

THE USE OF THE SUPERNATURAL IN THE
TURKISH EPICS OF
DEDE KORKUT AND KÖROGHLU

BY
AHMET EDIP UYSAL*

The Turkic peoples comprising such Turkic-speaking nations as the Uzbeks, Kirghiz, Kazakh, Türkmén, Tatar, Azeri and the Anatolian or Western Turks as well as many smaller communities or sub-groups scattered over a very wide area stretching from the Balkans to the borders of China on one hand, and from the Himalayas to Siberia on the other, are known to have had a rich and long tradition of minstrelsy fed and fostered by a common linguistic and cultural heritage, a tradition which still preserves much of its original vitality. Although studied extensively by such well-known scholars as Barthold, Radlov, Zhirmunsky, Chadwick, Köprülü and others, both in the east and west, the vastness of the area and the bewildering richness of the oral material so far gathered, require a good deal more research. The inaccessibility of most of these lands to Western scholars and the impossibility of conducting unhampered fieldwork in them is really a sad situation at the end of the 20th century.

We must, however, be grateful to a handful of energetic collectors who were able to surmount the difficulties and brought to light some extraordinary wealth of oral materials which is sufficient to give us a fairly good idea of the nature of the oral epics of the Turkic peoples.

It is generally believed that the epics of the Turkic peoples first started making their appearance during the 7th century B. C. and the 1st century A. D. and that they mostly dealt with tribal conflicts over land and pasture. Warriors drawing attention by their outstanding exploits in the service of their community formed the models or prototypes for the heroes of many Turkic epics which show structural similarities. First of all, each epic is the life story of a hero who often

* Professor of English Language and Literature; Dean, Faculty of Education, Middle East Technical University, Ankara.

has a legendary birth and as he grows he performs a series of remarkable exploits. He is given a name on the basis of these achievements, which also mark the end of his childhood period and the beginning of his adult life. This is followed by search for a wife and marriage. Then, the hero is encountered with problems of more serious nature related with his family or tribe. He rescues a kidnapped father, brother or sister, and fighting against the enemies of his people, succeeds in restoring peace and order in his community and eventually creates a large empire in which he unites all Turkic peoples. The epic celebrates the hero's achievements and comes to an end with his death. A second epic story follows describing how the hero's son succeeded in restoring his father's shattered empire and displaying many acts of heroism in the pursuit of his task. As in the epics of many other nations, the fights of the heroes of the Turkish epics sometimes take place in the sea and below the surface of the earth. In these fights the hero's sole asset is his superhuman power and the supernatural qualities of his horse. The hero may be a legendary figure involved in actual historical events. He is often accompanied by 40,365 or 1999 companions.

In the Turkic languages the word "destan," originally a loan-word from Persian, is used for an epic tale. Singers of epic tales are sometimes called "kam," "bakshi," "ozan" or "âshik", who are often believed to have been endowed with powers of clairvoyance and prophecy. Therefore their function in the community did not consist of merely reciting an epic. They also sought remedies for the serious problems of their community. Although this function is no longer practiced, singers of epic tales of great length are still revered and they enjoy prestige throughout the Turkic-speaking world, where the epic singer is considered to be a divinely inspired man. When Radlov, a 19th century investigator of Central -Asian epics, asked an epic singer how and from whom he had learned his art, he received the following reply from him: "The art of singing epic tales was put into my heart by Allah. I never search for words and lines when reciting an epic; they just pour out from my inside on their own."¹

¹ V. V. Radlov, *Proben der Volksliteratur der Türkischen Stämme Südsibiriens*, V. Teil, Der Dialekt der Kara-Kirgisen, St. Petersburg, 1885, p. XVI. Quoted after D. Yıldırım.

There is a belief still prevailing throughout the Turkic-speaking part of the world that the ability to create spontaneous poetry, lyric or epic, is granted to the artist by some divine agents in the form of a sweet drink (*bâde*) in a dream state.² In Turkey such minstrels are distinguished from those who did not have this experience by the epithet "*bâdeli âshik*" i.e. minstrel who has had the cup. Such minstrels recite and create spontaneous poetry as if in a state of trance.

