karakalpak versions, a continuation that also leads to a differ-

ent end of the tale. Tokhtamysh's daughter Qanikey is taken as wife by Edige, and her sister Tinikey is destined for Nuraddin. While Nuraddin pursues Tokhtamysh and finally kills him, Edige also appropriates Tinikey for himself. This is a move on the part of Kenžembay, who hopes in this way to arouse a quarrel between father and son. He had advised Tinikey to ask Edige why he shows no interest in her; is it age or lack of strength? In anger, Edige proves to her that he is still man enough to take her as his wife. When Nuraddin returns he is furious with his father's action and hits him with his whip, thereby blinding him on one side. In Erpolat's version, Nuraddin flees in shame to Päreñ Patša and is reunited with his father only after a number of adventures, finally acceding to the throne of the Noghay empire. In Žumabay's version, the epic ends at this point with Edige moaning over Nuraddin's cruelty and leaving the throne to him. Edige thereupon turns away from his son and leaves his land forever.

Although there are a number of differences, both in the general plot as outlined above and in various details not discussed here, between Wälixanov's Kazakh version and the two Karakalpak versions summarized, the basic story line is similar and segmentable into the units identified earlier, with the only exception that Edige's death is not narrated in the Karakalpak versions and that the end of the tale coincides hence with the solution of the quarrel between father and son. The absence of the revenge taken by Tokhtamysh's son in these two Karakalpak versions is also typical of the version recorded from Qiyas-žiraw as well as of the earliest surviving Karakalpak text of *Edige*, a version taken down in 1913 by I. A. Beljaev in the area of present-day Karakalpakistan.<sup>49</sup>

### *Edige* and the Genre of Heroic Epic

The discussion of the epic's content might help elucidate some of the historical background but it leaves a number of questions unanswered, most importantly that of the narrative's genre. Is this a heroic epic? If so, why? Do the historical elements play a role for the generic classification of the narrative? And what does the generic label "heroic epic" imply for the interpretation of the work? In chapter 1 I discussed the form of Turkic epic poetry by looking more closely at some versions of the Uzbek *dastan Alpāmiš*. In my analysis of *Edige* as a heroic epic, I will first draw attention to those elements that corre-

49. Beljaev 1917. For a comparison of various versions of *Edige* see Žirmunskij 1974b and Schmitz 1996, 23 ff.

spond to the generic traits singled out in chapter 1. I will then consider some of the historical elements in *Edige* and argue that their function in heroic poetry is only incompletely understood if one considers them solely on the textual level; in addition, they point to the performative and cultural context of oral poetry. The importance of this context for an understanding of heroic epic, both in regard to *Edige* and to medieval heroic epics, will be further discussed in chapter 5.

First the form of epic. A brief look at the structure and composition of the epic will suffice to show how closely *Edige* fits the "generic expectations" specified in relation to *Alpāmiš*. The introductory motif of *Alpāmiš* (and a great number of Turkic epics and romances)—the childless state of the parents of the future hero and his miraculous conception by the help of a *pir* or holy man—is (in the Karakalpak and many other versions) replaced by the motif-complex of the swan maidens (motif D361.1); the wooing of them by stealing their clothes when bathing (K1335); the various taboos placed on the husband (C31.1.2); the breaking of the taboos and the subsequent loss of the wife (C932); and finally the birth of the hero from a fairy (T540).<sup>50</sup> As in *Alpāmiš*, the *Göroğli* cycle, and other epics, the supernatural origin of the hero underlines both the outstanding role he is going to play in the future and his more than human stature. A second motif belonging to the legendary biography of a hero is his wisdom and acumen as shown in his decisions as a boy shepherd. In the Kazakh version summarized above, for instance, he decides among other cases a dispute between two women both claiming to be the mother of a child: he gives the Solomonic injunction to cut the child in half, a command which immediately reveals the true mother by her refusal to have the child killed (J1171.1; AT 926). Widely current in folklore is also the hero's fight against a giant or *div* in order to win a bride (Sätemir's daughter Aqbilek), with motifs typical of dragon-slayer folktales (AT 300): R11.1 Princess (maiden) abducted by monster (ogre); T68.1 Princess offered as prize to rescuer; G530.1 Help from ogre's wife (mistress); R111.1.1 Rescue of princess from ogre/R111.1.4 Rescue of princess (maiden) from giant (monster).

Besides the introduction of these (and other) legendary and folkloristic motifs, we have a restructuring of the plot that puts the spotlight, so to speak,

50. The numbers in parentheses refer to Stith Thompson's *Motif-Index* (Thompson 1955–58); the abbreviation AT stands for Aarne and Thompson's *Types of the Folktale* (Aarne and Thompson 1961). On the motif of the miraculous conception and birth of the hero, see Propp 1976; on the motif of the swan maidens (AT 400, motif D361.1), see Hatto 1961; on the role of the *pir* in Turkic epic poetry, see Lipec 1984, 26 ff. The role of Baba Tükli Šašti Āziz in the Islamization of the Central Asian Turks has been studied extensively by DeWeese (1994).

on Edige, Tokhtamysh, and Nuraddin. Sätemir is more of a background figure, while Tokhtamysh's viziers, in particular Kenžembay, play a more prominent role, generally (depending on the version) as evil counselors. The heroic struggle, which in *Alpāmiš* is that between the hero and the Kalmucks (the non-Turkic, non-Islamic enemy par excellence), on the one hand, and between the hero and the usurper of his throne and tyrannical despot over his people on the other, is in *Edige* centered on the hero's fight with Tokhtamysh and later his dispute with his own son. We recall Žirmunskij's observation that the historical struggle for power between Tokhtamysh and Edige is reduced to a "personal conflict between the unjust khan and his honest vassal." Heroic action is not just a simple defeating and killing of the enemy, but part of a more complicated intrigue in which the khan's advisers and the hero's protector (Sätemir) as well as his son are involved. This leads to a somewhat richer texture: it is obviously a flaw in the hero if he flees to Sätemir and fights against Tokhtamysh only after his son reproaches him (according to Wälixanov's version). And the father-son conflict does not conform to the international folktale motif (as also represented in heroic poetry like the Old High German *Hildebrandslied* or in epic poetry like the Persian *Book of Kings*; see above, pp. 97–98), but seems to hark back in its various forms (such as the son's mutilation of the father in anger and their later reconciliation) to some historical event, which is then, however, newly motivated within the narrative logic of a popular tale.

Apart from the conformity of the epic's plot to the various patterns possible in this type of epic tale (and hence its overlap with other epics, as for instance *Alpāmiš*), *Edige* is also stylistically on a par with epics like *Alpāmiš*. The scenic elaboration of story units as found in *Alpāmiš*—compare the council scene described above, pp. 25–30—also has its counterpart in *Edige*. One of the central scenes in various versions of the epic is the calling of Soppasli Söpira-žiraw to Tokhtamysh's court. According to the Karakalpak version outlined above, Nuraddin is sent on a dangerous mission to bring the 360-year-old *žiraw* to Tokhtamysh. But instead of losing his life, Nuraddin is successful in bringing Söpira-žiraw to the khan. In Wälixanov's version Söpira-žiraw is brought to the khan's court after Edige's flight to take part in the khan's deliberations. The *žiraw* prophesies the end of Tokhtamysh's power if he is unable to kill Edige. This is an interesting passage because the *žiraw* at first gives a genealogy of the khans he has known and then turns into the prophetic mode of speech, a mode that, as we shall see, is taken up again at a later point by Tokhtamysh himself. *Edige* features also a number of type-scenes (themes), such as the hero's ride through the desert (see chapter 1). A short extract from Žumabay's version will illustrate this. This is part of a passage describing Edige's flight to Sätemir:

Edige äne künniñ šigis talabi dep, Edil-Žayıqtan, Böktergili adırdan, Nuranıñ Qaraqumınan, Qumkenttiñ bälent tawınan attı salıp, ötken soñ: "Haq, yaratqan Alla!" dep žolğa kirge qusaydı-aw.

Häy, miyirban-äy!  
 "Šüw, žaniwar, köziñnen!  
 Sen ayırıldıñ üyirden,  
 Biz ayırıldıq ellerden,  
 Žayılıp žatqan Noğaydan, 5  
 San mün üyli xalqımnan.  
 Kün-tün šapsañ qatarsañ  
 Žete algandıy žer bolsa,  
 Mañlayımnan süyerseñ,  
 Annan soñ, haywan, tınarsañ." 10  
 Noğaydan šigip Edige  
 Eli-xalqıñ žoqladı.  
 Zäñgilesip qatarı,  
 Birge žürgen žorası,  
 Teñlesin žoytıp Edige, 15  
 Ingen yañlı qayısıp,  
 At üstinde tolğanıp,  
 Edige žilap keledi.  
 Astındağı at qulšınıp  
 Gähi žortıp, gä žorga 20  
 Gähi žortıs, gä šabis.  
 Aqşamı žatpay, bir tınbay,  
 Sayabir etip atlana,  
 At üstinde sargayıp,  
 Nuranı xaqqa qolžayıp, 25  
 Aqşam-kündiz selli žas  
 Sargayıp šölde keledi.

Edige turned to the east and directed his horse across the Edil (Volga) and Žayıq (Ural River), over the Böktergili hills, the Qaraqum (Black Desert) of Nura and the high mountain of Qumkent. He cried: "Eternal Justice, Creator God!" and started on his way.

Oh!  
 "Hoy, creature, run along!  
 You are separated from the herd,  
 I am separated from the people,

From the Noghay, grazing their herds, 5  
 From my people of the thousand yurts.  
 If you gallop along day and night, you will become stiff,  
 If there is a place to reach,  
 You will support me [lit. my forehead].  
 After that, animal, you will rest." 10  
 When Edige left the Noghay,  
 The people wept.  
 His companion, who had also mounted the horse,  
 His friend who went with him,  
 Could not keep up with Edige. 15  
 Bending like a female camel,  
 Twisting himself on the horse,  
 Edige rode along in tears.  
 The horse on which he sat was eager to get on,  
 Now at a trot, now at an amble, 20  
 Now again at a trot, now at a gallop.  
 Without lying down at night, without resting even once,  
 Resting only while riding,  
 Growing pale on top of the horse,  
 Praying to God for Nura, 25  
 Bathed in tears day and night,  
 Pale-faced he rides along in the desert.

There are two more comparable passages in Žumabay's version (Nuraddin's ride to Sīpīra-Žīraw and his ride to Sātemir), with similar wording, expressing the fact that the rider takes no rest (*aqšam žatpay, kūn ünbay*, "without lying down in the evening, without resting in the daytime") and describing his paleness from exertion (*at üstinde sarğayıp*, "growing pale on top of the horse").

*Edige*, then, conforms both in poetic form and narrative structure to the type of epic exemplified by *Alpamiš*. "All attention in the epic is concentrated on the hero (*batır*) and even the historical events become only elements of his epic biography," to quote Žirmunskij once again. Clearly, the hero's deeds are warlike, but are they also heroic? It is certainly not the kind of heroism we are familiar with from medieval heroic poetry: the brave and desperate fight against superior strength, calling for more than human courage and often ending in the tragic death of the hero.

Although as a story *Edige* might conform less to our idea of a heroic narrative than, for instance, the *Lay of Finnsburh* or the *Chanson de Roland*—representatives of truly heroic poetry according to W. P. Ker (see above, p. 96)—it can be argued that the label "heroic" is nevertheless appropriate for *Edige*.

What makes the epic into a heroic epic is not only the text, but also (and possibly even primarily) the context. Sir Maurice Bowra, in his definition of heroic poetry, stressed that although this type of poetry has many similarities with other types of poetry (and narrative),

What differentiates heroic poetry is largely its outlook. It works in conditions determined by special conceptions of manhood and honour. It cannot exist unless men believe that human beings are in themselves sufficient objects of interest and that their chief claim is the pursuit of honour through risk. Since these assumptions are not to be found in all countries at all times, heroic poetry does not flourish everywhere. It presupposes a view of existence in which man plays a central part and exerts his powers in a distinctive way.<sup>51</sup>

Put differently, it is the cultural context ("conditions determined by special conceptions of manhood and honour," "a view of existence") that makes possible the creation and cultivation of heroic poetry. While this cultural context can be studied on its own—from a sociological, historical, anthropological, or ethnographic point of view—it can also, as will be seen below, be studied from a more narrowly literary point of view insofar as this context is also part of the poetic code: it can be written into the poetry as text and expressed through the poetry as event.

In a similar vein, Arthur T. Hatto not long ago drew attention to contextual and cultural features in the course of outlining his "General Theory of the Heroic Epic." Hatto distinguishes between what he calls the "epic occasion," the existential relationship between epic world and singer/audience/patron, and the reflection of the cultural role of epic in its structure. The epic occasion corresponds roughly to the various parameters of the epic as speech event; in particular it refers to the actors of such an event, singer, audience, and patron.<sup>52</sup> The relationship between these actors and the epic world is an existential one insofar as "in the oral heroic epic a clan, a tribe, a people finds its cosmos."<sup>53</sup> In the heroic epic an anthropologically or sociologically definable group recognizes the poetic expression of its value system, in particular, of course, values related to honor and bravery. As H. Munro Chadwick put it over eighty years ago—with reference to a hypothesized Greek and Early Germanic heroic age—"the leading idea of the Heroic Age may be fittingly summed up in the phrase κλέα ἀνδρῶν" (the famous deeds of men).<sup>54</sup> Finally, the importance of

51. Bowra 1952, 4–5.

52. Hatto 1991, 8.

53. *Ibid.*, 10.

54. Chadwick 1912, 329; for an elaboration of this theme, see Nagy 1979, esp. 26ff.



the heroic epic for a particular group is not without consequences for the structure of the epic itself: "In order to possess the force demanded by its role in the public life of a society, a heroic epic must have a singleness of purpose, inherent in its total course from beginning to end; that is to say, it must possess an integrated structure."<sup>55</sup> Among these structural factors, Hatto recognizes three types: aesthetic ones (such as "unity of action" as stressed by Aristotle); those of narrative technique—formulas, themes and "epic moments"; and "factors arising from the social structure and ideology of a given society." Examples are kinship relationships in particular epics mirroring specific kinship structures of a society.<sup>56</sup>

Returning to *Edige*, it seems to me that the role of the epic in its cultural context is textually embodied by what one might call a "diagnostic" element of heroic poetry, namely genealogy. By genealogy I mean not only genealogical lists but also concerns with descent and succession. There are two passages in Wälixanov's version of *Edige* that fall under the heading of genealogy: a list in Sipiira-žiraw's prophecy and a reference to Ormanbet-biy and Qoblandi in one of Tokhtamysh's speeches. When Sipiira-žiraw arrives at Tokhtamysh's court, he warns the khan of Edige. He opens his speech by enumerating the khans he has known:

- "Men qartiñmîn, qartiñmîn. 115  
 Ne körmegen qartiñmîn!  
 Bastıq ta Bastıq, Bastıq xan,  
 Onı körgen qartiñmîn,  
 Andan soñğı Kedey xan,  
 Onı körgen qartiñmîn, 120  
 Andan soñğı Ala xan,  
 Onı körgen qartiñmîn,  
 Andan soñğı Qara xan,  
 Onı körgen qartiñmîn,  
 Andan soñğı qulağı šunaq Nazar xan 125  
 Onı körgen qartiñmîn,  
 On eki tutam oq tartqan  
 Onnan soñğı er Šiñğis,  
 Onı da körgen qartiñmîn,

55. Hatto 1991, 11.

56. Ibid. Examples of epic moments are Roland's blowing his horn and Kriemhild's bloody tears over Siegfried's coffin.

- Munarası qiriq qulaš, 130  
 Özden sultan Žanıbek,  
 Onı körgen qartiñmîn,  
 Ulı babañ Dombawıl,  
 Sonı körgen qartiñmîn,  
 Žas ta bolsa Toğım xan 135  
 Men seni körgen qartiñmîn! . . ."<sup>57</sup>
- "I am your old man, your old man. 115  
 What hasn't he seen, your old man!  
 The leader was Bastıq-khan,  
 Him have I seen, I who am your relative.  
 After him Kedey-khan,  
 Him have I seen, I who am your relative. 120  
 After him Ala-khan,  
 Him have I seen, I who am your relative.  
 After him Qara-khan,  
 Him have I seen, I who am your relative.  
 After him Nazar-khan with turned-up ears, 125  
 Him have I seen, I who am your relative.  
 Afterwards the hero Šiñğis,  
 Who was able to shoot an arrow of twelve spans,  
 Him have I seen, I who am your relative.  
 Afterwards Sultan Žanıbek, 130  
 Whose tower was forty fathoms high,  
 Him have I seen, I who am your relative.  
 Your greatgrandfather Dombawıl,  
 Him have I seen, I who am your relative.  
 Toğım-khan in his youth, 135  
 Him have I seen, I who am your relative! . . ."

The historicity of this list is difficult if not impossible to establish. Apart from Genghis Khan (Šiñğis) (d. 1227), most of the other rulers (of the Golden Horde) as enumerated by Sipiira-žiraw seem to be legendary. Žanıbek could be Džambek I (r. 1342–57) or possibly Džambek II (r. 1366–67), Toğım is the pet form of Tokhtamysh, but names like Qara-khan (Black khan) or Ala-khan (Many-colored khan) seem to be based on popular imagination rather than his-

57. Medewbekuli et al. 1996, 59–60; Melioranskij 1905, 14 (in Arabic script); see the Russian translation by Veselovskij (1904, 245).

torical fact.<sup>58</sup> One is reminded of the Anglo-Saxon poem *Widsith*, where the speaker—a singer like Sipira-žiraw—asserts that he was among the Burgundians where Guthere gave him a bracelet, among the Goths under Ermanaric, in Italy with Ælfwine, as well as in many other countries. As the historic Ermanaric belongs to the fourth century (d. c. 375) and Ælfwine or Alboin to the sixth century (d. 568), this makes the singer even older than Sipira-žiraw, who in the Kazakh version summarized here is said to be 185 years old. The *žiraw* continues to prophesy the end of Tokhtamysh's rule if he is unable to bring back Edige.

The second key passage is one of Tokhtamysh's speeches, more precisely his farewell speech when, after defeat, he has to leave his throne to Edige. "Sipira žirawdiñ aytqanı keldi" ("What Sipira-žiraw had said has come true") he exclaims in one of the Kazakh versions (Wälixanov's text), and continues in verse:

"Žigitter, šoralar!

.....

Al, aman bol menen soñ!

Ormanbet biy ölgen žurt,

On san noğay öngen žurt,

Sanazar batır žawdan žaralı kelgen žurt,

50

Biye sawğan sütti žurt,

Qimüz işken quttı žurt,

Atam küyew bolğan žurt—

Eñkeyip täžim etken žurt,

Anam kelin bolğan žurt—

55

Iyilip sälem etken žurt,

.....

Žayılıp miñ qoy bolğan žurt,

75

Al, aman bol menen soñ!

.....

Qaraqıpsaq Qoblandım,

Sen sekildi erden soñ,

Otıruwşı edik žaylasıp,

Kökorayğa biye baylasıp,

95

Qulın-tayday oynasıp,

Ayalasıp, oltırıp,

Asıldan saba toltırıp,

58. For a list of rulers of the Golden Horde, see Spuler 1965, 453–54. A similar genealogical passage is also found in the Noghay version of this epic; see Sikaliyev 1991, 24–32 (text); Sikaliyev 1994, 290–99 (Russian translation).

Teñ qurdasqa qosılıp,

Ötilip qimüz işe alman,

100

Noğayliniñ awır žurt,

Sen sekildi elden soñ! . . ."<sup>59</sup>

"Žigits, friends!

.....

May you be safe when I am gone!

