

# THE BIRTH OF HERO IN TURKIC EPICS

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## ÖZET

Dünya üzerindeki milletlerden pek çoğu destanı anlatmalara sahiptir ve bu anlatmalar arasında bazı benzer ve farklı yapılar söz konusudur. Bu benzer ve farklı yapılar bir milletin kendine ait destanları arasında da mevcuttur.

Bir destanda konu edilen olaylar ve yapının etrafında oluşturulduğu destan kahramanı, destanların benzer veya farklı şekillerde yaratılmasında ve sunulmasında önemli bir yere sahiptir. Milletlerin sahip oldukları destanı anlatmaları benzer veya farklı kılan da geleneksel anlatıcılar tarafından, geleneğe uygun şekilde yaratılan kahramanların sahip oldukları özellikler ve yaşadıkları olaylarla bağlantılıdır.

Destan kahramanları, kendi toplumlarında liderlik özellikleriyle ortaya çıkar ve sahip oldukları liderlik özellikleri dolayısıyla da "ideal tip" veya "örnek tip" olarak tasvir edilirler. Destan kahramanlarının ideal veya örnek tip olarak tasvir edilmelerindeki temel sebep ise, bu kahramanların yaratıldıkları, içinden çıktıkları toplumun sahip olduğu değerleri sürekli olarak yüklenmiş olmalarından kaynaklanmaktadır. Tabii ki, bu özelliklere sahip olmayı sağlayan da "destan sanatı" adı verilen çerçeve içinde bu ideal tipleri sürekli olarak yenileyen ve çeşitli adlarla anılan destan anlatıcılarıdır.

Destan anlatıcıları tarafından oluşturulan bu değerlerden bir kısmı daha uzun süreli yaşama kabiliyetine sahip olup, bu özellikler farklı kuşaklarda yaşayan destan anlatıcıları tarafından oluşturulan destanı anlatmalarda "kültür kalıpları" halinde yaşatılmıştır. Motif yapılarından daha geniş kapsamlı ve hatta içlerinde pek çok motife yer verebilecek genişlikte olan bu yapıların ana teması değişmezken, içlerini dolduran malzeme farklı dönemlerin renklerine sahip olabilir. İşte bu yapılar, bir milletin destanı anlatmaları arasında benzerlikler oluşmasını sağlarken, belli bir millete ait destanları da diğer milletlerin destanı anlatmalarından ayırmada yardımcı olur. Yine bu kalıpların bulunduğu anlatmaların "eş metinleri" arasında yapılacak karşılaştırma sayesinde mevcut bir destanın hangi metnin daha zengin olduğu ve ne kadar gelişip değiştiği gibi sorulara da cevap vermek mümkün olacaktır.

Destanlarda çok rastlanan bu temel kalıplardan bir tanesi "Kahramanın Doğumu"dur. Bu makalenin amacı; içleri birbirlerinden farklı şekillerde doldurulmuş olsa bile, kahramanın doğumuyla ilgili olayların Türk destanlarında nesiller boyu devam eden bir kalıp olup, olmadığını incelemek ve buradan hareketle Türk destanlarını diğer milletlerin destanlarından ayırmanın mümkün olup, olmayacağını tartışmak ve ayrıca Köroğlu gibi çok geniş bir alana yayılmış ve hakkında çok farklı yapılmış bir destanın hangi Türk boylarında daha zengin olduğu sorusuna cevap aramaktır.

Bu amaçla, Dede Korkut Kitabı'ndan "Dirse Han Oğlu Boğaç Han" ve "Kam Püre Oğlu Bamsı Beyrek" anlatmaları, Manas Destanı, Alpamış Destanı ve Köroğlu Destanı'nın Türkmen eş metni karşılaştırmalı olarak incelenmiştir. Kahramanın doğumuyla ilgili olaylar bu anlatmaların hepsinde ortaktır. Ancak, kalıp yapının işleniş tarzı ve motifleri bakımından bazı farklılıklar vardır ve bu farklar da birbirinden farklı dönemlerde ve farklı coğrafi alanlarda yaratılan bu anlatmalar için normal karşılanmalıdır.

İnceleme sonunda, bu anlatmaların hepsinde "kahramanın doğumu" yapısının olağanüstü bir takım olaylarla birleştirilerek tasvir edildiği tespit edilmiştir. Dolayısıyla bu kalıbın, Türk destanlarını Batı kaynaklı destanlardan ayıran bir özellik olarak ele alınabileceği düşünülmüştür. Türk destanlarında mevcut olan bu temel yapının içinde Türk boylarının sahip olduğu mahalli değerlerden de bahsedilmesi ve Türk hayat tarzının da bu içine yerleştirilmiş olması da tespitlerimiz arasındadır. Böyle özel bir yapıya sahip olan Köroğlu Destanı'nın Türkmen eş metninin de diğer Köroğlu eş metinlerine kaynaklık etmiş olabileceği de elde ettiğimiz sonuçlardandır.