It is believed by the epic singers of the Turkic world that the spirits of the heroes attend a session of epic recital, and if the performance is a good one they are extremely gratified, if bad they become very angry.

Although this belief in divine inspiration is very common among Turkic epic singers, it must be pointed out here that the Turkic epic singer cultivates his art by arduous training and exercise through apprenticeship to a master (*usta*). This traditional master - apprentice system is still followed in Turkey.

Zhirmunsky writes as follows about the training of Uzbek singers of epic tales:

Central Asian tale-singers were professionally trained in their art. The most detailed information exists on the training and Schools of Uzbek tale-singers. In early times many outstanding Uzbek bakshy were also teachers of poets (ustoz). The most prominent singer-teachers had several pupils at a time. Training lasted for two or three years and was free of charge; the teacher provided his pupils with food and clothing, the pupils helped the teacher about the house.

The young singers listened to the tales of their teacher and accompanied him on his trips to villages. At first, under the teacher's guidance, the pupils memorized the traditional passages of dastans and epic clichés, and at the same time learned how to recount the rest of the poem through their own improvisation. The end of the training was marked by a public examination: the pupil had to recite a whole dastan before a selected audience of tale-singers, after which he received the title of bakshy with the right to perform independently³.

² Süleyman Kazmaz, "The Theme of Initiation through Dream in Turkish Folk Literature," *ERDEM*, Atatürk Kültür Merkezi, vol. 1, No. 1, January 1985.

³ V. M. Zhirmunsky and N. Chadwick, *Oral Epics of Central Asia*, Cambridge, 1969, p. 330.

Manas, the well-known Kirghiz epic, is the most remarkable Turkic epic as far as its length, content and form are concerned. Dursun Yıldırım, a Turkish scholar who worked extensively on this work, writes as follows about its importance:

*The Manas epic cycle is comparable only to the Iliad and Odyssey of the Greeks, the Kalevala of the Finns, the Mahabharata of the Indians, the Shahnama of the Persians and Jangar of the Kalmuks as regards both length, content and poetic quality. It is longer, beyond any scale, than any of the above-mentioned epics.”*⁴

The same scholar informs us that the *Manas* epic is 6 times larger than the *Shahnama* and 48 times larger than the *Iliad*.

The *Manas* epic recounts the exploits of a Kirghiz hero in uniting the scattered Kirghiz tribes into a powerful state.

After this brief introduction to the epic, I should I suppose start dealing with my special topic i.e. the supernatural elements in the Book of *Dede Korkut* and *Köroghlu*.

The Book of Dede Korkut, consisting of 12 epic tales, recounting the heroic exploits of the Oghuz Turks, ancestors of the Turkish peoples of Turkey, survived in two 16th century manuscripts, one found in the Dresden National Library during the early 19th century and the other in the Vatican Library during the 20th century. The epic must have circulated in the oral tradition for many centuries before it was written down and finally published in Turkey, first in the old Arabic script in 1916 and later in the new Turkish alphabet i.e. in Latin characters in 1938. Numerous more recent editions, including a facsimile edition, have been made since then. It was translated into Russian in Baku 1950, Italian in the Vatican in 1952, German in Zurich in 1958, and in English in Texas, USA in 1972.

The manuscript contains three pages in the form of an introduction listing a number of proverbs with no direct relation to the tales which are titled as follows: 1) “The Story of Bugach Khan, Son of Dirse Khan.” 2) “The Sack of the House of Salur Kazan.” 3) “The Story of Bamsı Beyrek, Son of Kam Büre”. 4) “The Story of the Capture of Uruz Bey, Son of Kazan Bey.” 5) “The Story of Delü

⁴ Dursun Yıldırım, “*Manas Destanı ve Köketay Hanning Ertegüsü*,” unpublished dissertation, Ankara 1979, pp. 16-17.

Dumrul, Son of Duha Khoja.” 6) “The Story of Kan Turah, Son of Kanlı Khoja.” 7) “The Story of Yigenek, Son of Kazılık Khoja.” 8) “The Story of Basat, Killer of the One-eyed Giant.” 9) “The Story of Emren, Son of Begil.” 10) “The Story of Seghrek, Son of Ushun Khoja.” 11) “The Story of Salur Kazan’s Captivity and his rescue by his Son Uruz.” 12) “The Story of the Revolt of the Outer Oghuz against the Inner Oghuz and of the Death of Beyrek.”