You are the people among whom Ormanbet-biy has died,

You are the people of the growing ten Noghay tribes,

You are the people of Sanazar-batır, wounded by the enemy,

50

You are the people with *qimüz* [fermented mare's milk],

You are the happy people, drinking *qimüz*,

You are the people where my father was bridegroom,

You are the people that greets the guest with bows,

You are the people where my mother was bride,

55

You are the people that salutes the newcomer with respect.

.....

You are the people where a thousand sheep are grazing:

75

May you be safe when I am gone!

.....

My Qaraqıpsaq Qoblandı,

My time with a hero like you has come to an end:

We used to graze our herds together,

We used to graze the mare on a rich pasture,

95

We used to play together like foals,

We used to pamper one another,

We used to fill the *saba* [leather container for *qimüz*], coming from a noble race,<sup>60</sup>

We used to associate with our equals—

Now, as I have to leave, I cannot drink *qimüz*.

100

My sad people of the Noghay,

My time with a people like you has come to an end! . . ."

In this speech, Ormanbet-biy is twice mentioned, each time with reference to his death (*ölgen, ölgende*). The linguistic form of this reference is ambiguous as to the time of Ormanbet-biy's death: it could have happened already, could be happening now, or could be going to happen in the future. From a historical

59. Medewbekulı et al. 1996, 74ff.; Melioranskij 1905, 31 f. (in Arabic script); the Russian translation gives only a summary of this passage; see Veselovskij 1904, 258–59.

60. I take *asıldan*, lit. "from a noble one," to refer to Qoblan and Tokhtamysh; see also the following line.

point of view, Tokhtamysh must be speaking about the future, that is, we have, as in Sipira-žiraw's speech, a prophetic note. This reference, of course, ties Edige to Ormanbet-biy, or in terms of genre, the heroic epic to the *tolğaw*, the elegiac-historical song of the Karakalpaks and Kazakhs. But both passages link the epic of *Edige* also to other heroic epics, in particular to *Qoblan*. In the earlier scene, Tokhtamysh had asked others of his retinue to give their opinion, before asking Sipira-žiraw for advice, among them "Qaraqipšaq Qoblandim" (l. 58), "my Qoblandi of the Qara Kipchak." The Kipchak (Qipčaq) are a Turkic-speaking people who rose to power in Central Asia in the eleventh century. After them the steppes between the Caspian and Aral Seas were called Dešt-i Qipčaq (the Kipchak Steppes) by medieval Persian and Arab geographers and historians. Later the Kipchak formed part of the Golden Horde, where their language was the state language, and after the downfall of the Golden Horde and the Noghay Horde, they continued as clans among the Karakalpaks as well as the Kazakhs and Uzbeks.<sup>61</sup> Qoblan or Qoblandi (or Qoblanli) is the hero of a separate epic, named after him, in which he generally bears the ethnonymic epithet "qara qipšaq":

Qoblanniñ haslin sorasañ,  
Rustemniñ nāsili edi;  
Tiykarğı atın sorasañ,  
Dāsti Qipšaq dep edi,  
Qara Qipšaq urıwı . . .<sup>62</sup>

If you ask after Qoblan's descent:  
He is Rustam's descendant;  
If you ask for the name of his origin:  
It is the Dešt-i Qipčaq,  
The clan of the Qara Qipčaq . . .

Among the Kazakhs the Kipchak tribe belongs to the Middle Horde (*Orta žüz*), which consists, apart from the Kipchak (Qipšaq), of the Argın, Nayman, Qoñirat, Kerey, and Waq tribes (see above, p. 77). The most numerous clan of the Kipchak tribe are the Qara-Qipšaq (Black Kipchak; the others are the Sari-Qipšaq, the Qıtay-Qipšaq, and the Qulan-Qipšaq).<sup>63</sup> Within the clan structure of the Karakalpaks, on the other hand, the Kipchak belong to the Aris On Tört Ruw, the "Group (lit. "wagon shaft") of the Fourteen Clans," the other main

61. On the origin of the Kipchaks, see Golden 1992, 270ff.

62. Žapaqov et al. 1981, 53. Rustam is the fabulous hero of Ferdowsi's *Shāhnāma*.

63. See Mukanov 1974, 53-54.

clan groups of this *aris* being the Mañğit, the Keneges, and the Qıtay. It will be remembered that according to historical sources Edige belonged to the Mañğit, while in the epic (Žumabay's version) Kenžembay (called Kerim-biy by Erpolat), Tokhtamysh's adviser, is a Keneges.

By the inclusion of genealogical information in Sipira-žiraw's counsel speech the historicity of the dramatis personae is underlined. By the same token, the historical grounding of the protagonists is embedded in the tribal affiliation of a nomadic society, and the present is thereby linked to the past, the singer and hearers to the actors of the tale—and not only of this tale, but of a whole cycle of tales of the Noghay heroes, among them Qoblan. As we can also see, Ormanbet-biy is obviously felt to be a crucial figure in the emergence of the Noghay Horde from the Golden Horde, even if he is only alluded to without further comment. But the very fact that an allusion is enough underlines his importance in the historical thinking of the descendants of the Noghay clan. The existence of the *tolğaw* discussed above offers undeniable proof of this.

There is in this epic an insistence on tribal history and continuity that cannot be overlooked. One is tempted to conclude from this that *Edige* (and similar epics, such as, for instance, *Qoblan*) are basically historical epics: they are about historical persons, events, and circumstances, and are conceived of as the historical records of an illiterate people, transmitted orally and in poetic form. However, as soon as these epics are analysed, the historic content begins to evaporate, and although a historical nucleus and certain historical personages can be detected, the epics as we have them are overlaid by fabulous and legendary elements. It is possible to impute most of these manifestly unhistorical elements to the vagaries of oral transmission on the one hand and the "laws" of oral storytelling on the other. Mircea Éliade, in his *Mythe de l'éternel retour*, has given a number of illustrations of the transformation of a story, based on a historical event, into a tale that obeys the pattern of some primordial myth. Among his examples are the South Slavic heroic songs of Marko Kraljević, where according to Éliade historically grounded events have been poured into the mold of such myths as those of Indra, Thraetaone, and Heracles.<sup>64</sup> No doubt Edige could be added to Éliade's examples, with his fairy mother and his fight against the monstrous giant Qabantin Alıp, abductor of Sätemir's daughter.

If the "historical nucleus" is overgrown by fabulous elements and reshaped into mythic patterns, can the insistence on history, then, still be interpreted as the writing of culture into the text, as a "diagnostic" element for the identification of cultural values and hence one of the hallmarks of the heroic epic? I think that an answer in the affirmative can be given. It does presuppose, however, a dis-

64. See Éliade 1969, 54-55.

inction between the epic as text—as a composite of meaningful words and sentences—and as event—as the recital of poetry by a singer to an audience. While it is possible, and hermeneutically necessary, to isolate historical elements in the tale, their role can only be properly assessed if we move from the tale itself to its situational and cultural context, in particular to the singer and his audience. What this move entails for the interpretation of *Edige* and to what extent it can be applied to our reading of medieval epic poetry will be the topic of my final chapter.

## CHAPTER FIVE

## Heroic Past and Poetic Presence

Después de la verdad—decía mi maestro—nada hay tan bello como la ficción.

Apart from truth, my teacher said, nothing is so beautiful as fiction.

—Antonio Machado, *Juan de Mairena* (XXII)

In his discussion of the historical elements in *Beowulf*, Frederick Klaeber shrewdly observes that the extent of historical truth in the material he presents “cannot be made out with certainty.” He stresses that this type of poetry was not intended to be “a record and mirror of historical happenings,” and that we have to reckon with “all kinds of variation, shifting, and combination” in the course of its oral transmission. Nevertheless, there is “an air of reality and historical truth” in *Beowulf* that Klaeber finds remarkable. He does have to concede, though, that “there is only one of the events mentioned in the poem, viz. the disastrous Frankish raid of Hygelac, which we can positively claim as real history.”<sup>1</sup> The “real history” is reflected in the account that Gregory of Tours (d. 594) gives in his *Historia Francorum* of a raid on Frankish territory on the Rhine estuary and the lower Rhine, sometime around 520, by Danes under their king Chlochilaicus:

The next thing which happened was that the Danes sent a fleet under their King Chlochilaich and invaded Gaul from the sea. They came ashore, laid waste one of the regions ruled by Theuderic and captured some of the inhabitants. They loaded their ships with what they had stolen and the men they had seized, and then they set sail for home. Their King remained on the shore, waiting until the boats should have gained the open sea, when he planned to go on board. When

1. Klaeber 1950, xxix–xxx.



Theuderic heard that his land had been invaded by foreigners, he sent his son Theudebert to those parts with a powerful army and all the necessary equipment. The Danish King was killed, the enemy fleet was beaten in a naval battle and all the booty was brought back on shore once more.<sup>2</sup>

Although the historical record is not entirely straightforward—in addition to Gregory's *History* two other, later Frankish historical works transmit this episode—there can be no doubt that Chlochilaicus (or rather Chochilaicus, as one of the other Frankish sources spells the name) is identical with King Hygelac. *Beowulf* agrees with these documents insofar as it is stated in the epic that Hygelac met his death during this raid; there are, however, serious problems of historical interpretation when it comes to identifying the peoples involved in the fight.<sup>3</sup> But quite apart from the details of historical interpretation, the main problem concerns the role that this event plays in the epic. It is repeatedly alluded to but never fully described. Hygelac's death is obviously an important event in *Beowulf* in that it eventually leads to the hero's accession to the Geatish throne, and it is one of many occasions for Beowulf to show his heroism: it is he who kills Dæghrefn, presumably Hygelac's slayer, and who performs one of his astounding swimming feats after the encounter. But as an episode, the Frankish raid is marginal rather than central, and it can hardly be considered the historical nucleus from which the epic developed.

The relationship between historical event and epic poem is not only complex but also various. *Beowulf* is only one example of this relationship in medieval epic poetry. In the *Chanson de Roland*, for instance, the Spanish campaign of Charlemagne, of which we also have records in contemporary historiography, plays a central role, although, once again, historiographic record and poetic rendering are not simply mirror images of one another. Both *Beowulf* and the *Chanson de Roland* are quite different from *Edige* in the way they treat the events described in the poems as events of the past, but agree with *Edige* in underlining the relevance of this past to their respective audiences. Before discussing these medieval epics, however, I will first return to my interpretation of *Edige* as a heroic epic.

### Truth and the Authority of Tradition

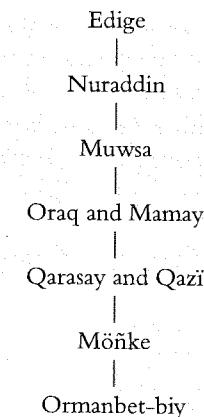
It has often been observed by anthropologists and folklorists that oral communities differentiate in their native taxonomies between true and untrue nar-

2. Quoted from Thorpe 1974, 163–64; for English translations of the relevant passages from other historical sources, see Garmonsway, Simpson, and Davidson 1980, 112–15.

3. For a useful summary, see Hoops 1932, 251–52.

ratives. The locus classicus for this kind of ethnoclassification is Malinowski's well-known study of the threefold generic system of the Trobriand Islanders, with their distinction between a tale without implications of truth ("folktale," *kukwanebu*), a narrative considered true ("legend," *libwogwo*), and a type of story "regarded not merely as true, but as venerable and sacred" ("myth," *lilii*).<sup>4</sup> Similar distinctions apply to other traditions, such as the Pawnee classification into true stories (adventures of the Cultural Hero, mythic exploits of shamans) and untrue stories (the Coyote tales);<sup>5</sup> or the Yoruba generic system, where the *itan*, a narrative about deities and human heroes, is classified as true, while the *alo*, an animal tale, is regarded as fiction.<sup>6</sup>

This dichotomy between true tales and fictional narratives also holds good for Turkic oral epic poetry. Epics like *Edige* or *Qoblan*, *Manas* or *Alpāmis'* are explicitly characterized as "true" in native taxonomy. "If we had time, I could show you all the places I am singing about" are Žumabay's words. As proof of the truth of his tale, the singer gives the genealogy of his heroes. According to this genealogy, Ormanbet-biy is a direct descendant of Edige:



With the exception of the last two generations, this genealogy agrees with that given by other singers of the so-called Noghay cycle: Edige is followed by his son Nuraddin, then his grandson Muwsa, then the latter's two sons Oraq and Mamay, and finally Oraq's sons Qarasay and Qazi.<sup>7</sup> Žumabay-žiraw differs from other singers in continuing the line with Möñke and finally Ormanbet-biy. Möñke might be spurious. There is, of course, the historical Möñke (Möngkä),

4. Malinowski 1926, 20ff.; see also Bascom 1954 and 1965.

5. Éliade 1955, 4f.

6. See Ben-Amos 1976, 233.

7. These are the descendants of Edige according to Murin-žiraw's cycle of epics; see Žirmunskij 1974a, 394ff.; these epics have meanwhile been edited in Nurmagambetova and Sidiyqov 1989, 70ff.

Great Khan from 1251 to 1259, and there is Möñke Temür, khan of the Golden Horde, who died in 1280.<sup>8</sup> But none of these fits the singer's Möñke. There is, however, reason to believe that Ormanbet-biy is a descendant of Edige. In a version of *Ormanbet-biy* recorded by Tabisqan Qanaatov from a Karakalpak by the name of Iygilik Älibek-uli (b. 1912), living in Aqqabaq *aul* in the district of Nawāyi in Uzbekistan, Ormanbet-biy and Edige are also related ("Sol Ormanbet biy menen Er Edige bir näsilden bolgan" ["This Ormanbet-biy and Edige the Hero belong to the same family line"]) and come from the same clan, that of the Mañgıt.<sup>9</sup>

There is, then, the assertion on the part of the singer that his tale is true, a truth that from the point of view of historical research would have to be severely restricted to the "historical nucleus" of the epic. The contrast between historical truth (lying somewhere buried in the epic) and untruth (so obvious in the fabulous and legendary trappings of the story) is emphatically denied by both the traditional singer and the traditional audience. Just as Žumabay-žiraw asserts again and again (in conversation) the truth of his tale, other singers are equally outspoken in this respect. The version of *Edige* recorded from Qiyas-žiraw ends with a long passage in which the singer specifies the tradition by which his poem is linked to the first poem on Edige, composed by no less a figure than Sipira-žiraw (in Karakalpak Soppasli-žiraw) himself, the venerable singer at Edige's court, who had, as we saw, lived long enough to remember Edige's forefathers and predecessors on the throne:

Sözlerimde zoqdur yalğan, 25  
 Qalayıqtan oriñ alğan,  
 Edigeniñ dāstani  
 Soppasli žirawdan qalğan.

Talqan etip salğan soraw, 30  
 Xannan altin alğan siylaw,  
 Šakirt bolip alğan eken  
 Qaraqalpaq Düysenbay žiraw.

.....  
 Šakirt bolip alğan qolğa,  
 Žüda šeber göne žolğa.  
 El gezip ötken bärqulla,

8. On the latter, see Spuler 1965, 52ff.; Spuler (60) also mentions another Möñke, contemporary of Möñke Temür and prince of the Ilkhan.

9. I am grateful to Tabisqan Qanaatov for this material. Compare also Edige's genealogy as given in Schmitz 1996, 232.

Düysenbaydiñ šakirti  
 Aytqiš žiraw Seydulla. 45

.....  
 Šakirt düzip öz aldına, 50  
 Belgili mākan žaylawğa,  
 Yad etip sözdi yadına  
 Seydulla žiraw taratqan,  
 Edigeniñ dāstanin  
 Pütkil qaraqalpaq xalqına. 55

.....  
 Qaraqalpaqtı aylanip,  
 Qırq žil xalıqqa žirlağan, 65  
 Edigeniñ dāstanin  
 Qiyas žiraw torlağan,  
 Šıqqan žerin sorasañ  
 Qiyastan qalğan bul dāstan.<sup>10</sup>

There are no lies in my words, 25  
 I have been given a place [of honor] by the people,  
 The *dastan* of Edige  
 Goes back to Soppasli-žiraw.

He pounded [the events] and asked questions,  
 From the khan he took money and honor, 30  
 As his pupil he took  
 The Karakalpak Düysenbay-žiraw.

.....  
 He took pupils by the hand,  
 A great master on the old road,  
 He continually traveled among the people,  
 Düysenbay's pupil  
 Was the orator-žiraw Seydulla. 45

.....  
 He gathered pupils round him, 50  
 Traveling to well-known places for pasture,  
 Committing the words to his memory,  
 Seydulla-žiraw spread them widely,  
 Spread the *dastan* of Edige  
 Through the whole Karakalpak people. 55

10. Ayımbetov and Maqsetov 1990, 395-96.

Having traveled among the Karakalpaks,  
I have sung for forty years to the people,  
The *dastan* of Edige  
Has been spread by Qiyas-žiraw,  
If you ask where it has come from,  
Then this *dastan* goes back to Qiyas.

65

The singer can assert the truth of his tale because he is the bearer of tradition. In order to be a bearer of tradition he needs a legitimation: he generally experiences some kind of calling, through a dream or a vision. Then he goes through a professional training as the pupil of a traditional singer, and he finally receives his teacher's blessing (*pätiya*), which entitles him to carry on the tradition (see above, p. 38). He is, in other words, invested with authority. His telling a tale has authority, can be relied upon, is to be taken seriously. Truth based on authority, however, is not what a philosopher might want to call truth, and even in everyday speech the notion of truth is generally associated with the notion of intersubjective verification: if something is to be true, one must be able to show it to be so. But the idea of demonstration—by reference to historical documents, for instance—is extraneous to an oral tradition and incompatible with a notion of truth based primarily on authority. Maybe what is meant by truth here is a different kind of truth, the kind of truth we find in art, in poetry, in fiction?

The philosopher John Searle has argued persuasively that fictional discourse differs from factual discourse primarily in the way the illocutionary act of assertion is handled. In nonfictional discourse the speaker is committed to the truth of his statement (an obligation shown, for instance, by not contradicting himself and asserting the opposite), while in fictional discourse the narrator only pretends to make an assertion. He is not expected to guarantee the truth of what he is saying and will not have to bear the consequences of his as-if assertion. This is not the same as lying, because in lying one is positively saying something untrue, i.e., one is breaking the rules that govern the making of an assertion.<sup>11</sup> Although Searle's analysis allows for subtler distinctions than the ones made here, it nevertheless fails to cover the present case. The speaker's/singer's and hearers' assumptions agree neither with the conventions regulating factual discourse nor with those regulating fictional discourse. There is no pretending that what is told is asserted, nor, of course, is what is narrated considered a lie. It is assumed that the statements made have historical, factual truth, and yet this truth is recognized as being of a special kind.

11. See Searle 1979. In case I might be misunderstood, I should probably state explicitly that my discussion of "truth" in the epic is focused on "historical truth" and is not a discussion of "poetic truth" or truth in the arts more generally.

The singer is convinced of the truth of his tale and is ready to point to the objective world for corroboration. On the other hand, there is an awareness in the singer's mind that the truth of his tale is not on the same level as the truth of a personal narrative. This is sometimes acknowledged in a formula, as in the Kirghiz epic *Manas*:<sup>12</sup>

Ey . . . !  
Aytayın baatır Manastı,  
Anın arbaqtarı qoldoso.  
Aytqanıñ dızalğan bolboso.  
Džarımı tögün, džarımı çin,  
Džarandardın köönü üçün.  
Džanında turğan kişi džoq,  
Džalğanı menen işi džoq.

Ey . . . !  
I will talk of the hero Manas,  
May the spirits of his forefathers give me their help!  
May what I am going to tell you be no lie!  
Half [of what I am going to narrate] is lie, half is truth,  
I am telling the story to please my friends.  
There is no one alive any more who was at his side,  
[The hero himself] had nothing to do with lying.