**Key Words (Anahtar Kelimeler):** The Birth of Hero (Kahramanın Doğumu), Turkic Epics (Türk Destanları), The Book of Dede Korkut (Dede Korkut Kitabı), Alpamış, Manas, Köroğlu

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Although almost all societies in the world have their own epics, those epics have their differences and similarities with regard to their internal structures-heroes, events they refer to- and their external structures-narrators, time and place of narrating; each of those epics is a distinctive narrative.

The events in an epic and the hero who is the person that lives through these events, constitute the backbone of the epic; all other elements are built around the hero and the hero's deeds. Therefore, however similar two heroes might be, they are totally different in the sense that they are shaped and depicted according to the social and cultural dynamics of the society they come from.

Generally, epic heroes appear as leaders, an important figure in their society due to their strong characters, which makes them what is called "ideal types" or "role models." Naturally, the characteristics of being "ideal type" or "role model" has to be such that the "heroes identified as "ideal types" or role models" show consistency and can form ability with the ideal values of the society whose culture they represent. Because the narrators or the creators of an epic knew or had to know what an "ideal type" had to look like in the society from which they came, it could be said that epic creators and narrators gave shape to their epic heroes in accordance with the social and cultural demands of their times. This characteristic evolved as social values of their societies culturally developed and changed.

All this coupled with the achievement of one of the fundamental features of the art epic, that is the integrity of the

narrative and form gives the epic teller the opportunity to present the "ideal type" to his audience in accordance with tradition. These "ideal types", or heroes, are presented sometimes as a leader and warrior, some times as a warrior-minstrel and some times as a combination of warrior, minstrel and a trickster person who tries all means to achieve his goal.

The lives of those heroes, which are presented differently in each epic story, may not be told in a manner which covers their lives from their birth until their death. An epic might start with events before the hero's birth and then depict his birth and growing, as well as his subsequent life. The hero might appear first as a young boy and the epic might tell his story afterwards, or an epic story might tell of a hero who is already a mature person who leads his people. In many epics that are told in Europe and that have been transformed into written form, the heroes are incorporated into the epics either as young or mature men. For instance, *The Odyssey* (see *The Odyssey of Homer; 1975*) is an epic which tells the story of a mature (in the sense of being a grown up) person. Similarly, in the *Song of Roland; Roland*,(see *Song of Roland; 1990*) in *The Nibelungenlied; Siegfried*,(see *The Nibelungenlied;1969*) and in the epic *Beowulf; Beowulf* (see *Beowulf; 1974*) appear as already grown up men.

In this regard Turkic epics differ fundamentally from epics of European origin. Most of the Turkic epics depict events before the hero's birth, that is, they tell of the situation which involves "childlessness" that is followed by a "search for a cure", that is followed by a hero's birth.(see Başgöz; 1976)

With regard to the general structure, episodes that deal with the events up to and including hero's birth constitute an important part of an epic. They might be told at length or might not be very long. It should be kept in mind that the part of an epic that is made up of these episodes is related to the internal structure of an epic and the social structure and the culture from which the epics originates.

That part is related to the internal structure of the epic in various ways. Almost all elements of that part could be said to prepare the ground for the appearance or existence of the hero. Such a preparation involves the reasons for a need for a hero; it explains what kind of person the hero is going to be or should be and the expectations of the family and society. Also, here the readers or audiences have information about people who play an important role in the birth of the hero, as well as the birth of his horse, which is going to be his best friend and most important helper. All this, as clues, signals that the main character will accomplish significant deeds.

The need for a hero has to do with the general values that is, the social institutions of the society from which the epic is flourished as much as it has to do with the internal structure of the epic. Almost all heroes are introduced as kings, leaders, khans, beys and son on of their societies.

A family which is in ruling position needs a male child to ensure the continuity of this position. Culturally, this is related to the fact that in the Turkic societies leadership passed from father to

son. Moreover, Turkic traditions reproached, for various reasons, those without children. Although this might be related to Islam, what should also be kept in mind is that in a societal structure based on nomadism and cattle breeding there was need for offspring that would help the family. In such a societal structure a children helped their families, they were seen as kind of "insurance" for the parents in their old age; in the continues struggles of a nomadic society they were to become warriors. For these reasons those who had children, especially son(s) were seen in a superior position as opposed to those without children. Examples for this clearly seen in Turkic epics. Considering the social structure of old times, the importance given to the notion and expectation that the child that is to be born should grow up to be healthy, strong, and a warrior with leadership abilities is self-evident. To this end, both before and after the birth, shamanistic as well as Islamic ritualistic elements are employed by the Turkic families. Importance is also given to raising the child (and an epic's hero) in accordance with the cultural values of the society so that those values could be pressed in the future.

I will try to examine, in the framework of "the birth of the hero" in Turkic epics, how those characteristics are narrated and how the connection between the external and internal structure of the epics is established. For this purpose I will use "The Story of Boğaç Han" and "The Story of Bamsı Beyrek of the Gray Horse" epic stories from the book of Dede Korkut (see The Book of Dede Korkut;

1974), as well as the epics Manas (see Manas-I:1984), Alpamiş (see Alpamiş: 1961), and Koroğlu (see Ger-Oglı: 1983). The aim of this article is to determine whether or not, one can speak of general characteristics, as those mentioned above, in Turkic epics and, if there are general characteristics, their causes and their structure in Turkic epics.