The Vatican MS⁵ of the *Book of Dede Korkut* containing the introductory part and only six of the tales is believed to be a more carefully written text than the Dresden MS.

Recounting the conflicts between the Oghuz and their neighbours, Tales No. II, IV and XI, and Tales No. VII, IX and X, all tales with political themes, are closely related with each other. The last tale describing an internal conflict within the Oghuz community can also be classified as a political tale. Tales III and VI can be called love stories in which the heroes risk their lives in daring exploits. Tale I is the story of a father led by some conspirators to kill his son. Tales V and VIII having a mythological character belong to a separate category altogether.

In the absence of any concrete evidence to help us in dating the compilation or creation of the *Book of Dede Korkut*, it is merely a matter of conjecture to say that the tales must have circulated in the oral tradition for many centuries before the Oghuz people accepted Islam in the 10th century. The two manuscripts, which are now almost universally accepted to have been inscribed in the second half of the 16th century, are full of Islamic references. It is highly probable that, like *Beowulf* for example, these tales were originally pagan but later went through a phase of Islamic transformation.

Contrary to the claims of some scholars, Islam is not merely a thin veneer in the *Book of Dede Korkut* but its presence is felt strongly throughout. Dede Korkut, after whom the tales are called, combines the function of a shaman, advisor, name-giver, tribal wise man and preacher. He is often invited to officiate on ceremonial occasions. After the audience hears of the heroic achievements of the Oghuz

⁵ Ettore Rossi, “Un nuovo manoscritto del Kitab-i Dede Qorqut,” *Estratto della Rivista degli Studi Orientali*, vol 25, 1950, pp. 34-43.

heroes he asks the members of the audience to learn from their example, saying

*Where now are the noble heroes who thought the world was theirs?
Where are those men who once claimed the whole world?
Now death has carried them off, and the earth concealed them.
To whom the mortal world remains? The world where man come
and go,
The world which is rounded off with death.*⁶

Most serious scholars are now unanimous in their evaluation of the religious sentiments expressed in the *Book of Dede Korkut*. They accept them as sincere deep and pure.

Time and space allow me to present only a very brief treatment of some of the supernatural elements in this epic. The references to Gabriel, Adam, Satan, Noah, Abraham, Nimrud, Moses, Jennet and Jehennem in the tales hardly need any explanation. However, some of the more obscure supernatural references in them may need clarification.

In "Bogach Khan, Son of Dirse Khan," the first tale in the epic, Dirse Khan is a childless lord in the Oghuz community and he is stigmatized on that account. Many believed he was cursed and Allah condemned him to sterility. With the suggestion of his wife, Dirse Khan fed the poor, dressed the naked and threw a big banquet and implored Allah to give him a son. Finally his wife bore him a child. According to Oghuz tradition a male child would not be given a name until he performed a remarkable act. This child fought with the king's bull and sent it crashing down with a blow directly on its forehead. He, then, severed the bull's head with his knife. This feat took place under the eyes of many lords. Therefore, Dede Korkut was called and the child was ceremoniously given the name Bugach (bull killer). Bugach grew into a fine young man and succeeded to his father's throne. As a ruler he ignored his forty companions, who being thus offended planned a conspiracy against him. They told his old father Dirse Khan that his son Bugach had become a tyrant and that he was planning to destroy the Oghuz State. Upon

⁶ *The Book of Dede Korkut: A Turkish Epic*, ed. Faruk Sümer, Ahmet E. Uysal and Warren S. Walker, University of Texas Press, Austin 1972, p. 114.

this, Dirse Khan decided to kill his son during a hunting expedition, which he had specially arranged. Bugach was shot and seriously wounded by an arrow of his father. Left bleeding, wild birds were trying to descend upon him to eat his flesh, but they were chased away by his dog. Soon, Hızır, riding upon his gray horse appeared, stroked his wound gently three times saying that an ointment made of his mother's milk and mountain flowers would heal his wound. He then disappeared.