A similar formula is found at the end of the version of *Alpamiş* recorded from Fäzil Yoldaş-ögli:

Fäzil šäir aytar bilganlarini.  
Bu sozlarnıñ biri yalgän, biri çin,  
Waqtı xuşlik bilan otsin korgan kun,  
Eblab-seblab aytgan sozim boldı şul.  
Häy desañ, keladi sozniñ ma'quli,  
Šäir bolar biliñ ädam faqiri,  
Šuytib adä boldı gapniñ äxiri.<sup>13</sup>

The singer Fäzil tells everything he knows.  
Of these words some are lies, some are the truth.  
May the days of our life pass in joy!  
These are the words that I have said according to my skill.

12. Mamay 1984, 1(I):1; see also Hu and Dor 1984; Yunusaliev 1958–60, 1:1.

13. Mitzhev, Abduraximov, and Mirbadaleva 1999, 422. For the translation of line 5, see *ibid.*, 814.

If you sing the epic melody, the right words will come.  
 Know that the singer is a poor man.  
 In this way my words are coming to an end.

The truth of the tale is not the truth of some everyday statement, nor is it a historical truth in the historian's sense, simply because in a truly oral society the dichotomy between historiography and historical poetry is meaningless.

In order to account for this somewhat ambiguous position—the tale is true, but maybe only half true, and yet not a lie, but maybe half a lie—it might be helpful to come back to the notion of authority. If the singer's tale is true—whatever “true” may mean here—then it is true only on the basis of authority. He is the voice of authority, and his authority stems from his official position in the chain of transmission. The truth a singer speaks on the basis of his authority is neither factual/historical truth, nor is it for that matter fictional truth, but rather it is a belief shared by singer and hearer in the (historical) truth of what is narrated. As with all beliefs, doubting and wavering are possible; but the believer will basically accept the relevance of what he believes for himself and his fellow believers. In an epic like *Edige* the singer does indeed portray matters of personal and societal relevance: it is “our” history he is relating, “our” tribal past, and the deeds of “our” forebears. What he relates is not history in a general sense, but history that matters.

It might be less confusing to avoid the term “truth” here and choose another word instead. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines *authenticity* as “The quality of being authentic, or entitled to acceptance, 1. as being authoritative or duly authorized; 2. as being in accordance with fact, as being true in substance.”<sup>14</sup> This captures neatly the relationship between authority (“being authoritative”) and truth (“being true”), and it might therefore be appropriate to speak of authenticity rather than truth in our case. Just as the singer has authority, his tale has authenticity.<sup>15</sup> As such the heroic epic is identificational: in its cultural context it functions primarily not as entertainment or instruction, but rather as a way of identifying with one's own roots, one's past and culture, one's ancestors,

14. See *OED*, s.v. *authenticity*; there are two more senses recorded, “genuineness” and “reality.”

15. Searle's concept of speech-acts has been fruitfully applied to the interpretation of Homeric poetry by Richard P. Martin (1989), who characterizes one of the distinguishing marks of the language of heroes within the epic as “authoritative speech-act” and reaches the conclusion that this speech-act can also be transferred to the epic itself: “I suggest that we can view the *Iliad* as we do the speech-acts of the tellers within the tale: this is poetry meant to persuade, enacted in public, created by authority, in a context where authority is always up for grabs and to be won by the speaker with the best style” (238). The notion of “authoritative speech” in Greek historiography, epic, and lyric has also been used and deepened by Gregory Nagy in his detailed discussion of the relationship between epic and lyric in ancient Greece (1990, esp. 215ff.).

and the deeds of a heroic age. It needs no great imaginative effort to realize that the qualities of a heroic lifestyle have an exemplary and group-identifying role in an originally nomadic society threatened with annihilation through outer enemies, or with dissolution through social changes such as enforced sedentary life, collectivization, urbanization, and Russification. It is symptomatic that the performance and publication of *Edige*, with its strong emphasis on historical roots, was forbidden in 1944 and that the ban has only been lifted in the wake of perestroika. In 1991 the Noghay (in their small autonomous region in the northern Caucasus) published one of their versions of the epic in celebration of six hundred years of *Edige*, which also fits into this picture.<sup>16</sup>

While the epic might still be a symbol of nationhood among the Noghay and while singers like Žumabay-Žiraw continue to perform the epic, albeit to ever dwindling audiences, there is no denying the fact that apart from nationalist uses (to be observed in a number of postcommunist states) the heroic epic has today generally lost its living significance for an ethnic or otherwise defined group. The “ethnographic present tense” I have been using in this chapter is, alas, a “historic present”: while the use of “national epics” as symbols of nationhood continues, the singer's voice of authority is about to become silent (or has become silent). What he and his traditional audience regarded as truth is now sought in history books, and if his tale is still appreciated it is as a work of literature, on a par with other works of poetic imagination, and like them nowadays more often read than listened to. This is also our situation with medieval epics for which we can assume an oral background: all we have—like the contemporary reader in Central Asia—is a text, and all we can generally do is appreciate this text as a work of literature. But the question remains whether the cultural context is written into these texts in a way similar to what we found in oral heroic epics like *Edige*, giving us the possibility of recapturing some aspects of the dynamics of their original oral milieu.

### *Beowulf*, Genealogy, and the Authenticating Voice

In my discussion of *Edige* I maintained that genealogical information given in some of the versions of the epic can be viewed as “diagnostic passages.” Genealogy does not, of course, play a role in all epics, even heroic ones. *Alpamiš* is an example of a heroic epic in which questions of genealogy, and hence of tribal affiliation and belonging, play little and at most only a subordinate part, at least

16. See Sikaliyev 1991. For a general discussion of the role of cultural symbols in tribal and political identification, see Assmann 1997, 130ff.; on Homer and Greek ethnogenesis, *ibid.*, 272ff.



in the versions known to us. This is not to say that scholars have not identified a "historical nucleus" for the epic and that in the various versions the main hero is introduced as tribeless and clanless. The Karakalpak versions, for instance, are quite specific on this point: Alpāmiš (called Alpamiš in Karakalpak) belongs to the Īrğaqlı clan of the Qoñirat tribe (Qoñgirāt in the Uzbek version summarized above, pp. 21–36). The Qoñirat are one of the tribes that entered into the formation of the Karakalpaks, Uzbeks, and also Kazakhs. While these peoples trace their ethnic lineage back to the Qoñirat, there are differences regarding the composition and further history of this tribe in each case.<sup>17</sup> There is no doubt that in the Uzbek, Karakalpak, and Kazakh versions of the epic, aptly called the "Kongrat Version" by Žirmunskij, there are historical reasons for the tribal affiliation of the hero.<sup>18</sup> Still, in these Central Asian versions of the epic, Alpāmiš is not presented as "our ancestor" in a genealogical sense, but rather more generally as "our hero" in the fight against non-Turkic aggression, in this case of the Kalmucks. Granted that heroic poetry need not be ancestral in a historical (or "oral historical") sense, it does nevertheless have an identificational dimension, which presupposes that the heroes celebrated are "our heroes" and hence part of "our past," however vague the contours of this past might be in a particular oral tradition.

In connection with poems like *Nāmāz* or *Brunanburh* I have argued that within an oral context the distinction between historical poetry and historiography is spurious (see above, pp. 70–72). By this I do not mean to imply that historical poetry (or rather, as in our examples, poetry about comparatively recent events that are explicitly characterized as historical) is the only form of oral history. The concept of oral history has received much attention from historians and anthropologists, who have underlined the multiplicity and complexity of the oral transmission of history as well as the sociological and cultural dimensions of oral narratives.<sup>19</sup> One widespread form of oral history is genealogy (or genealogical narrative), and this particular form is also found in the Turkic traditions.<sup>20</sup> Indeed the word for "ancestor" in Kazakh is indicative of this genealogical bent: it is *žeti ata*, literally "seven fathers," meaning that any self-respecting Kazakh is expected to know his forefathers up to the seventh generation. This knowledge is also expected of members of other tribally organized Turkic peoples. The Kirghiz have cultivated a form of oral narrative that is en-

17. See Mukanov 1974, 58ff.

18. See Reichl 1992c, 333–51.

19. On the latter, see Tonkin 1992, esp. 113–36 (the chapter significantly entitled "Truthfulness, History and Identity"); on the former, see Vansina 1985 (and the critical remarks in Tonkin 1992, 86ff.).

20. On genealogy from an anthropological point of view, see Barnes 1967; see also Vansina 1985, 182–85.

tirely devoted to genealogical information, appropriately called *sandžira*, "genealogy."<sup>21</sup> The nineteenth-century Karakalpak poet Berdax (1827–1900) also composed a genealogical poem, *Šežire* (genealogy), which has only been written down in the twentieth century from oral tradition.<sup>22</sup> Apart from orally composed or at least orally transmitted genealogical narratives and poems, there are also written sources. Of these, the most important is the *Genealogy of the Turkmens* of the Khan of Khiva Abū'l-Gāzī, who lived in the seventeenth century (d. 1663).<sup>23</sup> This reminds us that while the Turkic epics I have been discussing are incontestably examples of a genuine oral tradition, the nomadic world of which they are an expression has for many centuries been in intimate contact with the literate culture of Central Asia.

This reminder is particularly apposite when we come back to medieval heroic epics such as *Beowulf* which have inevitably undergone the influence of (and symbiosis with) literacy, however firmly they might originally have been part of an oral tradition. *Beowulf* seems at first sight an unlikely candidate for comparison with *Edige*, in particular with regard to questions of genealogy and the affirmation of historical roots. And *Beowulf* is certainly a difficult candidate for comparison, given that the interpretation of this poem is fraught with numerous problems.

The most obvious ones in the present context are its generic classification and the assessment of its traditionality. Although *Beowulf* has been discussed as a heroic epic by such eminent scholars as H. Munro Chadwick or Sir Maurice Bowra, dissenting voices can be heard, coming mostly from scholars who, like Andreas Heusler, view *Beowulf* as a "book epic." To classify *Beowulf* as a heroic epic does not logically entail the view that the epic must be traditional, but in practice these features are often connected. It is, however, the epic's traditionality (rather than its genre—or sub-genre) that has given rise to a fair amount of controversy. While an interpretation of the epic in its transmitted form as a direct reflection of an oral poem has become unfashionable, the view of *Beowulf* as a tradition-derived poem—i.e., an epic with firm grounding in oral tradition, however indirectly the manuscript text might be related to this tradition—is still widely held. But there are, of course, scholars who will grant the existence of an oral tradition, but will deny that *Beowulf* is a genuine representative of such a tradition. They consider the epic basically the work of a literate author, an au-

21. I am grateful to Gundula Salk for providing me with a copy of her Berlin M.A. thesis on Kirghiz *sandžira*. The word *sandžira* seems to be derived from Arabic *šajara(t)*, "tree, genealogical tree"; the latter is the etymological basis for Karakalpak and Kazakh *šežire*.

22. Parts of the poem were first edited in 1917; on editorial history and sources, see Karimov, Mur-tazaev and Qalimbetov 1987, 317; the poem is found *ibid.*, 273–306; for a short summary (in Russian) of Berdax's life and oeuvre, see Nurmuxamedov 1977.

23. On Abū'l-Gāzī and early Central Asian historiography, see Bombaci 1968, 162ff.

thor with perhaps antiquarian tastes (hence the poem's subject matter), an author perhaps imitating Virgil, an author perhaps writing an allegorical poem, but at any rate an author. Although one can proffer arguments for one or the other position, the intensive and often uncompromising nature of *Beowulf* scholarship as well as its sheer volume make it clear that almost any opinion can be defended and none proved to the satisfaction of everyone.

The present critical climate favors readings of texts that put the emphasis on the reader rather than on the text. From a postmodernist point of view, a Freudian reading of *Beowulf* is just as legitimate as a Marxist one. As one recent critic has put it, "objectivity is not exactly the goal of my interpretation; objectivity is not what is left when the psychological inhibitions to interpretation are finally overcome."<sup>24</sup> Even if many scholars will shrink from seeing such limitless subjectivity as the goal of criticism, there is no denying the fact that the epic as we have it is already the product of a particular reading of earlier epic poetry. The text in its transmitted form not only shows the traces of scribal and editorial activity, but also, and more importantly, it is a version of *Beowulf* that offers, both by its Christian perspective and by its arrangement of narrative material, a particular view of the story of Beowulf and his deeds. Although no one would want to follow in the steps of the proponents of the *Liedertheorie* today, different versions of Beowulf are nevertheless imaginable. We can think of a *Beowulf* only comprising parts of the epic in its present form, the Boyhood Deeds of Beowulf, perhaps, or the Danish Expedition, or Beowulf the Dragon Slayer. Or we can think of a different arrangement, with or without a particular episode, comparable to different versions of the *Chanson de Roland* with and without the Baligant Episode. And we can think of different tellings of the epic when it comes to presenting the various figures of the epic, not in a Christianized garb but more consistently as pagans in conformity to the heathen customs alluded to in lines 175ff.

Needless to say, it is futile to imagine these poems. Despite the occasional analyst (like Magoun),<sup>25</sup> the *Liedertheorie* is definitely out of fashion: we have to take the epic as we have it, Christian, digressive, multilayered, but whole. Furthermore, although no one will doubt the formulaic character of the epic's language, skeptics have not been convinced that this is proof of the orality of *Beowulf*. There is therefore much to be said for the view that the epic is the work of an author. But what did this author compose, in what style, and with what as model? He composed, I would answer, a heroic epic, in the style of (Old English but ultimately Germanic) heroic poetry and on the model of oral heroic poetry. However Christian the coloring of *Beowulf*, however elegiac a number

24. Earl 1994, 174.

25. See Magoun 1958, 1963.

of its passages, however interlaced with digressions and episodes its narrative, *Beowulf* seems to me to be the type of epic that can be meaningfully compared to heroic poetry worldwide, as was done by Bowra and others. If *Beowulf* is not a heroic epic, then a good deal of Bowra's other material would have to be eliminated too.

It is, of course, possible that the *Beowulf* poet, though basing his work on tradition, created something new and sui generis. Even then, it seems to me, the poem is primarily referring back to oral heroic poetry—poetry that at the time of its flowering must have been oral (whether in the form of lay or epic)—rather than to literary epic of a Virgilian kind, however great the influence this type of poetry might have exerted. Maybe the *Beowulf* poet could be compared to Elias Lönnrot, working the Finnish *runos* into an epic; but it seems unlikely that he was a Longfellow creating a pastiche of a traditional epic with no true basis in orality.<sup>26</sup> Although the days are gone when a scholar like H. M. Chadwick could confidently assert that he was "not aware that any serious argument has been brought forward to show that Beowulf was a literary production,"<sup>27</sup> it is still possible to interpret the poem in the context of genuine oral epics and to see it as "oral-derived," even if it must be granted that this derivation is not one of simply putting an oral poem into writing.<sup>28</sup>

As was pointed out above, the "historical nucleus" in *Beowulf* has been overgrown by legendary motifs. Nevertheless, discussions of the historical dimensions of *Beowulf*, quite apart from the death of Hygelac, are possible and meaningful. While Beowulf himself is legendary, other figures and elements of the narrative can be given a historical interpretation. The Scandinavian background of the epic has been elucidated from a historical point of view by several scholars; but any historically minded investigation has to take into account, as R. T. Farrell put it, "that *Beowulf* is a work of heroic history, i.e. a poem in which facts and chronology are subservient to the poet's interest in heroic deeds and their value in representing the ethics of an heroic civilization."<sup>29</sup>

With due consideration of this shift of emphasis in a work of heroic poetry, one of the elements pointing to the cultural context of the epic and anchoring it to social and dynastic conceptions of descent and tribal origin is the genealogical information supplied about the Danish royal house. The most interesting aspect of this genealogy is that parts of it are also found in Anglo-Saxon royal

26. On Elias Lönnrot and the *Kalevala*, see Branch 1994; on Longfellow's "Hiawatha" and its relation to Finnish folk poetry, see Moyne 1963.

27. Chadwick 1912, 73.

28. For the view of *Beowulf* as a traditional oral-derived poem, see especially Niles 1983 and Irving 1989; compare also Foley 1990. A useful guide to the voluminous literature on *Beowulf* is provided by Bjork and Niles 1996.

29. Farrell 1972, 229.

genealogies such as that of King Alfred according to Asser's *Life*, where we find among the king's ancestors Beaw (who corresponds to Beowulf, son of Scyld Scefig, in the epic), Sceldwea (or Scyldwa, as one of the versions of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records the name) and Heremod (in *Beowulf* a king of the Danes with an uncertain position in the royal line). These lists have been much discussed, both in their significance for the self-glorification of the West-Saxon kings and as either documents of clerical manipulation or remnants of oral genealogies.<sup>30</sup> However one views this overlap of genealogy in the epic and in various historiographic works, the presence of genealogy in the epic on the one hand and its use for dynastic purposes on the other provide a link between text and context, in this case the cultural context of the epic.<sup>31</sup> It is tempting to extrapolate from the epic, in analogy to *Edige* or the epics on the Noghay heroes, via the various genealogical pointers in the narrative, to some kind of identification of the poet and his audience with the hero as "our hero" and the narrated events as "our past." Such an interpretation is, however, notoriously difficult to elaborate in detail, not only because the genealogical pointers are diffuse (the hero is, of course, a Geat and not a Dane), but also because all efforts at cultural contextualization are inevitably mixed up with questions of origin and dating, issues at least as controversial as those concerning authorship and traditionality.

Without entering into a discussion of these problems, I would like to make a few comments on the question of genealogy. Various scholars have sought to establish a link between one or the other figure of the epic and the concerns of a contemporary audience. L. L. Schücking, who agreed with Andreas Heusler on the "bookishness" of *Beowulf* and interpreted the epic as a kind of mirror for princes, inferred from the Scandinavian scene of action that *Beowulf* must have been composed in a Scandinavian-English court of the late ninth century.<sup>32</sup> Except by adherents of a late dating of the epic like that proposed by Kevin Kiernan, the Scandinavian setting of *Beowulf* is generally thought to speak for the pre-Viking period of Anglo-Saxon England.<sup>33</sup> Dorothy Whitelock argued for the eighth century and took the eulogy on Offa of the Angles in the epic

30. The most important texts are printed in Klaeber 1950, 254–55. A seminal study of these genealogical lists is Sisam 1953; see also Dumville 1977 and, on their possible relationship to *Beowulf*, Lapidge 1982, 184–88. For an argument in favor of an oral tradition of genealogical lists, see Moisl 1981.

31. See further the discussion of these genealogies in relationship to the epic's origin in Newton 1993, 54ff., and as a clue to the epic's cultural world in Hill 1995, 46ff.

32. Schücking 1917, 407.

33. Kiernan's thesis (according to which the composition of the epic as we have it is contemporary with the manuscript, i.e., from the beginning of the eleventh century) has aroused much discussion; see Kiernan's contribution to Chase 1981, 9–22, and the various articles in this collection of papers on the date of *Beowulf*; see also Kiernan's preface to the revised edition of his book on *Beowulf* and the *Beowulf* manuscript (Kiernan 1996, xv–xxviii).

(ll. 1954–60) as indicative of an original audience at the court of King Offa of Mercia (757–96).<sup>34</sup> More recently, Sam Newton put forth the thesis that various genealogical elements in *Beowulf*, in particular the figure of Hrothmund (one of Hrothgar's sons), point to the kingdom of East Anglia under Ælfwald (d. c. 749) as the place of origin of the epic. Despite Newton's persuasive argumentation, his proposal cannot be more than hypothetical since it rests on a number of assumptions that cannot be proved, in particular his identification of the Wulfings of *Beowulf* with the East Anglian dynastic eponym Wuffa.<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, his book shows that we are entitled to assume an audience for *Beowulf* for whom the figures of the epic have a genealogical relevance, as they clearly did for the West Saxon kings.

This assumption, however, confronts a serious difficulty when it comes to interpreting the hero of the epic as "our hero" for a contemporary Anglo-Saxon audience in the same way that *Edige* or *Alpāmiš* are viewed by Central Asian Turks. Whatever significance some of the figures in the Danish royal line might have had for one or other Anglo-Saxon court that has been suggested as the site of the epic's audience, *Beowulf* is not a Dane but a Geat. When looking more closely at the text, however, one cannot help noticing that there is a certain emphasis on relating *Beowulf* the Geat to the royal house of Hrothgar the Dane. At the feast held after *Beowulf*'s victory over Grendel, *Wealtheow* presents a beaker of wine to King Hrothgar, asking her husband to speak kind words to the Geats, and adding (ll. 1175–76a):

Me man sægde þæt þu ðe for sunu wolde  
hererinc habban.<sup>36</sup>

I have been told that you wanted to have the warrior for your son.

There can be no doubt that Hrothgar wants to establish a close relationship with the hero and that the gifts he bestows on him express more than the expected recompense for a retainer's service to his lord. It is conceivable that *Beowulf*'s "adoption" is more than a symbolic gesture and does open up the pos-

34. "I do not think that a date 757–96 can be proved impossibly late for either *Beowulf* or the Offa section of *Widsith*, and so I would regard it a possible hypothesis that our poem originated at the court of Offa the Great, a possible and an attractive hypothesis, but one incapable of proof" (Whitelock 1951, 64). An eighth-century Mercian milieu is also favored by Peter Clemoes in his discussion of kingship in *Beowulf* and in early Anglo-Saxon England (1995).

35. See Newton 1993, esp. the summary on 132–35.

36. *Beowulf* quotations are from volume 4 of *Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records* (Krapp and Dobbie 1931–53).

sibility of royal succession.<sup>37</sup> However one views this relationship, Beowulf is clearly associated with the Danish court and the Scyldings.

Even more telling is the praise poem composed in the morning after the fight with Grendel. Beowulf is here, as noted above (p. 102), compared to Sigemund, the dragon slayer (ll. 867ff.). In the same poem, he is also contrasted to Heremod (ll. 901–15), a Danish king who was strong and mighty in youth but later became a tyrant and was forced to end his life in exile. As far as we know, the coupling of Sigemund and Heremod is traditional; it occurs also in the Eddic *Hyndluljóð*. There is a strong moral undertone in this comparison with Heremod; the moral warning to the hero is later made explicit in Hrothgar's hortatory speech, in which Heremod once again makes his appearance (ll. 1709–22).<sup>38</sup> Heremod is one of the names in the West Saxon genealogies mentioned above. It could be argued that with this name we have another link between genealogical concerns and the hero of the epic, even if this particular ancestor is used for warning rather than praise.

Suggestive as various genealogical elements in *Beowulf* might be, there is hardly enough evidence on which to build an interpretation of the epic along the lines proposed for *Edige*. *Beowulf* has in common with other Germanic heroic poems that it sings of an ancient past and of heroes who are too distant to be seen as "our ancestors" by a contemporary audience. The heroic age of Germanic epic poetry is the time of the migrations, while the extant poetry is much later and not generally concerned with the immediate forefathers of a particular Germanic tribe or people. Chadwick, in his study of the heroic age, underlined the fact that these poems are

singularly free . . . from anything in the nature of national interest or sentiment. They are certainly national in the sense that the characters are drawn entirely, or almost entirely, from within the Teutonic world—for even Attila can hardly be regarded as an exception. But nationalism in the narrower sense, i.e. in the interests of the poet's own nation or tribe, seems to be altogether wanting. The interest is centred in one or more individual characters and in the various adventures that befall them. Sometimes, as in *Beowulf*, it does also embrace the history of the family to which these persons belonged, but the nation, apart from the royal family, is practically disregarded.<sup>39</sup>

By contrast, Turkic heroic epics such as *Edige*, *Manas*, the Noghay cycle, or *Alpamiş* are concerned with tribal roots, even if these roots are to be found in an early period of the formation of the respective *ethnos*. There is furthermore

37. This has been argued by Hollis (1983); compare also Swanton 1982, 115; Schrader 1991, 498.

38. See Bonjour 1950, 47–53; see also Hoops 1932, 113–15.

39. Chadwick 1912, 34.

a more fundamental difference between the genealogical concerns of *Beowulf*, if such they are, and those of *Edige*.

In an oral milieu, the singer of Old English heroic poetry is the *scop*, a figure intimately linked to the court of king or nobleman. Genealogical matters are primarily of interest to the ruling dynasty and the nobility, while the hero as hero (and not as ancestor) will be of interest to all members of the audience. In a Turkic setting, however, in particular where clan structures are still intact or at least were so until recently, the hero, though not literally the ancestor of the clan or the tribe, is closely associated with tribal formation. When his deeds are sung, the listeners are not only confronted with heroic action and heroic ethos but also with their own past and the beginnings of their identity as an ethnic group.

The authority of the singer guarantees that the happenings of the epic do relate to the tribe's past, that they are indeed true. As Stanley Greenfield has shown, the narrator's stance in *Beowulf* can be captured by the phrase "authenticating voice": "voice" because the narrator is neither present as persona in the epic nor properly to be called a "poet" on account of the depersonalizing effect of formulaic diction; "authenticating" because "the voice not only relates the events it has 'heard,' but in reporting them validates the way or ways in which it understands and wishes its audience to understand them."<sup>40</sup> Greenfield's observations tie in with what has been said about the singer's authority and the authenticity of his tale in an oral context. On the one hand the voice puts the narrated events into the distant past ("by historicizing or distancing them from its own and its immediate audience's time and way of life"); but on the other these events are also related to the present, "by contemporizing them, suggesting a continuity between the past and present." Greenfield underlines the truth-asserting function of the "I have heard" formula, as found already in the first lines of the epic:

Hwæt! We Gardena in geardagum,  
peodcyniga, prym gefrunon . . .

Truly, we have heard of the glory of the Spear-Danes, of the kings of the people, in days long past . . .

Similar formulas are found in other heroic poetry in Older Germanic languages, most notably in the *Hildebrandslied*, which starts with the same formula:

Ik gihorta dat seggen . . .  
(I heard say truly . . .)

40. Greenfield 1976, 53.



or at the beginning of the Middle High German *Nibelungenlied*:

Uns ist in alten mæren wunders vil geseit . . .  
(We have been told many wondrous events in old tales . . .)<sup>41</sup>

One of the ways of narrowing the gap between past and present is by stressing the relevance of the narrated events for the contemporary audience. One of the phenomena that Greenfield discusses is the voice's "commenting on the morality involved in the actions of the characters."<sup>42</sup> Gnomonic sayings and general evaluations of figures and actions are pervasive in *Beowulf*, whether uttered by the narrating voice or by the protagonists. To give just a few examples:

Of Scyld Scefing:

Ðæt wæs god cyning! (l. 11b)  
(That was a good king!)

Wealththeow to Beowulf:

swa sceal man don (l. 1172b)  
(thus a man shall act)

Beowulf on Fate:

Gæð a wyrd swa hio scel (l. 455b)  
(Fate will always go as it must)

Gnomonic and proverbial sayings are widely used in Old English poetry. They are also found in the elegies (*Wanderer*, *Seafarer* and others), as well as in other non-narrative poetry. Gnomes also constitute a genre of their own, attesting to their popularity in Anglo-Saxon society.<sup>43</sup> Maxims and other advice are also found in Turkic oral epic poetry, usually when the hero is about to depart on a dangerous mission. When, for instance, Alpāmiš leaves home to woo Barčın in the land of the Kalmucks, his sister Qaldirgāč wishes him success and gives him this advice:

41. On this formula in Old English, see Parks 1987, and in the *Nibelungenlied*, see Ehrismann 1987, 98–99.

42. Greenfield 1976, 53, 57–59.

43. See Shippey 1977 and 1994; Schäfer 1992, 178 ff. On gnomes in Old English and Old Norse narrative verse, see Larrington 1993, 200–219; on proverbial sayings in *Beowulf*, particularly warnings and advice, see Desks 1996, 105–38.

Bir nečuk nāmardga koñil bermagin,  
Lādān koñliñ har xayālga bolmagin,  
Kop yašagin, kop yilgača olmagin,  
Yolda nāmardlarni hamrāh qilmagin.<sup>44</sup>

May you never set your heart on a coward,  
May your innocent heart never be oppressed by heavy thoughts,  
May you live for a long time and not die for many years,  
May you not associate with a coward on your way.

Passages like these are probably the clearest cases of the transmission of cultural values in traditional epic poetry. They contribute to a reading of poems like *Alpāmiš* and also *Beowulf* as poetic expressions of a cultural world, characterized both by various elements of material culture and by sets of values and rules. We can talk meaningfully about the swords in *Beowulf* as well as about the code of behavior regulating the relationship between lord and retainer in the *comitatus* system.<sup>45</sup> These readings specify the wider sphere in which the singer's narrating of a heroic past is placed: singing the past constitutes one of the facets of the traditional epic as a storehouse of cultural wisdom and a symbol of cultural identity.

#### "Nos avum dreit": History and Identification in the *Chanson de Roland*

Even an early dating of *Beowulf* has to acknowledge the fact that the poem is separated by more than two hundred years from the only datable historical event in the epic, Hygelac's Frisian raid of c. A.D. 520. Similarly, the *Chanson de Roland*, the oldest extant *chanson de geste*, reflects a historical event that happened several hundred years earlier. The Oxford manuscript of the *Chanson de Roland*, Bodleian Digby 23, dates from the beginning of the twelfth century, but the poem is thought to have been composed in the eleventh century. The historical nucleus of the *Chanson de Roland* is the Basque ambush of August 15, 778, during Charlemagne's Spanish campaign, which has its historiographical reflection in a passage in Einhard's *Vita Karoli Magni*. According to Einhard (d. 840), the ambush ended with the death of Eggihard, president of the king's

44. Mirzaev, Abduraximov, and Mirbadaleva 1999, 134. The passage comprises 32 lines (in Fāzil Yoldāš-oglı's version).

45. A recent attempt to look at the cultural world in the epic from an anthropological point of view is Hill 1995.

table; Anshelmus, count of the palace; and Roland, prefect of the Breton marches, as well as many others.<sup>46</sup> It is clear that this event lies at the heart of the *Chanson de Roland* and acted as a kind of generator for the development of the poem. In this respect the *Chanson de Roland* is quite different from *Beowulf*, where Hygelac's raid is fairly marginal to the action, although Hygelac's death does, of course, raise the question of Geatish succession.

While the historical nucleus of the *Chanson de Roland* is incontestable, the question of the relationship between history and poetry, regarding the genesis of the poem, is far from settled. A widely accepted explanatory paradigm posits the following three stages: a historical event worthy of attention is at first remembered in historical songs (of the type discussed in chapter 2); in the course of their transmission these songs become dehistoricized and combined with unhistorical narrative elements ("legends" and "myths"); they are finally transformed into heroic lays or epics that reflect history only in an indirect and possibly spurious way. There are several problems with this paradigm. In the case of the *Chanson de Roland*, we basically have only (a) some reflection of the historical event itself in contemporary (or near-contemporary) historiography (such as Einhard's *Vita Karoli Magni*); and (b) the end product, the full-blown epic. All the intervening stages between the historical event and the epic in its transmitted form are missing. There is, it is true, the *Nota Emilianense*, a short note from the third quarter of the eleventh century that attests to the popularity of the "legend of Roland" in the early eleventh and probably late tenth century, but there is no guarantee that at this or any earlier time there were poems in circulation that are comparable to our *chanson*.<sup>47</sup> Obviously, any attempt to reconstruct the missing links between historical event and transmitted poem has to face the quagmire of issues surrounding the origin and genesis of the *Chanson de Roland* and the *chanson de geste* in general. Given the controversial nature (and voluminousness) of the critical debate, there can be no question of entering into this debate here. A few remarks must suffice.

As in *Beowulf* scholarship, questions of genesis, dating, transmission, authorship, traditionality, orality, and generic affiliation (to mention only the most obvious) are almost inextricably intertwined and enmeshed in critical studies of the *chanson de geste*. In the present context, where parallels to a genuine oral tradition are stressed, neotraditionalist readings of the *Chanson de Roland* clearly

46. "In quo proelio Eggihardus regiae mensae praepositus, Anshelmus comes palatii [et Hruodlandus Brittanici limitis praefectus] cum aliis conpluribus interficiuntur" (Pertz, Waitz, and Holder-Egger 1911, 12). For an English translation of the relevant chapter, see Thorpe 1969, 64–65.

47. For the historical background to the *Chanson de Roland*, see the magisterial neotraditionalist study by Menéndez Pidal (1960); see also Aebischer 1972. The *Nota Emilianense*, dating from around 1070, names Roland, Oliver, and other heroes of the *chanson de geste*, attesting to legendary activity prior to the extant poems. The *Nota* was published by Dámaso Alonso (1973), who believes that we can deduce the existence of epic poems at the end of the tenth century from this document.

make more sense for a comparative analysis than individualist approaches, in particular of an uncompromising kind.<sup>48</sup> While, as with *Beowulf*, optimism about being able to prove the orality of the *Chanson* by reference to its formulaic composition has been somewhat dampened, an awareness of the oral background to this type of poetry is nevertheless widespread today.<sup>49</sup> Many scholars will agree that the *Chanson de Roland* is a representative of traditional poetry, even if the vagaries of textual transmission and preservation have resulted in a written text, literally a work of "literature." There can be no doubt that, in particular in later *chansons de geste*, formulaic diction and other marks of orality such as addressing listeners rather than readers have become stylistic devices, typical of the genre and inherited from oral tradition, but not necessarily any longer indicative of oral composition. On the other hand, it would seem strange that representatives of a genre with such a clear orientation toward oral performance should be primarily interpreted as works of written literature, especially in the case of *chansons de geste* of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Without denying the fact that *chansons de geste* were also composed in writing (and certainly "edited" by scribes), the art of the *chanson de geste* is fundamentally that of the oral performer, as Jean Rychner has convincingly shown. In a neotraditionalist reading, as adopted here, a poem such as the *Chanson de Roland* is modeled on native oral epic poetry, even if the text itself cannot be proved to have been orally composed.

However controversial the debate on traditionality, what is uncontroversial is that the *Chanson de Roland* has a historical nucleus and that this nucleus plays a central role in the plot of the poem, even if the Basques of history have been replaced by (historical and legendary) Arabs and the bare events as described by Einhard have been transformed into a drama of heroism, intrigue, and revenge. The question to be discussed here, however, is not how central the events of the past are to the plot of the poem but rather what the relevance of the poetic reflection of the past could have been to a contemporary audience.

At the beginning of the Saracens' attack on the rearguard of Charlemagne's

48. Questions of genesis and traditionality have been much discussed; for witty and skeptical surveys, see Siciliano 1951 and 1968. Siciliano's attitude is typical of scholars opposed to neotraditionalism: "The history of the French epic begins in the eleventh century. From the eleventh century onward every *chanson de geste* reveals to us what it is by telling us, without overmuch lying, its own history. Beyond the eleventh century, the field is open for all the fruitful or sterile operations of our more or less legendary philology" (1968, 325). For a more recent summary discussion, see Boutet 1993, 34ff. Boutet advocates a syncretistic view: "In the final analysis, then, the *chanson de geste* emerges as a mixed form, where orality and writing are intimately intermingled" (97).

49. The formulaic nature of the *chanson de geste* as evidence of the jongleur's art was first discussed systematically by Jean Rychner (1955). Rychner's analysis provoked opposition, in particular among "individualists" and anti-oralists. A typical reply to Rychner's challenge is that by Maurice Delbouille (1959). For an application of Parry's and Lord's oral-formulaic theory to the *chanson de geste* (which has also been criticized), see Duggan 1973.

army under Roland, the Saracen Aëlroth defies the “feluns Franceis” and accuses their king of folly and treason (ll. 1191–95). Enraged, Roland rides toward Aëlroth, stabs him with his lance, and throws him from his horse, lifeless and with a broken neck. He exclaims triumphantly (ll. 1207–12):

“Ultre, culvert! Carles n'est mie fol,  
Ne traïsun unkes amer ne volt.  
Il fist que proz qu'il nus laisad as porz,  
Oi n'en perdrat France dulce sun los.  
Ferez i, Francs, nostre est li premiers colps!  
Nos avum dreit, mais cist glutun unt tort.”<sup>50</sup>

“Away, rascal! Charles has neither folly  
Not does he ever love treason.  
He acted bravely when he entrusted the mountain pass to us.  
Today sweet France will not lose her glory.  
Strike, Franks, the first blow is ours!  
We are in the right, but these wretches are in the wrong.”

Phrases like “nos avum dreit” recur in the *Chanson de Roland*. When the approaching Saracens are first sighted and Oliver expresses his opinion that a hostile encounter will ensue, Roland assures him that

Paien unt tort e chrestiens unt dreit (l. 1015)  
(The infidels are in the wrong and the Christians in the right)

Later, during the battle between the Christians under Charlemagne and the Saracens under Baligant, the emir of Babylon, Charlemagne encourages his soldiers by reminding them that theirs is a just cause:

Ja savez vos cuntre paiens ai dreit (l. 3413)  
(You know already that the right is on my side against the infidels)

Even Baligant becomes aware of this, when he sees the Muslim banners sink:

Baligant veit sun gunfanon cadeir  
E l'estandart Mahumet remaneir;  
Li amiralz alques s'en aperceit  
Que il ad tort e Carlemagne dreit. (ll. 3551–54)

50. Quotations from the *Chanson de Roland* are taken from Moignet 1969; as Moignet points out in his note (104), *ultre* can be variously interpreted; my translation follows the reading he favors.

Baligant sees his standard bearer fall  
And the banner of Mohammed become worthless:  
The emir begins to realize  
That he is in the wrong and Charlemagne in the right.

In the heat of the battle, the soldiers on the Christian side exclaim:

Carles ad dreit, ne li devom faillir (l. 3359)  
(Charles is in the right, we must not fail him)<sup>51</sup>

When Charlemagne as the leader of the Christian army and Baligant as the commander of the Saracens engage in single combat, the insistence on right and wrong evokes a judicial duel.<sup>52</sup> But the implications of “nos avum dreit” are wider. As the quotations show, the two sides are respectively identified as Charlemagne, Franks, and Christians; and Baligant, Saracens, and infidels. There is a triple opposition: between two kings and their vassals, between Franks and Saracens/Arabs, and between Christians and Muslims. Thus on “our side,” the listeners are asked to identify with “our king,” with “our Franks,” and with “our Christians.”

“Our king” is the Charlemagne of legend rather than history. As a number of scholars have argued—generally when trying to defend the authenticity of the Baligant episode, Charlemagne’s battle with Baligant and the Saracen army—Charlemagne has an important role to play in the *chanson*, not only as an avenger, but more importantly as lord and king, as leader of the Franks, and, as it turns out, as symbol of Christian Europe.<sup>53</sup> In the *Chanson de Roland* the code of feudal society is taken for granted, and the relationship between king and vassal is presented as intact. This is not so in all *chansons de geste*. While Charlemagne’s kingship is idealized in the *Chanson de Roland*, a process of deidealization can be recognized as early as the twelfth century.<sup>54</sup> In fact, the problematic relationship between king and vassal gave rise to a subgroup of *chansons de geste*, “epics of revolt.”<sup>55</sup> In the *Chanson de Roland* the role of Charlemagne as overlord and commander in chief of his troops remains unchallenged. There are signs neither of revolt nor of tension in the feudal relationships. Unlike other *chansons de geste*, such as *Girart de Roussillon* or *Raoul de*

51. In line 3367, they exclaim “Carles ad dreit vers la gent. . . .” The Oxford manuscript has *iesnie* at the end of this line, which some editors emend to *païenisme* or *païesnie* (“Charles is in the right against the pagans”).