Hızır,⁷ the Islamic counterpart of St. George, is the most popular saint in Islamic countries. He plays many roles among which one is that of rescuing someone from disaster in the last minute when all hope is abandoned.

When word reaches the hero's mother she comes upon the scene and addresses her son as follows:

*Your slit black eyes now taken by sleep— let them open.
 Your strong healthy bones have been broken,
 Your soul all but flown from your frame.
 If your body retains any life, let me know.
 Let my poor luckless head be a sacrifice to you.
 Kazılık Mountain, your waters still flow;
 Let them, I pray, cease their flowing.
 Kazılık Mountain, your deer still run fast;
 Let them cease running and turn into stone.
 How can I know, my son, if it was lion
 Or tiger? How can I know, my son?
 How did this accident happen to you?
 If your life is still in your body, my son, let me know.
 Let my poor luckless head be a sacrifice to you.
 Speak a few words to me now.⁸*

⁷ For Hızır see Warren S. Walker and Ahmet E. Uysal, "An Ancient God in Modern Turkey: Some aspects of the cult of Hızır," *Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 86, No. 341, July-September, 1973, pp. 285-289; *Tales alive in Turkey*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1966, pp. 42-43, 210; P. N. Boratav, "Türk Folklorunda Hızır" *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 5 pp. 463-471; Israel Friedlaender, "Khidr," *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* Vol. 7, pp. 693-695; F. W. Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, Vol. 2, pp. 315-336.

⁸ *The Book of Dede Korkut*, p. 18.

*You fight with the fierce barking dogs;
 You make run through the night the shepherds who kindle their fires.
 If you know what disaster has come to my camp, oh, speak
 May my luckless head be a sacrifice to you.*⁹

The hero's address to water in the earlier part of the above quotation may be taken as traces of an ancient Turkish shamanistic water cult.¹⁰ The ancient Turks held water to be a sacred element and worshipped rivers. For them death by drowning was believed to be an honourable form of death.

In their pre-Islamic, animistic period, the ancient Turks considered trees sacred and some Turkish tribes traced their origin to trees. According to a Turkish myth mankind grew out of a beech tree (father) and a hazelnut tree (mother). When one night a column of sacred light fell upon these trees, the hazelnut tree became pregnant. Nine months later a door opened in the trunk of this tree and from it jumped five babies.

The wolf was the official symbol of the Göktürk Empire founded by the Tu-kiu Dynasty. On the Göktürk standard there was a small emblem showing a wolf's head. In a 14th century Oghuz legend written in Uigur script the Oghuz ruler is said to have been led by a gray wolf in his conquests.¹¹ Michael the Syrian Patriarch mentions that the Oghuz Turks under the Seljuk Dynasty in the eleventh century carried before them in their conquests of the Near East an animal resembling a dog, undoubtedly a wolf. Originally the official emblem of the Republic of Turkey had a wolf's head along with the star and crescent, although this disappeared later. In European literature Atatürk himself was sometimes referred to as "The Gray Wolf." All Turkish tribes once called the wolf *boru* or *börü*, but beginning in the eleventh century the Oghuz used the word *kurt* instead. *Kurt* is also the name of the common earthworm, and the deliberate ambiguity here is probably brought about by a kind of word magic. Although admired as a Turkish totem, the wolf is also feared as a destroyer of flocks. By avoiding its real name and using

⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 27-29.

¹⁰ See in this connection: Abdulkadir İnan, "Türklerde su kültü ile ilgili gelenekler," *Fuat Köprülü Armağanı*, Istanbul, 1953, p. 249; *Şamanizm*, p. 49.

¹¹ See the notes on wolf in the *The Book of Dede Korkut*, p. 186.

instead the name of a harmless creature, the Turks must have hoped to keep him away.