52. Riquier 1957, 91.

53. The so-called Baligant Episode is thought by some scholars to be a later accretion; see Menéndez Pidal 1960, 121–26. For a defense of the episode, see Riquier 1957, 87–92.

54. This has been worked out in detail in Bender 1967.

55. See Calin 1962; one of these *chansons*, *Gormond et Isembard*, will be briefly discussed below.

*Cambrai*, the *Chanson de Roland* is concerned neither with problems of succession or inheritance, nor with struggles for power and overlordship.<sup>56</sup>

In the eleventh century many peoples of Europe could look back to Charlemagne as "our king," "our emperor," "nostre emperere magnes," as the *Chanson de Roland* calls him in its first line. But what about "our Franks"? The *Chanson de Roland* (like other *chansons de geste*) uses "Franc" (Frank) and "Franceis" (French) interchangeably. At the beginning of the poem, in the council scene at King Marsile's court in Saragossa, Blancandrins predicts the imminent retreat of the Christian army:

L' ost des Franceis verrez sempres desfere.  
Francs s'en irunt en France, la lur tere. (ll. 49-50)

You will soon see the army of the French defeated.  
The Franks will return to France, their country.

Both the Francs and the French are from France:

Des Francs de France en i ad plus de mil (l. 177)  
(There are more than a thousand Franks of France)

Od mil Franceis de France, la lur tere (l. 808)  
(With a thousand French of France, their country)

This synonymy of "Franc" and "Franceis" is generally interpreted as indicating that "France" must designate Charlemagne's empire and "Franc" and "Franceis" the people of his empire.<sup>57</sup> This is certainly correct for the *Chanson de Roland*, but it can nevertheless be shown that a growing national awareness is reflected in the *chansons de geste* of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, where "France" comes to mean more and more a contemporary political entity rather than Charlemagne's empire. Andreas Bomba has analyzed the occurrence of "Franc" and "Franceis" in the poems of the *Cycle of Guillaume*, where he finds various uses and functions of these terms: a distinctive function, distinguishing the French from the English or the Normans; a generalizing function, meaning basically the peoples of (Latin) Christendom; an identifying function, especially

56. For an interpretation of feudal relationships in *Raoul de Cambrai*, see Matarasso 1962, 105-75. The role of Charlemagne as king and emperor in the *Chanson de Roland* as reflecting twelfth-century ideas of kingship and feudal aspirations is discussed in Haidu 1993, 101-19.

57. See Bédier 1927, 511-12.

when characterized as "our"; and an idealizing function, whereby "Francs" and "Franceis" are presented as embodying the values of a feudal society.<sup>58</sup>

In his analysis, Bomba stressed the performative aspect of the *chanson de geste*: the various functions of "Franc" and "Franceis" are exploited by the jongleur to enable his listeners to identify with the heroes and action of the epics. Who were these listeners? The pilgrims on the way to St. James of Compostela? The common folk gathering in the marketplace on feast days and holidays? Noblemen, knights, and other members of the elite of feudal society? Jean Flori exclaims, after having asked this question ("Who, then, was the audience of the epics?"): "Unfortunately, the uncertainty is here as great as that concerning the person of the author."<sup>59</sup> The uncertainty is indeed great, and the proposed audiences are correspondingly varied. Flori mentions among others Edmond Faral, who imagined a popular audience; Joseph Bédier, for whom the performance of the *chansons de geste* (as well as their origin) was intimately linked to pilgrims and pilgrims' routes; Léon Gautier, who advocated both knightly and popular groups of listeners; and M. Dominica Legge, who sought the members of the audience among the knights and warriors of medieval castles. Given the differences among the extant *chansons de geste*, a focus on just one type of audience to the exclusion of others is difficult to justify. Nevertheless, the sociological group most directly addressed in the poems does seem to be the knight-hood, in particular in the twelfth century.<sup>60</sup> A number of historically oriented analyses stress the reflection of the feudal world in the *Chanson de Roland* and other *chansons de geste*, a reflection that must not, however, be taken as a naïve mirroring of society. The "nos" in the *Chanson de Roland* suggests a community of listeners and protagonists who cannot be simply conflated into one sociological group. Audience and epic world are linked by models of social behavior and value systems that need not coincide with only one social group.<sup>61</sup>

The third opposition found in the *Chanson de Roland*, that between Christians and Muslims, points in a direction that calls for more inclusive identifications than one social class or group. Charlemagne is the leader of Christendom

58. See Bomba 1987, 177-205; on the meaning of "France," see *ibid.*, 205ff.

59. Flori 1988, 89.

60. This has been argued in detail for the *Chanson de Roland* by Matthias Waltz (1965, 80-134).

61. There are a great number of historical analyses of individual *chansons de geste* and of interpretations of the *chansons de geste* in terms of the historical reality that they represent, or which structures the concerns of the epics. Among more recent studies, Joël Griswald attempts to uncover a Dumézilian tripartite social structure in the *Cycle of Aymeri de Narbonne* (1981); Howard Bloch sees the language of the *Chanson de Roland* as serving "to affirm the shared values of the community of warrior knights, and even to crystallize the aspirations of an entire class" (1983, 106); and Sarah Kay stresses that an analysis of societal preoccupations in the *chansons de geste* reveals contradictions and tensions arising from "the political unconscious" (1995).



and Roland and the Douze Pairs are the champions of the fight against the Saracens. It has been argued that this emphasis on a holy war, a Christian jihad, in the *Chanson de Roland* reflects the spirit of the Crusades. Ernst Robert Curtius saw, as new elements in the *Chanson de Roland*, the idealization of Charlemagne, the reflection of knightly values, and the glorification of the war against the infidels.<sup>62</sup> This emphasis on a religious mission is at the same time connected with the defense of Christendom against Saracen aggression and with the reconquest of territory felt to be unlawfully occupied by Muslims: the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and other holy places in Palestine as well as the larger part of the Iberian peninsula. These wider issues enable the listeners across medieval Europe to identify with "our Franks" and to appreciate the *chansons de geste* as expressions of a spirit uniting all peoples of Christian Europe.<sup>63</sup> This probably explains their popularity in late medieval England, in particular that of the *chansons de geste* of *Otinel* and *Fierabras*, which are both stories about the fight against the Saracens and the conversion of the infidel to Christianity.<sup>64</sup>

From a Turkological point of view, one might add that there is a widely diffused genre of oral epic (and popular chapbook) among Turkic peoples which treats of the fight of the *gāzī*, the Muslim warriors for the faith, against unbelievers, be they Christian Greeks and Armenians or Shiite Persians. These poems (or prosimetric narratives) are called *džāñnāma* in Uzbek, a term derived from Persian *džāñ*, "war," and *nāma*, "book." This type of narrative is not only popular among Turkic-speaking peoples, but is found in the entire Islamic world. The Uzbek *džāñnāma* corresponds to the Arabic *al-magāzī*, "war story," popular narratives of the heroic deeds of the Prophet Mohammed, of his cousin and son-in-law Ali, and of their generals and *gāzī*, which in style and ethos are very similar to secular heroic narratives such as the epics of *Abū Zayd* and the *Banī Hilāl*. In Turkey, the popular narratives of the heroic deeds of Seyyid Baṭṭāl (*Gazevât-i Seyyid Battâl Gazi*) and Melik Dānīshmend (*Dānīshmend-nâme*) are the most famous representatives of this genre. Seyyid Baṭṭāl was an Umayyad general of the eighth century, but the tale of his deeds tells mostly of the border wars in which the Arabs, Turks, and Byzantines were later engaged (eleventh to thirteenth centuries). Melik ("King") Dānīshmend lived in the eleventh century (d. 1104) and founded a dynasty in Anatolia. The *Dānīshmend-nâme* recounts how Dānīshmend rode into battle with Seyyid Baṭṭāl's banner and Abū Muslim's black standard in his hand. Abū Muslim, also a historical figure (he

62. Curtius 1944, 310. For a discussion of the literature on the crusading spirit in the *Chanson de Roland*, see Klein 1956.

63. For an interpretation of the *chansons de geste* within the framework of the fight of Christian knighthood against the threat of the Muslim invasion and conquest of Europe, see Daniel 1984.

64. See Cowen 1996.

was assassinated in 755), is the hero of yet another *džāñnāma*, in Turkish, Persian, and Uzbek. In all these popular narratives and epics, the crusading spirit of the *chanson de geste* finds, as it were, its mirror image on the side of the enemy. Stylistically, the closeness of these works to secular heroic poetry is remarkable, although on account of their religious themes written literature has exerted a strong influence on the *džāñnāma* and related genres.<sup>65</sup>

Coming back to the *Chanson de Roland*, we find that the celebration of "our past" differs significantly from what was said both about *Edige* and about *Beowulf*. While these poems agree with one another in many ways, most notably in their orientation toward a glorified and heroic past, they differ in how they interpret this past. For the audience of *Edige*, unlike the assumed contemporary audience of the *Chanson de Roland*, larger political entities than the tribe play no role; nor does the code of a medieval feudal society, nor the fervor of a religious (and political) mission. Although there are religious elements in *Edige* (and comparable Turkic heroic epics) and although the archenemy in the epics of the central traditions is the infidel, the non-Islamic Kalmuck, there is no crusading spirit in these *dastans*. The society depicted is basically tribal and prefeudal, and "our side" is primarily the side of "our ancestors" and their leaders, of the founders of "our tribe".<sup>66</sup> Despite these differences, *Edige* seems closer to the *Chanson de Roland* than to *Beowulf*. In both the French and the Turkic case we can assume listeners to whom the past matters in an existential sense, who seek their roots in the poetic representation of "our heroes." As discussed above, this connection is more tenuous in the case of *Beowulf*, where furthermore the genealogical concerns are dynastic and probably restricted to a courtly audience.

The *chanson de geste* ties in, however, with what has been said about truth, authority, and authenticity. In a famous medieval discussion of genres, a passage in Jean Bodel's *Chanson des Saisnes* (end of twelfth century), it is said that the distinctive mark of the *chanson de geste* is its truth:

Li conte de Bretagne si sont vain et plaisant,  
Et cil de Ronme sage et de sens apendant,  
Cil de France sont voir chacun jour apparant (ll. 9–11)<sup>67</sup>

65. On the Uzbek *džāñnāma*, see Žirmunskij and Zarifov 1947, 112–22; on the Arabic *al-magāzī*, see Paret 1930; on the Turkish narratives, see Bombaci 1968, 259–64; on the Turkic and Iranian poetic traditions about Abū Muslim, see Melikoff 1962.

66. Calling the society that epics like *Edige* depict "prefeudal" does not imply that a feudal setting of the story is excluded. Important protagonists in *Edige* are khans and viziers, and as Žirmunskij has pointed out, the "personal conflict between the unjust khan and his honest vassal" in *Edige* is "typical for the epic of the feudal period" (Žirmunskij 1974b, 378). As Lawrence Krader has underlined, larger social units such as clan federations and khanates can be viewed, like clans, as corporations; they are nothing less than "political states in statu nascendi" (Krader 1963, 328).

67. Brasseur 1989, 1:2.

The Breton tales [Arthurian narratives and Breton lays] are idle and pleasing, And the narratives of Rome [the *romans antiques*] are wise and educational, While those of France [the *chansons de geste*] reveal every day their truth.

Guarantor for the truth of the tale is the narrating voice. Curiously, the authenticity of the tale is averred, not by reference to an oral tradition but by reference to written sources. While in the oral epic the singer guarantees the truth (or authenticity) of his tale, the medieval scribe (and probably the jongleur as well) replaces the authority of oral transmission by the authority of a written source. In the Old French *chanson de geste* of *Gormond et Isembard*, for instance, there is repeated reference to a *geste* (meaning "chronicle," *res gestae*):<sup>68</sup>

ceo dit la geste a Seint Denise (l. 146)  
(thus says the chronicle at Saint-Denis)

ceo dit la geste a Seint Richier (l. 330)  
(thus says the chronicle at Saint-Riquier)

Ceo dit la geste, e il est veir (l. 418)  
(Thus says the chronicle and it is true)

This *chanson de geste* has as its "historical nucleus" the same events as the *Ludwigslied*, the raids of the Norsemen in northern France in the 880s and the victory of Louis III in the battle of Saucourt in 881 (see above, pp. 56–58). The *chanson* shows, however, little resemblance to the *Ludwigslied*; it is transmitted only in fragmentary form, a fact that seriously impairs comparison and interpretation. Although the identification of the "historical nucleus" is uncontested, the relationship between *chanson de geste* and historical event is far from clear. For Joseph Bédier the origin of the *chanson* is linked to the Abbey of Saint-Riquier and its feast and fair on October 9. Hariulf, a monk of the abbey, wrote in his chronicle in the eleventh century that at the feast of St. Riquier all the knights of Ponthieu assembled to do homage to the saint: "These knights, assembled around the saint as if around their lord, these pilgrims, these merchants attracted by the fair—such was the first audience of the *chanson* of *Gormond et Isembard*. This legend was formed by them and for them."<sup>69</sup> Ferdinand Lot, on the other hand, firmly rejects a clerical origin in the eleventh century and concludes in his studies of *Gormond et Isembard* that a local oral tradition—

68. Quoted from the edition by Bayot (1931). The name of the *chanson de geste* is also *Gormont et Isembart*. For a survey of editions and scholarly literature, see Ashford 1984–85; the poem is discussed in connection with the revolt epics in Calin 1962.

69. Bédier 1926, 4:90. Bédier's chapter on this *chanson de geste* is found *ibid.*, 19–91.

in song—must have given rise to the *chanson* as we have it.<sup>70</sup> It is interesting to note that the poet (or scribe?) of the *chanson* refers to the "chronicle at Saint-Riquier," while Hariulf, in his chronicle, refers (apart from books) also to local oral poems. He justifies the brevity of his treatment of the historical events as follows:

Sed quia quomodo sit factum non solum historiis, sed etiam patriensium memoria quotidie recolitur et cantatur, nos, pauca memorantes, caetera omittamus, ut qui cuncta nosse anhelat, non nostro scripto, sed priscorum auctoritate doceatur.

But as these events were not only treated in historical writings, but are also daily revived in the memory of the natives and narrated in song, we, who remember little, will leave out the rest [of the story], so that who wants to know the whole story may be taught not by what we have written but by the authority of our elders.<sup>71</sup>

For the jongleur (and certainly the scribe) authenticity could apparently only be derived from written sources, while the historiographer will sift his evidence, and if oral poems are of use he will not disdain them. In fact, Hariulf accords authority only to his oral sources. Widukind of Corvey refers to *mimi* just as Hariulf refers to jongleurs. In the same vein Alfonso X and his staff derive authority in the *Estoria de Espanna* (1270–75) from the native Spanish *cantares de gesta*.<sup>72</sup> While in Old English or Old High German the "I have heard" formula places the tale in an oral context, implying authenticity through participation in an oral transmission, for the later jongleur (and the other entertainers and popular narrators, such as the minstrel and the *spielmann*) legitimacy can no longer be based on oral tradition in a world in which power is associated with literacy. This reminds us of the transitional nature of medieval heroic poetry and epic: while we can still discern the roots of this poetry in oral tradition, we owe its preservation and textual shape to the development of writing and the activity of scribes. Although the spread of literacy entailed a change from a predominantly oral to a predominantly literate culture and hence marginalized oral poetry by the end of the Middle Ages, we must be grateful to these medieval "men of the book" for having transmitted such a rich heritage of traditional poetry.

70. "But how can one explain the fact that two centuries after the events, someone from Ponthieu should have been able to preserve the memory, however altered, of an event from so distant a past?"

"The answer to this question is that remembrance of King Louis's victory over the Norsemen was preserved locally, thanks to oral tradition. One or several poems could have—in fact must have—preceded the one that we still have, at least in part." Lot 1958, 224–25.

71. Lot 1894, 141.

72. See González-Casanovas 1990.

## Conclusion

Certainly, I must confess my own barbarousness, I never heard the old song of Percy and Douglas that I found not my heart moved more than with a trumpet; and yet it is sung but by some blind crowder, with no rougher voice than rude style; which being so evil appalled in the dust and cobwebs of that uncivil age, what could it work trimmed in the gorgeous eloquence of Pindar?

—Sir Philip Sidney, *A Defence of Poetry* (1595)

Sidney was not the last person to hear the ballad *The Hunting of the Cheviot* performed; Bertrand H. Bronson published several melodies of the ballad which were recorded as late as the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, though none of these late performers was a “blind crowder.”<sup>1</sup> This ballad, of which version A (according to Child’s classification) dates from c. 1550 and version B is found in the Percy Folio, stands clearly in a late medieval tradition (shared by other ballads) and is based on a historical event, the battle of Otterburn, which took place between the English and the Scots in 1388.<sup>2</sup> In its narrative technique, this ballad reaches even further into the past. Oskar Sauer, in a dissertation on the sources of *The Hunting of the Cheviot*, singles out a number of elements that hark back to the Old Germanic heroic lay: arming the heroes, asking for the opponent’s name, flyting, lament, and others.<sup>3</sup> This is not to say that the ballad stands in a direct line of descent to Germanic oral poetry, but it exhibits a somewhat archaic style and technique that make it a fitting example of the survival of an older oral world in Sidney’s England.

1. The passage quoted from Sidney’s *Defence* is taken from Van Dorsten 1973, 46. On the tunes of this ballad (Child 1882–98, no. 162), see Bronson 1959–72, 3:113–16.

2. See Child 1882–98, 3:303–15; cf. also Child no. 161, *The Battle of Otterburn* (ibid., 289–302); on the relation and evolution of the ballads in question, see also Bland 1951.

3. Sauer 1913.

In the case of the popular ballad we are fortunate in being able to witness the continuance of a tradition with roots in the Middle Ages to this day—at least in some parts of the English-speaking world, and a similar situation holds for other European traditions. Other types of oral narrative poetry, however, have been lost and their orality—as performance act and performance situation—can only be reconstructed, on internal evidence if such exists, or by comparison. Sidney underlines the value of a comparative approach to poetry at various points in his argument. When he speaks of the relationship of poetry to a life of action and warfare, he cites as examples *Orlando Furioso* and “honest King Arthur,” adding that the martial quality of poetry is the reason why “even Turks and Tartars are delighted with poets.”<sup>4</sup> Some of the poetry of these “Turks and Tartars” has been analyzed in the preceding chapters, with the intention of providing analogues to and a “living context” for traditional medieval heroic and epic poetry. In this conclusion I would like to take up again the two components of the title of this book, “singing” and “the past.”

Doubtless the area where comparative studies are especially called for is that of performance. As the essence of oral poetry is its orality, medieval poetry with an oral background must as living poetry, as sound and event, be forever closed to us, unless comparison opens a window. There are enough clues in medieval poetry to impress on us their vocality. One such clue is references to performance and to the singing of narrative and epic poetry. Possibly the most elaborate medieval catalogue of works performed at a feast is found in the Old Provençal *roman* of *Flamenca* (ll. 592 ff.). Some of the performers were musicians, some narrators; some of the works mentioned were sung—such as the *Lai dels Fins amanz* (The *lai* of the perfect lovers)—some narrated, some both narrated and accompanied by music:

L'uns viola-[ ] lais del Cabrefoil,  
E l'autre cel de Tintagoil;  
L'us cantet cel des Fins amanz,  
E l'autre cel que fes Ivans.  
L'us menet arpa, l'autre viula;  
L'us flautella, l'autre siula;  
L'us mena giga, l'autre rota,  
L'us diz los motz et l'autre-ls nota;  
.....  
Per la rumor dels viuladors  
E per brug d'aitans comtadors  
Hac gran murmuri per la sala.<sup>5</sup>

4. Van Dorsten 1973, 56.

5. *Flamenca*, ll. 599–606, 707–9; Lavaud and Nelli 1960, 674, 680.

One of them plays the “Lai du Chèvrefeuille” on the *vièle*,  
Another that of Tintagel;  
One minstrel sings the “Lai of the Perfect Lovers,”  
Another that which Ivain composed.  
One plays the harp, another the *vièle*,  
One plays the flute, another the pipe,  
One plays the gigue, another the *rota*,  
One speaks the words and the other plays the music.

.....  
Because of the sound of the fiddle players  
And the noise of so many narrators  
There was a lot of din in the hall.<sup>6</sup>

These lists and descriptions leave us in no doubt that the reciting of narratives (tales, epics, *chansons de geste*, romances, and others) by professional narrators (singers, minstrels, jongleurs: there is a profusion of overlapping and not always clearly defined terms in medieval texts) was of common occurrence during feasts and social gatherings of various sorts. Granted that the abundance of entertainers, instruments played, and poetry performed is in many cases (as certainly in *Flamenca*) hyperbolic, the mixing of playing music, singing songs, and telling tales (in whatever form—reading, reciting, chanting, or singing) must have been fairly widespread, without, however, any recognizable sequence of events as in the case of the performance of Turkic epic poetry.

In the Old English poem *Widsith* there are a number of passages in which the speaker of the poem, the *gleoman* Widsith, refers to the performance of song and poetry. Thus he narrates that he had received a ring from Ermanaric and a second one from Ealhild, Ermanaric's wife, and then continues:

Hyre lof lengde geond londa fela,  
ponne ic be songe secgan sceolde  
hwær ic under swegl[e] selast wisse  
goldhrodene cwen giefe bryttian.  
Donne wit Scilling sciran reorde  
for uncrum sigedryhtne song ahofan,  
hlude be hearpan hleoþor swinsade,  
ponne monige men modum wlonce  
wordum sprecan, þa þe wel cuþan,  
þæt hi næfre song sellan ne hyrdon. (ll. 99–108)

6. The “Lai du Chèvrefeuille” is one of the Breton *lais* composed by Marie de France (Ewert 1944, 123–26); as to the other *lais*, it is unclear whether they correspond to any of the extant *lais*. According to Chrétien's *Yvain*, there was a *lai* about Duke Laudunet, Laudine's father, but this was not composed by Yvain (*Yvain*, l. 2153; Roques 1960, 66).



Through many lands her praise extended, when I must tell in song, where under the heavens I best knew a queen adorned with gold giving forth treasure. When Scilling and I with clear voice raised the song before our noble lord (loud to the harp the words made melody) then many men cunning and great of mind said they had never heard a better song.<sup>7</sup>

There are several points to be made about this passage. First we notice that *song* and *secgan* are combined; as it is clear from the context that *song* really means "song" here, the verb *secgan* need obviously not mean "say in speaking." This is just a minor point, but as theories of the performance of medieval narrative poetry are sometimes based on the supposed meaning of these verbs, one needs to keep this in mind. Secondly there are two performers, Widsith and Scilling. The singing of epic poetry by two singers is also attested for medieval Italian *cantastorie*; it was the traditional way of singing the Finnish *runos*, and it is also occasionally found among South Slavic *guslari* and Albanian singers of heroic lays.<sup>8</sup> There have been attempts to take Scilling as the name of Widsith's harp; in that case *reord* "voice" would mean two things here, the human voice of the singer and the musical sound of the instrument.<sup>9</sup> Old English *reord* is generally used to denote human speech, but it can be used for the sound made by animals, as the famous line from the *Seafarer* attests: "Swylce geac monað geomran reorde" ("Thus the cuckoo moans with his woeful voice," l. 53). As the harp is not explicitly named anywhere, it seems unlikely that Scilling should be the name of the singer's instrument. Unferth's sword in *Beowulf*, for instance, is explicitly named: "wæs þæm hæftmece Hrunting nama" ("the *hæftmece* was called Hrunting," l. 1457); and it is equally clear from the context that *Nægling* must be the name of Beowulf's sword: "Nægling forbærst, geswac æt sæcweord Biowulfes" ("Nægling broke in two, Beowulf's sword failed in the fight," ll. 2680–81). Furthermore, the singers apparently sing to the accompaniment of the harp (or lyre). Their singing is *scir* "clean, clear" and *hlud* "loud."

7. Text and translation from Chambers 1912, 217–18.

8. "Et isti comedi adhuc sunt in usu nostro et apparent maxime in partibus Lombardie aliqui cantatores qui magnorum dominorum in rithmis cantant gesta, unus proponendo, alius respondendo." From the commentary on the *Divine Comedy* by Alberico da Rosciate (1343–49) as quoted in Levi 1914, 10. For the performance of *runos* see Mustanoja 1959. On the "choric performance" of *junačke pjesme*, see Kravcov 1985, 127. For an example of the antiphonal performance of an Albanian heroic lay ("Kënga e Çun Mules" ["The Song of Çun Mula"]), see the record edited by Lloyd 1966, side A, band 7.

9. Strictly speaking, the instrument called *hearp* in Old English might also be a lyre. Organology distinguishes between the harp, which consists of a soundboard and (generally plucked) strings, whose plane is perpendicular to the soundboard, and the lyre, which is similar to the harp but differs in having a yoke of two wooden pieces, rising from the soundbox and connected by a piece of wood on which the strings are fastened. David in the illumination of fol. 30v of the *Vespasian Psalter*, for instance, is playing the lyre, not the harp.

Finally, they sing at the royal court (*for uncrum sigedryhtne*) and in praise of the queen.

We learn from this passage, then, that a singer like Widsith composes and performs praise songs.<sup>10</sup> He performs them to the accompaniment of the *hearp*, sometimes together with another singer, and his art consists apparently not only in his verbal skill but also in his musical performance: he has a clear and well-carrying voice, and the sound of his singing (*hleopor*) is presumably musical and pleasant to the ear.<sup>11</sup>

As we saw earlier (pp. 102–3), the performance of poetry is also described in the Old English *Beowulf*: the "clear song of the *scop*," when he is singing a song of Creation (ll. 86ff.), the praise poem on Beowulf (ll. 867ff.), the performance of the *Lay of Finnsburh* (above, p. 86ff.), the reciting of poetry and the playing of the harp in Heorot as reported by Beowulf (ll. 2105ff.). But there are also other passages one could cite in connection with this. The *scop* also appears in the evening after Beowulf's arrival in Heorot:

Scop hwilum sang  
hador on Heorote. (ll. 496b–497a)

The *scop* sang now and again  
clear-voiced in Heorot.

We note the clearness of the *scop*'s singing, as in l. 90, where his song was characterized as *swutol*, "clear." Later, after the flyting between Unferth and Beowulf has subsided:

Dær wæs hælþa hleahor, hlyn swynsode,  
word wæron wynsume. (ll. 611–12a)

There was the laughter of men [heroes], the sound was melodious,  
the words were friendly.

As these passages show, the *scop* performed praise poems and narrative poems, he played the harp/lyre (probably as an accompaniment to his singing), and he had a style of performance that could be characterized as "clear," "loud," and

10. This is also implied by lines 54–56 of the poem (Chambers 1912, 207); similarly, toward the end of the poem (ll. 135–41), various types of poems might be implied by the terminology employed, among them a praise poem (ibid., 223–24).

11. The verb *swinsian* is glossed in Bosworth and Toller (1898, 958) as "to make a (pleasing) sound, make melody or music."

“harmonious” (or “pleasing to the ear”). But what we do not know is what his singing sounded like in terms of melody, rhythm, and musical structure. No musical notation of vernacular poetry or song has been transmitted from Anglo-Saxon England, which means that we have to look elsewhere if we want to have a clearer picture of what the “swutol sang scopes” was like.<sup>12</sup>

There is some musical evidence from other medieval traditions that can be consulted. Notation for individual lines of Otfried’s *Evangelienharmonie* (c. 870) have been preserved, but it is in neumes—staffless notational signs—which means that neither the rhythm nor the exact melodic line of these melodies can be reconstructed.<sup>13</sup> More material is available for the High and Late Middle Ages, for both Middle High German and Old French. Most of this evidence, however, is once again only indirect and circumstantial. Melodies of vernacular narrative texts are reconstructed from liturgical and paraliturgical *contrafacta* such as the fifteenth-century *Trierer Marienklage* and *Alsfelder Passionsspiel*, or from quotations in nonnarrative works, such as a line from a *chanson de geste* in the play of *Robin et Marion*; and later melodies from the repertoire of the Meistersinger and from late medieval ballads, for example *Das jüngere Hildebrandslied*. There are also, however, some “genuine” melodies: for Old French the melody of the verse parts of the *chantefable Aucassin et Nicolette*; and most notably, for Middle High German the “Titurelweise” (for Wolfram’s fragmentary *Titurel* and Albrecht’s *Later Titurel*) and the “Herzog-Ernst-Ton” (for the strophic version of *Herzog Ernst*).<sup>14</sup> Additional evidence for the singing of narrative texts in the Middle Ages comes from the liturgy (psalms and gospel narrative) and from nonliturgical poetry in Latin and French (*lai*, *épitre farcie*, and others).<sup>15</sup> Although some of the melodies proposed for medieval narrative might be contestable, we have on the whole a fairly good picture of their range.

From these analyses several deductions can be made. One is that we can assume that it was typical for oral epic poetry to be performed musically, to be sung rather than just recited. It also seems to have been the case that the melody of epic was basically stichic, that is, every line was sung to the same melody (or, as this melody could vary slightly, melodic formula).<sup>16</sup> Looking at some of the

12. Thomas Cable (1974) has proposed melodic lines for *Beowulf* that are basically transpositions of Sievers’s seven metrical types into notes on a scale. Apart from metrical theory, Cable justifies his melodic phrases by reference to liturgical psalmody (or cantillation). See also Cable 1991.

13. See Stephan 1957; Jammers 1964; Hofmann and Jammers 1965.

14. On Middle High German poetry, see Bertau and Stephan 1956–57; Brunner 1979; on the Old French *chanson de geste*, see Gennrich 1923; Chailley 1948 and 1955.

15. See Stevens 1986, 199ff.

16. Sometimes stichic melodies can extend over more than one line. Also verse passages can have a somewhat more complex musical structure than the term “stichic” suggests; but there is a tendency to use the same melody per line. The number of musical phrases is small and the melodies are definitely not strophic.

melodies still extant, such as the “Hildebrandston,” the melody of the so-called *Jüngeres Hildebrandslied*, further characteristics of the music of medieval oral epic emerge.<sup>17</sup> There is a certain lack of melodic complexity (in the sense of having a multiplicity of phrases). The melody is of a type that is termed “recitative,” that is, there are repeated “recitation tones,” the singing of consecutive syllables on the same note. The interval steps are comparatively small, and the melody is generally syllabic (without melismas).<sup>18</sup> A number of scholars (Siegfried Beyschlag, Horst Brunner, Ulrich Müller, and others) have argued that the “Hildebrandston” can be used for the *Nibelungenlied*, and Eberhard Kummer has produced an attractive recording of parts of the *Nibelungenlied* in the “Hildebrandston.”<sup>19</sup>

Unfortunately the medieval evidence available allows no definite answer to the question: What did poetry like the *Nibelungenlied* really sound like? Although we will never be able to give a reliable answer to this question, confirmation of some of the melodies proposed or reconstructed by musicologists for medieval narrative poetry comes from living traditions of oral epic poetry. When we look at Turkic oral epic poetry, we find a wide variety of melodies and musical realization. This should make us skeptical of dogmatic solutions. On the other hand, there are traditions that can be meaningfully compared to Old English (and generally Old Germanic) narrative poetry in alliterative lines, and what Brunner and others have remarked about the structure of the hypothesized melodies is, I think, borne out by the Turkic material.<sup>20</sup>

The closest parallel to what we believe Old Germanic poetry to have sounded like comes from those Turkic traditions where the performance of epic is fairly archaic. One of these traditions is that of the Karakalpak *žiraw*. Žumabay-žiraw sings both the *tolğaw Ormanbet-biy* and the epic *Edige* in the same style. The verse passages in the epic are structured according to a fixed pattern. The singer generally begins by retuning his instrument, if necessary, and plays as an introduction the melodic line of the verse passage several times with variations.

17. This melody is first found in a collection of *bicinia* (vocal or instrumental compositions in two parts) published by Georg Rhaw in 1545 under the title *Bicinia Gallica Latina Germanica*. It is a melody that was repeatedly printed in song collections of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and is used for the *Jüngeres Hildebrandslied*; the latter has come down to us in a few manuscripts of the fifteenth century and about thirty printed editions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; while it became obsolete at the end of the seventeenth century in Germany, it was popular in the Netherlands for another hundred years. Although the transmission of this melody is late, John Meier and Walther Lipphardt have convincingly argued that this melody still belongs to the thirteenth century and probably incorporated even older minstrel material. Meier 1935, 20; this claim is accepted by Brunner 1979, 304.

18. See Brunner’s analysis; 1979, 304–6.

19. Beyschlag 1964; for the recording, see Kummer and Müller 1983.

20. For a collection of essays on the music of oral epics, see Reichl 2000. For the singing of Turkic oral epics, see Reichl 1985, 1995, and my contribution to Reichl 2000.

While playing, the singer does not generally look at the audience but either looks down at his instrument or has his eyes closed. He sways somewhat with his body. Then the actual singing begins. The voice of the singer is quite different from its normal timbre. The vocal cords are strained, the sounds are pressed out. The *qobiz* accompanies the singer in unison. After several lines the singer often plays a few musical phrases before he continues his singing. Toward the end of a verse passage, the singer stops singing and declaims the lines in a high, pressed voice; he strikes his instrument at short intervals to punctuate his performance with single chords. He then sings the end of the passage in a more "florid" style than the previous lines: the last notes are prolonged, often repeated, and always sung in unison with the *qobiz*.

Without entering into a detailed musical analysis, I will just make a few more remarks on the *žiraw's* musical style. Each line is basically sung to the same melody (or rather melodic formula). This melody (with its variations) is syllabic, that is, there is generally one note per syllable. There is a clear beat to the melody. Extra syllables are accommodated to this pattern. The range of the melodic line is comparatively restricted; it does not generally exceed a fifth. The interval steps are small, proceeding by minor and major seconds. The melody consists mainly of one motif, which is introduced in the first unit of the melodic line and then slightly varied in the second unit. Žumabay-žiraw uses several melodies for the poems and epics he performs; of these the most common is the *tolgaw namasi*, the "tolgaw melody."

But this is only one of many types of music of Turkic epic. A quite different style is found in the Kazakh "heroic lay" *Tawke-batır*, to give just one more example. Here the singer sings in a natural voice and accompanies himself on the *dombıra*, a plucked two-stringed lute-type instrument, which supplies a strong rhythmical beat. The melody itself is rhythmically somewhat freer; it is characterized by its wide range, which exceeds the octave, and the fact that it has several intervals as large as a fourth or fifth in its tonal line. The melody is syllabic and has no melismas or sustained notes. It is strophic and corresponds to the strophic and metric arrangement of the text. Each stanza has four lines, and each line is sung to one of the four melodic phrases that build the melody. All stanzas of the poem are sung to basically the same strophic melody; between stanzas, the singer plays short musical interludes.<sup>21</sup>

A study of the various musical styles encountered in the performance of Turkic oral epics could, I think, show that they can be placed on a scale running from stichic melodies to strophic, song-like melodies; from recitative-like melodies with a fairly restricted tonal range and a melodic progression in small

intervals to melodies more ornate and varied in range, tonal line, and phrasal structure; from unaccompanied singing (as found in the singing of the Kirghiz epic *Manas*) to a performance of epic accompanied by a small ensemble (as in Khorezm). There is a certain historical and developmental aspect to this scale: the "operatic" style of the Khorezmian *baxši*—with the songs functioning as "arias" in the narrative—is most likely a recent form of performance; there has also been a strong influence from classical Turkic (Chaghatay) poetry on the Uzbek, Uighur, Turkmen, and Azerbaijani traditions, and the frequent use of rhymed prose in the Uzbek *dastans* might very well have been suggested by Arabic and Persian models. The performance styles of the Karakalpak *žiraw*, the Altaian *qayči*, or the Kirghiz epic singer, on the other hand, seem to hark back to a more ancient mode of reciting epic poetry, found not only among the Turkic peoples of Central Asia and Siberia, but also in the neighboring Mongolian, Tungus, and Palaeo-Asiatic traditions.<sup>22</sup>

"Poetry without music," writes Franz Boas in his pioneering study of primitive art, ". . . [is] found only in civilized communities."<sup>23</sup> And Raymond Firth remarks in his study of the songs of the Tikopia people of Polynesia: "in Tikopia a poem is composed *as a song*. Indeed, to treat a Tikopia song simply as a poem, a patterned arrangement of words without recognised tonal intervals, occurs for the Tikopia only as a learning device, and would be ultimately meaningless without the melodic referent."<sup>24</sup> Although there are significant differences between cultures, there is enough evidence to support the claim that not only lyric poetry but also oral epic poetry the world over is generally sung rather than spoken, with singing styles ranging from repetitive chanting to elaborate arioso and song. The same can be said of medieval epic poetry that flourished in an oral milieu, although, as we have seen, there is little reliable evidence as to the precise nature of its musical performance. Does the reduction of our interpretation of medieval epics to the purely textual level, without regard to their musical performance, seriously distort our understanding of these works? Should we try to reconstruct, if not in a scholarly way then at least imaginatively, the "melody of *Beowulf*"? Is music merely ornamental? Or maybe just functional in an oral context, but easily dispensed with when we look at the recorded text?

There is no doubt in my mind that music is indeed functional in oral performance. The singer's voice carries better when he sings or chants, as can be easily observed on any old-style European marketplace. For all their stylization, the various pieces composed around 1600 by English composers like Orlando

22. For a typology of the music of oral epics, see Kondrat'eva 1975; for a collection of essays on the music of oral epics in the former Soviet Union, see Zemcovskij 1989.

23. Boas 1928, 301.

24. Firth and McLean 1990, 3.

21. For other examples from Kazakh epics, see Erzakovič et al. 1982, 123 ff.

Gibbons or Thomas Wheelkes based on the street cries of London certainly reflect the different vendors' melodies, some of which can still be heard today. But one of the important functions of music, in particular in the syllabic style of song, is also to give the singer a firm rhythmical bed for his verse. By the repetitiveness of the musical pattern the regularity of the meter is underscored and it becomes easier for the singer to "pour," so to speak, his words into the model of musico-metrical form. If music were, however, limited to this functional aspect only, it could be argued that in a literary interpretation it can be dispensed with.

Neglect of the music is clearly problematic when the relationship between word and music is either one of balance or one where music plays a predominant role, as in the Khorezmian tradition. There is some justification in comparing these *dastans* to Baroque oratorio: the alternation between the declaiming of prose and the singing of verse recalls that of recitative and aria in an oratorio, with a similar emphasis on musical elaboration, and in some cases even flamboyance. Although it would be an exaggeration to reduce the textual side of these *dastans* to the status of a libretto, ignoring the musical side does, nevertheless, seriously distort our appreciation of these works as it leaves out an essential element of the epic as a whole, which is a composite of prose *and* verse, word *and* music, declaiming *and* singing *and* playing. Studying these epics as texts only is as one-sided as studying folksongs as lyrics only. Even in some of the heroic epics where music plays a less prominent role, as in the Kirghiz *Manas* or the various versions of *Alpāmiš*, the citation of lyric forms like wedding songs (*yar-yar*, at the end of *Alpāmiš*), lament (*žoqlaw*), elegy (*arman*), or love songs is enhanced by the use of different song forms. Once again the interpretation is only partial at best if the musical aspect is ignored.