As in most medieval and ancient legends, dreams have an important place in the *Book of Dede Korkut*. As told in Tale VII, The Story of Yigenek, Son of Kazılık Khoja, one day, Kazılık Khoja, a vizier of Bayındır Khan, the Oghuz ruler, was taken prisoner by the infidel commander of a castle on the Black Sea coast. This infidel was sixty yards tall and carried a huge club weighing sixty batmans. A rescue party headed by Yigenek, his son, and including some of the greatest Oghuz heroes was sent by the Oghuz ruler. During the night before the rescue operation Yigenek had a dream which he told his companions in the morning. Here is this dream as Yigenek told his friends in the tale:

*O, beys, while asleep last night, this poor and unfortunate head of mine had a dream. When I opened my eyes, I saw the world crowded with heroes riding on gray-dappled horses. I took the white-helmeted heroes with me, and then I received advice from the white-bearded Dede Korkut. I crossed the long ranges of black mountains and reached a sea lying below me. There I built myself a boat and made a sail for it out of my shirt. I sailed through the sea lying under me. On the other side of the black mountains I saw a man whose head and forehead were shining. I rose and went toward him, holding my spear in my hand. I went and stood before him. When I was about to pierce him, I looked at him out of the corner of my eye and realized that he was my maternal uncle Emen. I greeted him and asked him who he was among the Oghuz. Lifting his eyes, he looked at me and asked, "Yigenek, my son, where are you going?" I replied "I am going to Düzürd Castle, where I have heard my father is imprisoned." My uncle spoke to me as follows:
I once had seven warriors faster than the wind.
My warriors were like wolves out of the seven mountains.
My bowstring then was pulled by seven men
To shoot my beechen arrows with gold fins.
Winds blew, rains fell, and fog descended —
I tried to take that castle seven times and then returned.
You cannot show more courage than I;
My Yigenek, turn back!*

*Yigenek in his dream spoke as follows to his uncle:
 When you arose from where you sat,
 You did not lead forth brown-eyed princely men with you;
 You did not gallop out with well-known beys.
 You must have taken mercenary troops for five akchas apiece,
 And that is why you failed to take the fort.
 He continued,
 Stewed meat is good to eat, slice after slice.
 A powerful horse is good in time of need.
 Good luck is good while it lasts.
 The mind is good if it does not forget;
 And valour, too, is good if there is no retreating from the foe.¹²*

This was a perfectly telepathic dream, because it happened that Yigenek's uncle Emen was not very far away. He soon joined the party and the Oghuz warriors finally reached the Düzürd Castle.

Sleep and dream are among important motifs in the book. The Oghuz heroes are reputed for their long sleep. It is said that they often slept for seven days. "Küçük ölüm" i.e. little death was a synonym for sleep. Bamsı Beyrek in tale III and Salur Kazan in tale XI were captured while they were asleep. In Tale III Segrek falls asleep at a most critical moment and is awakened by his horse. In Tale VI the narrator states that in days gone by most of the misfortunes of Oghuz beys were the result of untimely sleep.¹³ The heroes' falling into long sleep is a frequently encountered motif in the tales of other countries, too. Oghuz heroes are often warned about the important events through dreams. Salur Kazan's dream in Tale III is a dream of this kind. It is a nightmare which comes true:

As it happened, Salur Kazan, the hope of the strong Oghuz people had a dream that night. Waking up with a start, he said: "My brother Kara Göne, do you know what I saw in my dream? It was a terrible dream.

I saw my falcon dying in my hand. I saw a lightning bolt strike down my tent with the golden top. I saw a black cloud descending upon my camp. I saw mad wolves attacking my house. I felt the black camel biting my neck. I saw my black hair rise like spears and cover

¹² *The Book of Dede Korkut*, pp. 117-118.

¹³ *Ibid.* p. 108.

my eyes. I saw my ten fingers dipped in blood to my wrists. I wonder why I had such a dream? Ever since I had this dream I have been unable to think clearly. My brother khan come and interpret my dream for me.

Kara Göne said: What you say about a black cloud has to do with power. Snow and rain from such a cloud would mean troops. Hair represents sorrow, and blood means trouble. I cannot interpret the rest. May Allah interpret it.¹⁴

What had actually happened was that while he was hunting his own house was sacked by the troops of an infidel ruler.