There is both an aesthetic and an affective dimension to music in this type of oral narrative: aesthetic, in that a successful performance depends as much on the narrative as on the musical skill of the singer; affective, in that the audience is moved not only by the words and what they mean but also by the musical texture of the performance. This aesthetic and affective dimension is more difficult to imagine in the case of epics with a stichic and repetitive melody of a fairly restricted tonal range. Here the words seem to be in the foreground and music seems to play a merely secondary and ancillary role. But even in these cases we might ask why the "monotony" sometimes stressed by Western observers does not stop a native audience from listening to the bard's voice all through the night. This type of singing has occasionally been compared to cantillation, the chanting of psalms.<sup>25</sup> The comparison of the music of epic with liturgical chant seems indeed apposite, not primarily because of a strictly mu-

25. See Sachs 1962, 78.

sical similarity between the two, but perhaps more pertinently because of their pragmatic similarity. We can very well read a psalm as a poetic text only, but we will remain ignorant of its function in the religious life in both Jewish and (traditional) Christian traditions if we pay no attention to its liturgical use. And here the chanting of a psalm is not merely a convenient way of reading it out aloud, or an ornamental, decorative aspect of reciting poetry. It is part of a liturgical act, a meaningful event just as the recitation of oral epic poetry is part of a speech event, though admittedly of a different nature. The singing of poetry makes this poetry into performed poetry, performed by a singer, for an audience, in a particular framework, defined by spatial, temporal, and other parameters.

While the performance style of the Karakalpak *žiraw* might be considered a possible analogue to the performance of the Anglo-Saxon *scop*, later medieval traditions, such as the oral performance of popular romance, might be compared to the performance of romance-like *dastans*, where the musical, "minstrel" element is more in the foreground. Other performance aspects of traditional medieval narrative poetry are more difficult to reconstruct. I have touched on the act sequence of an epic performance in Turkic oral tradition in chapters 1 and 4. Although medieval literature furnishes us with clues as to the occasions of performance and the types of poetry performed, many of these indications are open to differing interpretations, partly on account of the conventional nature of the repertoire lists and other descriptions in medieval sources.

Concerning setting and participants (the "performance arena"), studies on patronage, for instance, help to elucidate the social role of poets and performers, and in some cases, as in that of the Marner, a socioliterary profile can be given. On the other hand, as the brief discussion of the possible audience of the *chanson de geste* has shown, there are many unknown quantities in this "performance arena." While the exact mode of performance and reception, the "channel" used in the speech event, is often debatable—whether the poetry is orally recited/chanted or read out aloud, and whether it is heard and listened to or read—the actual form of the extant poetry is generally uncontroversial. There is disagreement about the meter of particular poems or traditions, and there is, of course, the problem of musical performance. But on the whole, this is the least contested aspect of the ethnopoetic analysis of oral/traditional epic.

In the preceding chapters I have therefore said little about the form and poetic style of the epics and heroic poems discussed. I have concentrated rather on two other areas of the communicative event, "genre" and "purpose," or, in terms of a contextualization of the epic performance, on "generic context" and "cultural context." For gaining a better understanding of the oral epic as event rather than text, priority must be accorded to the situational context. However, the discussion of a singer's repertoire and the act sequence of his performance



has also underlined the generic context of epic. A heroic epic like *Edige* is closely linked to the *tolgaw* of *Ormanbet-biy*, as items in the singer's repertoire and performance as well as in their significance within the cultural world that the singer and his audience share. Hence the epic can be seen in a synchronic relationship to other forms of oral poetry, such as the topical poem (*terma/terme*), the historical song, the contest song (*aytis*), and the heroic lay. Although it is possible to posit distinctive genres, a number of them show a syncretistic nature, which casts doubt on too neat a classificatory system.

The syncretistic nature of some of these genres is highlighted in a poem like *Tawke-batir*, for which characterizations like "heroic boast," "flying," "contest song," and "heroic lay" all apply. In its emphasis on verbal dueling, *Tawke-batir* is symptomatic of an oral culture, as Walter J. Ong has recognized in his useful survey of the "psychodynamics of orality":

Many, if not all, oral or residually oral cultures strike literates as extraordinarily agonistic in their verbal performance and indeed in their lifestyle. . . . Bragging about one's own prowess and/or verbal tongue-lashings of an opponent figure regularly in encounters between characters in narrative: in the *Iliad*, in *Beowulf*, throughout medieval European romance, in *The Mwindo Epic* and countless other African stories (. . .), in the Bible, as between David and Goliath (I Samuel 17:43-47).<sup>26</sup>

Agonistic tone and heroic spirit are seen as intimately connected, both as textual elements of narrative and as textual markers of the cultural fabric.

The generic context of epic can also be found, somewhat paradoxically, within the epic. Various lyric forms can be identified in Turkic oral epics— not only in love romances—as well as aphorisms, proverbs, maxims, or anecdotal elements. In *Alpamiş*, as we have seen, wedding songs are incorporated into the action, in *Manas* laments, and in *Beowulf* elegiac passages. This generic variety within the epic is also typical of other oral traditions and has been worked out in detail for a northern Egyptian tradition of Arabic oral epic.<sup>27</sup> It has also been stressed that *Beowulf* is characterized by the incorporation of different genres. Heroic boasting, typical of the heroic lay, is also found in *Beowulf*, in Beowulf's boast at King Hrothgar's court about brave deeds done (*gylp*) and deeds to do (*bēot*). Joseph Harris has coined the term "summa litterarum" for *Beowulf* to capture this generic comprehensiveness, for Harris a sign of the uniqueness and as it were self-reflective character of *Beowulf*.<sup>28</sup>

26. Ong 1982, 43-44. Ong further refers to the verbal contests of African Americans, variously called "dozens," "sounding," etc.; see Abrahams 1974.

27. See Reynolds 1991 and 1995, 139ff.

28. See Harris 1985, 260ff.

The generic context of epic can also be given a diachronic interpretation. In a medieval setting, praise poetry, topical and historical song, heroic lay and heroic epic have often been discussed as different stages rather than only different forms. This is a difficult issue, for which oral traditions with a restricted time-depth of recorded poetry can be of only limited use. Historical songs such as the Uzbek poem *Nāmāz* are generally late in a tradition and presuppose heroic poetry, whether on an epic or a smaller scale. The earliest examples of Turkic heroic poetry transmitted, those preserved in Maḥmūd of Kashgar's eleventh-century *Dīwān luḡāt at-turk* (Divan of Turkic Languages), are typologically nearer to the Old English *Brunanburh* or the Old High German *Ludwigslied* than to heroic lays or epics. Salient traits of this type of poetry are an explicit reference to a comparatively recent event; a personal point of view (possibly even a first-person narrative, as in the case of the poems in the *Dīwān luḡāt at-turk*); an allusive and summarizing rather than descriptive presentation of the action, with emphasis on the person(s) of the protagonist(s) rather than on the sequence of events; and a strongly evaluative stance, distributing praise or blame, as the case may be. It is quite possible that this type of poetry functioned as the historio-"graphy" of an oral society; its value as a genuine reflection of history was only doubted at an age when chroniclers drew a line between history and poetry. As I have tried to argue, the original historiographical function still lingers on in a poem like *Brunanburh*.

Despite such stylistic similarities with heroic lays and heroic epics as formulaic diction and recurring motifs, poems like *Brunanburh* or *Nāmāz* differ from poems like *Finnsburh* or *Edige* most significantly in their view of history. Heroic lay and heroic epic, as exemplified here, refer generally to the distant rather than the recent past, to origins rather than to a single event or deed of note. In the case of *Edige*, one can argue that for singer and audience the narrative is a poetic representation of their tribal past, of a heroic age, into which the roots of their own ethnicity reach. The authenticity of the tale is guaranteed by the authority of the singer and the tradition behind him. The heroic epic has relevance to audience and singer alike as an affirmation of historical roots, but also more generally as a cultural symbol. Its significance for a (however sociologically defined) community consists also in the fact that it expresses cultural values, reinforces them, and comments upon them. This view, of course, presupposes a homogeneous audience, or, on a larger scale, a primarily oral society. In present-day Central Asia, there are only fragmentary oral societies left, existing within predominantly literate societies, so that orality is more and more marginalized. With the advance of literacy and technology, with the changes in the structure of society such as urbanization and collectivization, and with the various upheavals in the political systems of the region, the significance of the

heroic epic is more and more that of a national epic, cherished as a classic on a par with the great works of world literature. It has to be stressed that although contemporary confirmation for the significance of heroic epic in the sense earlier described can still be found, this confirmation is restricted to ever smaller and remoter areas.

The characterization of heroic poetry, especially heroic epic, as a poetic reflection of (and on) the past raises several questions. An interpretation of the heroic epic as a repository of cultural values and as a means of seeking and asserting ethnic (or tribal or possibly national) roots in the distant past of a heroic age sees the epic primarily from a functional point of view. This view is defensible but needs to be qualified. One qualification concerns the functional approach itself. The heading of "functionalism" groups together a number of different anthropological models and theories. Malinowski's functionalist view was briefly touched upon in connection with his definition of the genres of the Trobriand Islanders as performing different functions and hence having different truth values (above, p. 137). However important and useful a functional approach might be, highly evolved genres like the epic will only be partially interpreted by concentrating on their function alone.<sup>29</sup>

Reading the epic primarily as a celebration of "our" history neglects the fabulous, hyperbolic, and fantastic elements and, more fundamentally, the creative and imaginative side of the epic as poetry. A medieval audience might well have believed in the existence of dragons and monsters (depending, of course, on the time and the type of audience); contemporary singers and their listeners, however, are well aware of the fact that when it comes to *divs* and giants, old stories reflect old beliefs, which they may not themselves share. Furthermore, the repertoire of a singer may also comprise epics of a different type, romances or adventure *dastans*, which may not always be clearly distinguishable from the heroic epic proper. Žumabay-žiraw, for instance, also sings the *dastan Šaryar*, which is quite manifestly a fairytale of epic proportions; it is stylistically and in the manner of performance very similar to *Edige* and *Qoblan*, but lacks the historical dimension of these.

Mircea Éliade and others have drawn attention to the fact that narrative elements identifiable as historically grounded have become embedded in, or overlaid by mythic patterns, often at a very early stage in the formation of a traditional tale or poem (above, p. 133). This is particularly noticeable in the case of *Beowulf*, but it is also true of many other epics and epic traditions. In an article published in 1909, Andreas Heusler stressed this tension between history and

myth in Germanic heroic legend. In this article, he refers to Svend Grundtvig, who forty years earlier had stated that German scholars founder on the "Scylla of mythic interpretation" and Scandinavian scholars on the "Charybdis of historical interpretation."<sup>30</sup> Heusler was emphatic in his denial of a truly historical (and by implication ethnic) underpinning of Germanic heroic legend:

. . . the *old* heroic legends were at all periods works of art that floated above ethnicity. The greatest contrast to this is found in ancient Greek legend, which has ritual roots, roots that the Germanic hero lacks: again and again it installs the old heroes as ancestors, recomposes stories for genealogical or political purposes, founds hereditary rights on the deeds of forefathers, and introduces local heroes as minor characters.<sup>31</sup>

Heusler did, however, recognize that later Middle High German epics, such as the *Nibelungenlied*, have a stronger historical orientation.

Heusler also recognized the presence of mythic, or rather more neutrally supernatural and fabulous elements in older Germanic heroic legend, among them the fight with trolls (as in *Beowulf*'s fight with Grendel and Grendel's Dame); the magical qualities of the hero (as in *Beowulf*'s bearlike grip); or the miraculous fate of individual figures (as in Scyld Scefing's rise from an abandoned child to a mighty ruler). But Heusler criticized the attempt to reduce the sources of Germanic heroic legend to history and myth only and proposed a less rigid mixture of sources, composed of history, human experiences, poetic invention, and traditional story.<sup>32</sup>

Heusler's reflections on the genesis of Germanic heroic legend and heroic poetry pervade much of his scholarly work and are far too involved to be summarized succinctly. They have been the subject of a scholarly debate, which has revealed the complexity of the subject itself as well as of Heusler's theories.<sup>33</sup> In the present context Heusler's position is meant as a warning against reductionism. My emphasis on singing *the past*, on the importance of a "historical dimension" in heroic epic, should not be understood as a contribution to the theory of origins. In my discussions of heroic epics like *Edige*, *Beowulf*, and the *Chanson de Roland* it emerged that there is a difference between the "historical nucleus" as a historiographically verifiable element, and the past, "our past," as the focus of identification. The two might overlap, as in the case of *Edige* and the *Chanson de Roland*, but the "historical nucleus" might also be merely tangential to the

29. On the function of heroic poetry, see Hatto 1989, 184–95. The function of Middle High German traditional poetry, especially the *Nibelungenlied*, has been the subject of heated debate among Germanists; for a critical survey, see Heinzle 1998.

30. Heusler 1969, 2:495.

31. *Ibid.*, 507.

32. *Ibid.*, 515.

33. See Andersson 1988.

narrative, as in *Beowulf*. Similarly, the role a heroic past plays on the pragmatic level, in the dynamic relationship between epic, singer, and audience, differs considerably between epics and traditions. But despite differences and variations, there is a common concern with the past, not as the historiographer's history but as the time of heroes and ancestors, which justifies comparison.

While the pragmatics of medieval traditional poetry are only indirectly reconstructible, by having recourse to whatever textual evidence is still available, the dynamics of living oral poetry are still open to direct observation. Comparative analysis cannot, however, answer all questions, and an unfiltered application of oral models to medieval traditional poetry has been viewed with skepticism by a number of scholars, doubtless in many cases rightly so. In concluding I would therefore like to stress again the typological orientation of comparative criticism. The intensive study of oral epic traditions over the past decades has revealed many idiosyncrasies and peculiarities but it has also made clear that oral epics constitute a type of poetry, a type which has of course, like all types, a number of subtypes.<sup>34</sup> From the traditionalist viewpoint adopted here, the examples of medieval heroic poetry and epic discussed in this book can be seen as basically belonging to this type, even if the correct allocation to this or that subtype might be a moot point. In the case of medieval traditional poetry, we have to take into account the transformation of a predominantly oral society into a literate society from the early Middle Ages onwards. It is only thanks to literacy that traditional poetry has been preserved for us. Hence there is no getting away from the textuality of medieval traditional poetry, even if its oral background seems to be palpably close. A recapturing of its orality must always be an imaginative act. What genuine oral poetry can do, however, is help to stimulate our imagination and provide it with an empirical basis.

34. Compare the "anatomy of heroic/epic poetry" proposed by A. Hatto (1989).

## The Text of *Täwke-batır*

The following is an edition of the poem as recorded from the Kazakh singer Müslimbek Sarqıtbay-ulı (born 1946) in Kulja (Yining) in the Chinese province of Xinjiang on September 12, 1989. For help with the transcription of the poem I am grateful to Mr. Bek Soltan of the Xinjiang branch of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (Urumchi); I am also grateful to Mr. Žiger Žanabil for going over the Kazakh text with me as well as to Ms. Aygül Kasimova for help with other Kazakh poems about *Täwke-batır*. Apart from this text, there are three further variants and two related poems:

(1a) A poem comprising 183 lines, which was taken down from Könbay Äbdiržanov by Taliğa Bekqožina in Alma-Ata on March 5, 1953. It is found as text no. 15 (in typescript) in folder (*papka*) no. 263 of the Manuscript Department of the Kazakh Academy of Sciences in Alma-Ata. I am grateful to the Manuscript Department for providing me with a photograph of this text.

(1b) Twenty four-line stanzas, corresponding to the dialogue portion of the poem (ll. 41–100 of the text below), edited in Almanov 1988, 2: 56–58, under the title *Täwke men kelinšek* (*Täwke and the Young Woman*).

(1c) One stanza of four lines (a variant corresponding to ll. 41–44 of the text below) has been printed (with musical transcription and Russian translation) in Erzakovič et al. 1982, 157 (music), 231 (text and translation). According to the notes (248) this variant was taken down from Aqat Qudayberdiev by Taliğa Bekqožina in Alma-Ata in 1968.

(2) A further *aytis* with *Täwke* as one of the protagonists (lying in prison and engaged in dialogue with a young woman called Urqıya) is edited in Almanov 1988, 2: 51–56.

(3) A song comprising four eight-line stanzas was recorded in 1967 by Qayrolla Žüsipuli Žüsbasov of the Kazakh Academy of Sciences in Alma-Ata from Žamal Amanšina in the Gorno-Altay region. I am grateful to Dr. Žüsbasov for providing me with text and musical transcription. The poem, beginning “Surasañ meniñ atım Tawke-batır” (If you ask for my name, it is Tawke the Hero) has Tawke as speaker. He is lying in prison, where he is forced “to eat the black bread of the Russians.” In his song he asks to give his greetings to Märyam. The song belongs to the genre of “letter poems” (from prison, from the front, from abroad), which is popular in Kazakh folklore. For examples, see Bäjtenova 1993, 113–19.

The poem recorded from Müslimbek contains a number of linguistic difficulties and textual cruxes which cannot be gone into here. My understanding of the poem is reflected in the translation above, pp. 79–84. In the following edition, I will give readings from variants (1a), (1b) and (1c) only in those cases where they contribute to a better understanding of Müslimbek’s variant.

Bazardan baqşa baqşa böz keledi,  
Atqan oq azaldığa kez keledi.  
Žamağat qulaq salıp tiñdasañüz,  
Azıraq Er Tawkeden söz keledi.

“Eki eldiñ eger bolğan arasında,  
Naymanniñ Kerey menen talasında,  
Tal tüste abılaylap elge šaptıq,  
Babamniñ öresi artqan salasında.

Žiynaldıq žetpis kisi kărımen žas,  
Kereydi bir šabuğa oylanıp qas.  
Siyiniñ Tobıqtınıñ arwağına  
Kisiniñ žetpisine men boldum bas.

Žiynaldıq žetpis kisi Toganaqtan.  
“Žel sözdin körmegenge bari maqtan!  
Mal šawıp kisi öltirseñ šošınma!” dep  
Batani babam bergen bergi žaqtan.

13 Var. (1a), l.1: Attandıq 70 kisi Dogalaqtan (“We mounted our horses, seventy people from Dogalaq”).

16 Var. (1a), l. 4: Batani bergen Arap bergi žaqtan (“Arap gave the blessing from this [our] side”). There is a note in the manuscript explaining that Arap is the name of the bay of the Tobıqtı, living in the town of Semey (Semipalatinsk, on the River Irtysh in eastern Kazakhstan).

Kereyder malın bağıp saqtanıp tur,  
Nayzasın qarıw-žaraq bapmanıp tur.  
Keletin Tobıqtınıñ žolun tosıp  
Ar žerde erwildep attanıp tur.

Sol küni qaytqan eken žerin šalıp  
Žigitter damıl körmey žürüwge talıgıp.  
Bolğan da žer žağalay köp armanda  
Bir talay žaza soqtıq qapıl qalıp.

Qalbaniñ awıl qonğan žağasına,  
Qalıñ el žilqi salğan arasına.  
Mağlumsız ötkel awızı ay qarañgi  
Awıldıñ bara almadıq qarasına.

Sol küni žatıp qaldıq atti baylap.  
Žigitten žiyirma birdi aldım saylap.  
Tañ ata sol Kereydi šappaq bolduq,  
Oñgarsa žastiñ žoluna qudaylap.

Awılğa žetip bardım šalayın dep,  
Bos bolsa ötkel awızın alayın dep.  
Awıldan bir qarayğan šiqtı žayaw.  
Özüne qarsı žürdim barayın dep.

Qolına quman alğan bir žas qatın.  
Žaqşılar aytpay biler erdiñ zatın.  
Qılžaqtap bir-eki awız söz söylestim.  
Astımda toqtamaydı mingen atım.

Tañ atıp kün šiğistan qılañ alğan,  
Astımda qulager at silañdağan:

25 Var. (1a), l. 25: Babaniñ el qonıptı salasına (“The people had settled in the domain of your forefather”).

32 Var. (1a), l. 32: Oñdasa žas tilekti abılaylap (“In the hope of bringing to success the wish of the young, they shouted ‘Abılay!’”).