I suppose no discussion of the supernatural is complete without referring to the theme of bargaining with the Angel of Death Azrail in Tale V, The Story of Delü Dumrul, Son of Duha Khoja, and to the fight with the One-eyed Giant (Tepegöz) in Tale VIII, The Story of Basat, Killer of the One-eyed Giant.

Tale V The Story of Delü Dumrul is obviously a variant of the story of Admetus and Alcestis. In the Greek myth Hercules wrestles with Thanatos, the Angel of Death and winning saves the life of his friend's wife. In the Turkish tale, Delü Dumrul, Dumrul the Mad, decides to put an end to Azrail's terrorizing people and taking their lives, so he declares openly that he would fight with him. One day Azrail comes quite unnoticed and asks Delü Dumrul to deliver his life to him. Delü Dumrul tries to reason with him and asks if there is a way out. Azrail suggests that there is only one way out and it is finding someone else's life as a substitute. He goes to his parents but they refuse sacrificing their lives for their son. He finally applies to his own wife who accepts to give her own life to save her husband. This is reported to Azrail but he is not pleased with the arrangement. He takes the lives of the parents and grants 140 years to Delü Dumrul and his wife. I suppose Azrail showed this generosity not for the sake of Delü Dumrul, whose behaviour towards his parents can never be considered a noble gesture in any culture, but for his deep sympathy for his wife, who demonstrated a perfect example of love and loyalty for a man even though he did not deserve it. As portrayed in this tale Delü Dumrul does not display an exemplary behaviour fit for an Oghuz hero. He may perhaps be forgiven on one point. His

¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 27.

motive is a noble one, as he wants to save mankind from the curse of death once for all; but the means he employs is far from being noble and honest.

The second supernatural element in these tales is a theme also found in Greek mythology i.e. fight with the One-eyed giant (Cyclops). Similarities between the Turkish Tepegöz (the One-eyed giant) and Homer's Polyphemus in Book IX of the *Odyssey* are obvious. It is a matter of controversy to decide which is the original and which is the borrowed one. It cannot of course be argued that all tales of one-eyed giants derive from the Polyphemus story that other models did not exist for the giant called Tepegöz. There are examples of similar monsters in ancient oriental legends some of which may well precede Homer and Hesiod. See for example Stith Thompson and Jonas Balys *Motif and Type Index of the Oral Tales of India* Motifs F5 12.1.1 and F31.1.1. Even more closely related to the Turkish tradition is *Dua* (Dev) the One-eyed Mongol character whose exploits are narrated in the opening lines of the *Secret History of the Mongols*.¹⁵

The Köroghlu is a more popular epic tale than *The Book of Dede Korkut*, which is now considered a subject fit for scholarly study rather than for public recitation on the occasion of such social events as village weddings and minstrel gatherings. Although some traces of the Dede Korkut tales are still found in many living Turkish folktales, they are no longer a part of the repertory of the Turkish minstrels, whereas *The Köroghlu* is still narrated in the accompaniment of the *saz*, the six-stringed national musical instrument. The tradition of narrating long epic tales and tales of romantic adventure is still alive particularly in such eastern provinces as Kars and Erzurum. Village weddings without a minstrel reciting traditional tales is unthinkable in the villages of those provinces.

Among the Turkish folk heroes, Köroghlu, the chivalrous outlaw occupies a very prominent place. Few Turkish folk heroes stir sentiments so deep as he does. Like Robin Hood, the Turkish outlaw for many Turks, stands as a symbol of freedom and defiance of arbitrary authority. Köroghlu is by no means a simple bandit. He is an embodiment of some of the highest Turkish ideals: physical strength, courage, charity, courtesy, manliness and honour. Like

¹⁵ *The Secret History of the Mongols*, Arthur Waley's translation, p. 217.

Robin Hood and Rob Roy he is the protector of the oppressed and the enemy of the tyrant. Like them he robs from the rich in order to give to the poor. What makes him a very unusual hero is that he is a saz-playing minstrel and he frequently resorts to verse in his dealings with both friends and enemies. The name Kōroğlu is a compound name formed of 'kōr' (blind man) and 'oghlu' (son of). So, literally he is the son of the blind man.