36 This stanza reads in Var. (1c) [with variants from (1a), ll. 41–44, in square brackets]: Ötkelge žetip keldim šalayın dep, / Bos pa eken ötkel aldı qarayın dep [Bos bolsa ötkel awızın alayın dep]. / Awıldan bir qarayğan žayaw šiqtı, / Özine qarsı [tuwra] žürdim barayın dep. (“I reached the ford to reconnoitre, / Planning to see whether or not it was free [Planning to take the entry of the ford if it was free]. / Someone was visible approaching on foot from the aul, / I decided to go toward this person.”)



‘Žamilip qara šapan quman alip,  
Taň atpay netken žansiň silandağan?’

(Sonda äyel bilay deydi:)

‘Astıñda qulager at qılañdağan,  
Men edim körgen žigit qumarlangan.  
Mirzamiz taň atarda žilqıdan kep  
Tösekten žaňa turdım žumarlangan.’

45

(Sonda Tawke aytadi:)

‘Aldımnan qarsi šiqtıñ qızıl tülki.  
Egesse šaşılmaydı kimniñ mülki?  
Awıldıñ žönin suray kelip edim.  
Kimdiki qarsi aldımnda žatqan žilqı?’

50

(Sonda äyel bilay deydi:)

‘Kim edi izdegeniñ köñilge alğan?  
Eškimgе opa qilmas munaw žalğan.  
Žekebay öz erimniñ atı bolar.  
Atamız qazı deydi, Meke bargan.’

55

(Sonda Tawke bilay deydi:)

‘Awılıñdı kelip edim šabayın dep,  
Tal tüste bir oyrandı salayın dep.  
Bay Seyit qasqa žolun bilmey turmın.  
Žilqısın tüp qoparıp alayın dep.’

60

(Äyel:)

‘Awılğa žap-žay žatqan qılama šataq,  
Turğan žoq žawdan qorqup malın matap.  
Aptıqtı-aw batır minez žan ekensiñ.  
Aytıp ber äweli endi atıñdı atap.’

(Sonda Tawke bilay deydi:)

46 Var. (1a), l. 70: Sizderi körgen žigit qumarlangan (“A žigit who sees you will yearn for you” [spoken by the woman]). Var. (1b), l. 6: Meni de körgen žigit qumarlangan (“A žigit who sees me will yearn for me” [spoken by the woman]).

‘Bilmeseñ batır Tawke meniñ atım.  
Eškimgе ketkeni žoq sözdin qaçım.  
Saptıayaq argı atamız surasañız,  
Qaytesin endi surap qalğan zatin.’

65

(Sonda äyel bilay deydi:)

‘Batır-aw qumar edim dabisiña,  
Taň qalam tal tüsteği šabisiña.  
Šataq qıp Aqmolağa žer awdarğan,  
Žürmisiñ Tobıqtıniñ namisina?’

70

Sen žürsiñ Tobıqtıniñ tuwğanım dep,  
Maz bolup barımtanı quwğanım dep.  
Kettiñ be Aqmoladan žerdi qıymay,  
Kindik kesip kirdim žuwğanım dep?’

75

Batır-aw šolaq eken oylağanıñ,  
Bas bağıp Qaramolda boylağanıñ.  
Bes bolıs Tobıqtığa boptı-aw namıs,  
Tal tüste eriñdi ustap baylağanıñ.’

80

(Degende, Tawke bilay deydi:)

‘Awılıña tastamaymın tağalı tay.  
Žilqı alsam nayza qağıp köñilim žay.  
Šataq qıp Aqmolağa žer awdarğan  
İruwı Kereyiñniñ özüme may.’

Önerdi körsetemin osi žolda,  
Oqtawlı onatarım tursa qolda.  
Ötkelde Säbitpen tur Qaramolda.  
Köresiñ önerimdi osi žolda.’

85

68 Var. (1a), ll. 55–56 [= Var. (1b), ll. 27–28]: Surasañ öz atımdı [özim atım] Batır Tawke, / Tuw alğan Saptıayaqtıñ nemeresi (“If you ask for my name, it is Tawke the Hero, / the grandson of Saptıayaq, who had held the banner”).

72 Var. (1a), ll. 89–92 [= Var. (1b), ll. 45–48]: Batır ay [Ey batır] qumar edim dabisiña, / Tal tüste qalıñ elge tabisiña [qayran qalam šabisiña]. / Žazasız [Žaziqsız] Aqmolağa žer awdarğan [aydap edi], / Žürsiz be [Žürmisiñ] Tobıqtıniñ namisina. (“O hero, I have been longing for your voice, / for your success in broad daylight for the numerous people [I am amazed about your raid in broad daylight]. / Without punishment [Without guilt] you have gone into exile [have moved] to Aqmola, / Are you moving about for the honor of the Tobıqtı?”)

- (Sonda äyel aytadı:)
- 'Ey batır, žoldasıña arqalanba!  
Sözime meniñ aytqan qalqalama!  
Eliñniñ eski zañin bilmeymisiñ?  
Negip ediñ keşe küni Qalqamanga? 90
- Bar šigar balalıgıñ äytken-büytken.  
Aydaldıñ Aqmolağa ne sebeppen?  
Tiridey atqa süyrep öldirip ediñ.  
Ne žazıq kördiñ žanıñ Er Kebekten? 95
- (Degende, Täwke batır:)
- Bul qatın nede bolsa sözben žeñbek,  
Aytadı qıysındırıp bärin öñdep.  
Žilqığa sırt aynalıp želip kettim,  
'Zamandas däl aytasiñ, söziñ žön,' dep. 100
- Žilqını aydap šıqtıq qır basına.  
Batırdıñ qaruwı artıq bir basına.  
Er bolup elge kegim ketpep edi-aw,  
Körsetti sözben qorlıq urğaşı da-aw.
- Žilqını altaw aydap turduq on bes,  
Quwğınşı beti qaytıp sirä könbes.  
Nayzalap betteğendi šıdatpaydı.  
Žekebay žigit eken öziüm teñdes. 105
- 92 Var. (1a), ll. 99–100: Esiñniñ eski tegi žaman edi, / Ne qızıq körsetip eñ Qalqamanga ("The ancient origin of your memory was bad, / What have you seen of interest for [in] Qalqaman").  
Var. (1b), ll. 63–64: Eliñniñ eski tegi žaman edi, / Bilesiñ ne gip edi Qalqamanga?! ("The ancient origin of your people was bad, / You do know what they did to Qalqaman?!")
- 96 Var. (1a), ll. 105–8: Bar šigar üytken-büytken qatalıgıñ [= qataldıgıñ?], / Ne žaza tawıp ediñ Er Kebekten. / Onı da kömew oqqa berdiñ baylap, / Žarı men žürmesp/e/ edi külip oynap. ("You really are so cruel. / What punishment have you received from Er Kebek? / You bound him and shot him openly. / Wasn't he making merry with his wife?")  
Var. (1b), ll. 69–72: Bar edi atılganıñ öytken-büytken, / Žiberdi Aqmolağa ne sebeppen. / Žazıqsız atqa tağıp öltirip ne ed[i], / Ne kinä tawıp edi er Kebekten. ("There has been shooting by you. / Why did [they] send [you] to Aq-mola? / Guiltless, bound to a horse, why did [you] kill [Er Kebek]? / What was Er Kebek's guilt?")
- 100 In Var. (1a) the woman returns to her husband at this point and wakes him up, telling him of Täwke's raid. She brings him his grey, five-year-old horse. Žekebay mounts the horse and rides out to confront Täwke.
- 104 Var. (1a), ll. 141–44: Aydağan žilqı šıqtı qır basına, / Bawırdıñ qaruwı/i/ artıq bir basına. / Tük kelmey perwayına tüsi qaşıp, / Kördim dep sözden zorlıq urğaşıdan. ("Driving away the horse-herd, we ascended the top of a hill. / The arms of a brother are excellent for a man. / Without paying attention to anything he became pale, / 'I experienced grief,' he said, 'through the words of a woman.'")

- Astında kök bestı atı oynaqtagan,  
Mal ašuwı ešnerseni oylatpağan. 110  
Qolında qos šašaqtı nayzası bar,  
Kez kelse ilip tastap boylatpağan.
- Astında kök bestı atı basın šayqap,  
Eškimdi šıdatpaydı quwday žayqap.  
Kez kelse atın atıp tastayın dep,  
Qolğa alıp qos awızdı turdim bayqap. 115
- Bir kezde ol qarsı umtıldı abılaylap,  
Mendağı tura šaptım žobalaylap.  
Qutqarar žalgız adam körünbeydi,  
Atpasam onuñ atın oqqa baylap. 120
- Miltıqtıñ tura qaldım oğın kezep,  
Atınıñ toqtay qaldı basın težep.  
Ökpeden kök bestı atın basıp saldıñ.  
Batırğa žol bolatın keldi kezek.
- Žigildi kök bestı atı oq tiygen soñ,  
Sorgalap bawırınan qan siygen soñ.  
Atına žoldasınıñ mine šaptı,  
Šıdatpay mal ašuwı žan küygen soñ. 125
- Keledi tağı umtılip abılaylap,  
Qolına Er Qosaydıñ tuwin baylap. 130  
Qutqarar žalgız adam körünbeydi.  
Atpasam Žekebaydı oqqa baylap.
- 112 This stanza corresponds to ll. 145–48 of Var. (1a) (which are almost identical).
- 116 Var. (1a), ll. 149–53: Kök best/i/ at toqtamaydı basın šayqap, / Zuwidlap bartırında šıqtı žayqap. / Qurtqarar žalgız kisi körünbeydi. / Kez bolsa atın atıp qalayın dep, / Qolğa/a/ alıp vinčesterdi turdim bayqap. ("The grey, five-year-old horse did not stop, shaking his head. / Whizzing along, he galloped away with the hero. / Not one man who could have saved [me] was to be seen. / I took my Winchester rifle into my hand and took aim.")
- 124 Var. (1a), ll. 154–57: Miltıqtıñ tura qaldım oğın kezep, / Atınıñ tura qaldı basın težep. / Tusınan qos ökpeniñ qaldım atıp, / Batırdıñ žoñı bolar keldi kezek. ("I stopped short and pointed the gun to shoot, / While his horse stood still and pulled his head back. / I shot from my side at the [animal's] liver. / The hero's successful turn had come.")
- 129 Var. (1a), ll. 158–61: At loqıp tura qaldı oq tiygen soñ, / Zuwidlap ökpesinen qan siygen soñ. / Atına žoldasınıñ qarğıp mindi, / Šıdamay mal ašuw žan küygen soñ. ("His horse stood snorting after being hit by the bullet, / After a stream of blood had been gushing from his liver. / He jumped onto his companion's horse and galloped along, / Attacking, with his heart burning from his anger about the animals.")
- 130 Var. (1a), ll. 162–63: Tağıda aralastı žobalaylap, / Nayzağa Er Qosaydıñ tuwin baylap ("He joined again in the melee, shouting 'Žobalay!' / With Er Qosay's banner fastened to the spear").

- Quwg'ins'i qaptap keledi ar bir setten,  
Batirni qaytar emes kelgen betten.  
Qos zanbas may quyriqtin molsere dep,  
Batirdi basip saldim qalini etten. 135
- Zigildi oq tiygen son omaqatip,  
Esinen bir olshewsiz qanga batip.  
Qamalip qalini Kerey turup qaldi.  
Qutildim areni-zorga multiq atip. 140
- Iriktep bes zus zilqi shiqtiq aydap,  
Bolinip esti ziydiq zobalaylap.  
Mal tugil basqa jazim bolarmedi-aw.  
Atpasam Zekebaydi oqqa baylap.
- Kereydi malin sawip algan zerim 145  
Elderdi namisina bargan zerim.  
Mal tugil basqa jazim bolarmedi.  
Atpasam sol Kereydi kemeengerin."
- Atin nan aynalayin xaq tagalam,  
Galamga on sekiz min zetken pana. 150  
Qaqtigis Kerey menen Tobiqidan  
Qiyisasi Er Tawkenin boldi-aw tamam.
- 136 Var. (1a), ll. 168–71: Quwg'ins'i kelip zatir ar bir setten, / Quwg'ins'i bir qaytpaydi algan betten. / May quyriq qara sannin shamas/i/ aw dep, / Tagi da qaldim atip qalini etten. ("The pursuers are coming from all sides, / The pursuers do not return from the direction they have taken. / Thinking that there is strength in the black thigh of the fat behind, / I shot again into the fat flesh.")
- 140 Var. (1a), ll. 172–75: Zigildi sonda batir zerge zatip, / Qip qizil one boyi qanga batip. / Qalini el qamalasip qala berdi, / Qutildim azar zorga multiq atip. ("The hero then collapsed onto the ground, / His whole body covered with red blood. / The numerous people surrounded him and stopped still. / I was just barely saved, by shooting my gun.")
- 141 Var. (1a), l. 181: Iriktep us zus zilqi shiqtiq aydap ("We selected three hundred horses and drove them away").

The Text of *Ormanbet-biy*

The following edition of the Karakalpak *tolgaw* of *Ormanbet-biy* is based on a version recorded from Zhumabay-Ziraw Bazarov (born 1927) in Nukus (Karakapakistan, Uzbekistan) in the autumn of 1994. In addition to this version, I recorded two other versions from the same singer, one in 1981 (comprising 58 lines) and one in 1997 (comprising 185 lines). The 1981 version corresponds roughly to lines 1–58 of the 1994 version; the 1997 version is almost identical with the 1994 version. For some published variants, see Tazhimuratov 1980, 380–83; Ayimbetov 1988, 61–62. For help with the transcription of this text, I am indebted to Mr. Tabisqan Qanaatov (University of Nukus).

In the text (as in the translation, [above, pp. 106–11]) two strokes (//) denote a pause in the singing, when the *Ziraw* plays on the *qobiz*. The poem is basically sung [S], with the exception of those passages marked by [R], which are spoken in a kind of recitative. In these passages a single stroke denotes a short chord played on the *qobiz*, punctuating the recitative. I have refrained from indicating dialect features of Zhumabay-Ziraw's language (such as *munnan* instead of *bunnan*, *bas* instead of *bas*, *yam* instead of *zam* etc.). I have also left out of the transcription the frequent filler syllables *ay* and *aw*.

[S] Buringi otken zamanda,  
Zamanni qadim shaginda,  
Oyilday menen Qiyilda,  
Qumkenti balent taw tawinda,  
Edil-Zayiq boyinda,  
Min san da Nogay el boldi,  
Ormanbettoy biy boldi. //





Ayağın teñlep köterseñ.  
 Üyiñ, qara üyiñ aşılğan,  
 Ayaqqa ultan şañ bolıp,  
 Äwelden soñğa ya basılğan, 95  
 Härkimnen qalğan büyerin  
 ‘Žaylawım’ dep bararsañ. //  
 Bärha qazarsañ ariq,  
 Heş körmesseñ bir žariq.  
 Žilay, žilay, Noğayım, 100  
 Bunnan da posıp köşerseñ.  
 Däriyanı žaylap, xalayıq,  
 Tağı sırtqa öterseñ. //  
 Körmesiñdi yä körerseñ.  
 Ata da bilmes teksizben, 105  
 Şiyme-şiy qoñsi žürerseñ.  
 Žürgeniñ, xalqım, emes pe?  
 Ulamañda ya izzet žoq,  
 Baylarda qayır-saqawat,  
 Ol naşarda hayat žoq, 110  
 Hayatsız eldi körerseñ. //  
 Körgeniñ, xalqım, emes pe?  
 Eki başı kök tuyıq  
 Belbew şığar,” dep edi.  
 “Qıdırip žürgen žigittiñ 115  
 Belbewi žoq belinde.  
 Qıdırip bargan üyinde,  
 Bir köpşiğe iyninde  
 Kölbew şığar,” dep edi. //  
 “Orarsañ pişen bawlıqsız, 120  
 Ketpey me qızıñ žawlıqsız,  
 Keşegi tüsken keliniñ?  
 ‘Kördiñ be meni, qaynağa,  
 Qaynağa?’ dep biybağıñ,  
 Žalañ ayaq, žalañ bas, 125  
 Aldiñnan öter sälemsiz. //  
 Qızıñdi bergeniñ kim edi?  
 Izlep te körseñ küyewdi,

126 Compare the following lines in one of the variants (Täžimuratov 1980, 381): Pişeniñ bolar bawlıqsız, / Keliniñ keler žawlıqsız, / Keşegi kelgen keliniñ, / Žalañ ayaq žalañ bas, / “Qaynağa bizdi köriñ” dep, / Aldiñnen öter sälemsiz (“Your hay will be without band, / Your daughter-in-law will come without kerchief, / Your daughter-in-law, who came the day before, / Will bare-foot, bareheaded, / Say ‘Look at me, father-in-law,’ / And walk past you without greeting”).

Qiziñnan tuwğan bir uliñ,  
 Qudayiñ bergen häm quliñ, 130  
 ‘Kiyatır meniñ dayım’ dep,  
 Žuwirip şığar aldiña.  
 Qolların salsa moyniña,  
 Quwanişiñ siymay qoyniña,  
 ‘Žiyenim’ dep alarsañ. 135  
 [R] Alarsañ da süyerseñ,  
 Süyerseñ de küyerseñ,  
 [S] Arqañdi tamğa süyerseñ. //  
 Aytilar sözim här qaşan.  
 Bolmay ma tilde bir nişan? 140  
 Qaraqalpaq naqıraşi,  
 Qazaqtan şığar sirnayşi,  
 Däp, baraban, dayraşi  
 Qazaqtan bolar,” dep edi. //  
 “Qazaqtan şığar sirnayşi” 145  
 Aytilar sözdñ mänisi:  
 Mina da turgan Noğaydiñ  
 [R] Emennen soqqan kemesi.  
 Keme degen nemesi? /  
 Eki başı qayqayğan 150  
 [S] Keme şığar,” dep edi. //  
 “Al kemege de miyasar  
 Keşegi ölgen Mönke biy.  
 [R] Miñ qabatlı xalayıq,  
 Baliq şığar,” dep edi. 155  
 “Sol baliq ta uwlawğa  
 [S] Xalıq şığar,” dep edi. //  
 “Ol xalıqqa miyasar 157a  
 Saliq şığar,” dep edi. 157b  
 “Žil on eki ay tabisñ  
 Salıp şığar,” dep edi.  
 [R] “Ata turıp ul söyler,

134 Compare in one of the variants (Täžimuratov 1980, 382): Qiziñnan tuwğan sol ballar, / Žuwirip kelip aldiña, / Asılsa kelip moyniña, / Quwanişiñ siymay qoyniña . . . (“These children, born from your daughter, / Will come running to you, / When they come and hang on your neck, / Your joy will not find enough place in your chest . . .”).

157b These two lines were added by the singer in 1997 when going over the text recorded in 1994. Compare also in one of the variants (Täžimuratov 1980, 381): Aydin-aydin köllerden, / Baliq şığar dep edi, / Ol baliqqa miyasar, / Xalıq şığar dep edi, / Ol xalıqqa miyasar, / Saliq şığar dep edi . . . (“Out of the clear lakes / A fish will come,” she said, / ‘Fitting for this fish / There will be a people,’ she said, / ‘Fitting for this people / There will be a tax,’ she said . . .”).

Šešesi turip qiz söyler, / Šešesinen qizi Žetik šigar," dep edi. / 'Žetik šiqqan' mänisi: Al da on beške kelgende, / Köšede žürgen žigitke 'Qälegenim usi' dep, Buğadayın bir süzip, Özi asılar," dep edi. // Ormanbettiñ genžesi, Algir qustiñ pänžesi, Miñ san da üyli Nogayğa, Aldin bolžap aldında, Aytiwli tolğaw sözi edi, Aytiwli tolğaw sözi edi. //	160    165    170    175
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