Originally called Rushen Ali, he was renamed after his father, a groom, who was blinded for failing to carry out the order of his master, the Bey of Bolu. He had been ordered to find a high-bred colt for him, while he brought home a mangy colt. This was taken as a serious insult and in punishment he was blinded, by red-hot skewers being pushed through his eyeballs, and dismissed with the worthless colt he had brought with him. The blinded groom and his son Rushen Ali depart with the colt. The groom had reason to believe that the colt he had chosen was going to grow into an extremely good horse. Let us continue with the rest of the story from the mouth of Sergeant Hasan, the town crier (Tellal Mehmet Chavush), a man of 75, of the town of Nallıhan, not far from the Kōroğlu Mountain in the province of Bolu. He narrated to me the very beginning of the epic "How Kōroghlu became an outlaw" right in the middle of a field. Here is his account:

When Kōroghlu's father reached home, he said to his son, "Build four walls here." After Kōroghlu had built the four walls, his father said "Now cover these four walls with a roof so that not even a single ray of sunshine can penetrate it."

The horse was put in this dark stable, and there it was groomed for six months. After that time passed, Kōroghlu's father ordered that a field be plowed twelve times and watered after each plowing. After this was done, he ordered Kōroghlu to mount the horse and ride through the plowed field. When Kōroghlu had done this and returned, his father felt the horse's hoofs with his hands, but he was not satisfied with what he felt there.

"There must be a leak in some corner of the stable," he said to Kōroghlu. "This horse must be kept in complete darkness in the stable for another six months." Kōroghlu found the place in the roof where a small amount of light leaked and fixed it. Then he cared for the horse for another six months.

At the end of that time, his father ordered that the field be again plowed and watered twelve times. Köroghlu then mounted the horse and rode around the field several times, jumped over a high wall, and returned to his father, who again felt the horse's hoofs with his hands. This time he was satisfied, for he found some dry earth on the hoofs and knew that the horse had been able to reach down through the mud to the firm earth.

"As long as you have this horse," he told Köroghlu, "nobody can defeat you. Now I want you to go and take my revenge against Bolu Bey."¹⁶

What made Kirat, the Gray Horse, a remarkable animal was that it was sired by a sea stallion (*deniz kulunu*). It understood its master's speech and actually talked with him. It warned him of approaching danger. It could fly like a bird. It was immortal. In fact, Köroghlu himself was immortal, too, because he drank purposely the *abu hayat* i.e. water of life, given him by Hızır, the Turkish counterpart of St. George, as already mentioned in connection with the epic of Dede Korkut. This elixir called *abu hayat* was to be administered to his father's eyes, but Köroghlu could not resist the temptation of drinking it himself, as in this way he would acquire superhuman power which he needed to take the revenge of his father from the Bey of Bolu. While drinking this elixir he spilled part of it on his horse making him immortal, too.

Taking the Gray Horse and 365 warriors with him, Köroghlu built a castle at Chamlibel on the Köroghlu Mountains for himself and his companions. From this base he carried raids on the territories of the Governor of Bolu, his father's former master and the cause of his blindness. He robbed caravans, went on hunting expeditions and was engaged in amorous pursuits. He had many of the attributes of a medieval knight. He was a hero of the days of man to man combat with sword and shield. He is said to have stated that heroism and bravery were over with the invention of the iron pipe, his word for rifle. He disappeared mysteriously. It is said that he joined the Forty Saints and still lives in their company as he had gained immortality after having drunk the Water of Life and that his horse Kirat is also with him.

¹⁶ *Tales alive in Turkey*, pp. 193-194.

In conclusion I would like to express the view that, like other types of folklore, the epic tale is also waging a struggle for survival against the motion picture and TV. Perhaps something can be done to save the epic if the cooperation of some TV producers can be ensured. Surely, there must be at least a few sufficiently imaginative, easily convertible, sensitive people in the profession somewhere, people who can appreciate the power, beauty and mystery of this ancient means of entertainment and education. The supernatural element in the epic has great appeal on all kinds of audience, naive or sophisticated. In a way, these elements of the epic provide the same kind of excitement and spell as science fiction does. Great actions expressed in forceful language will always produce vibrations deep in the heart of man.