### 1. The Story of Boğaç Han, Son of Dirse Han:

This epic story is the first one in the Book of Dede Korkut (The Book of Dede Korkut: 1974; 27-41) and in terms of its general structure it can be divided into two parts. The first part deals with the childlessness of Dirse Han, who is reproached for this, the search for a cure for the childlessness, the birth of a son, and the giving of a name to the boy. The second part deals with another problem, when the father-son relation is spoiled and the father attempts to kill his son; later the situation changes and the son rescues his father from misfortune. The figure of the mother is given considerable place in both parts. I am concerned mostly with the first part of the story; I will take into consideration the second part insofar as it related to subject is under examination.

In this story, the birth of the hero is preceded by a crisis of childlessness, which is narrated as follows: The Han of the Hans Bayındır gives a feast every year, inviting all Oğuz nobles to attend. On one occasion he orders his men to “put anyone who has no sons or daughters in the black tent. Spread black felt beneath him, set before him mutton-stew made from the black sheep. If he will eat it, he may, if he will not he can

get up and go. Put him who has a son in the white tent, him who has a daughter in the red tent. But him who has neither, God Most High has humiliated, and we shall humiliate him too; let him mark this well.” (The Book of Dede Korkut; 1974: 27)

As it can be seen, having no son or daughter is a reason for humiliation that is expressed with the color black. Even though Dirse Han is one of the Oğuz nobles, he is not regarded highly among the other nobles because he has no children. In the story, the importance of having children is explained in terms of religious understanding, that is Islamic, elements. On the other hand, when one reads the entire book, it becomes clear that the figure in the stories have no strong religious, Islamic, convictions, for they believe in Islam, but still drink forbidden beverages. Therefore, one should look for other reasons for explaining the importance given to having children. The main reason seems to be related to the nomadic or semi-nomadic life style of the Oğuz Turks, who, throughout the book depicted as fighting their enemies. The need they had for manpower explains to a considerable degree the importance given to having children.

In the story, following his humiliation in front of other nobles, Dirse Han goes home and has conversation with his wife about their childlessness. They discuss the question of how to find a cure and, upon his wife’s suggestion, Dirse Han decides to give a feast to the hungry and cloth the naked. He proceeds to implement the idea. Those who are helped, fed and clothed pray that Dirse Han and his wife have a child. As a

result, “with prayerful mouths singing his praise, God Most High granted them a child; his wife became pregnant and some time later she bore him a son.” (The Book of Dede Korkut; 1974: 29-30)

Thus the family finds a cure by religious means, that is, by helping the poor and getting their good wishes and prayers. The birth of the hero is permeated with the “ideology” of the book of Dede Korkut. As it is known, the Oğuz-Turkic tribes were converted to Islam in the 9th and 10th centuries. Dede Korkut reflects the daily life and cultural history of those tribes from that era, when Islam was either newly accepted, or still not embraced as their faith at all. This duality is related in the story as well, for a while Dirse Han gives the feast and the poor pray, he also serves them “Kimız”, which is fermented mare milk used as drink by Turkic peoples. Thus the story combines element both from Islamic and shamanistic beliefs.

In the story, the birth of the hero is important for various reasons. First, the story needs a hero upon whom it could be built. Second, as an internal element in the story, the society, for religious reasons, pressures the family to have a child, when, actually, as mentioned, the life style of the society requires families to have children. The solution to the childlessness crisis is found by religious means, later in the story this religious element will play an important role in the confrontation between the father and the son, which has also to do with family structures of the society. All the fore-mentioned elements help to create the hero in the story of Boğaç Han; the totality of the existing ethical values

shapes the hero’s character, as well as the subsequent unfolding of the story.

### **2.The Story of Bamsı Beyrek of the Gray Horse:**

The second story subjected to my examination is the story of Bamsı Beyrek from the book of Dede Korkut. This is a colorful story whose various aspects- its subject, hero, structure and so on have been closely examined. It covers the themes of childlessness, the birth of the hero, preparations for his wedding, his capture and imprisonment by enemies of the Oğuz, and his return. From those closely related episodes, I will be concentrate on the parts that deal with the problem of childlessness and the birth of the hero.

In the story of Bamsı Beyrek, the parts related to the birth of the hero are slightly different from those parts of Boğaç Han that deal with the same subject. For the purpose of this article therefore, I will give a brief outline of the developments, starting with the problem of the childlessness and also the presentation of the birth of the hero in the story of Bamsı Beyrek.

The Han of the khans Bayındır gathers all Oğuz nobles. Before he comes and takes his place at the meeting, the noble Oğuz Beys are already seated. Among them is Bay Bure. When he looks to his left and to his right and sees that all other nobles came with their sons, waiting together for Bayındır Han, he starts to cry. The son-in-law of Bayındır Han, Salur Kazan, sees him and asks him why he crying for. Bay Bure replies: “Lord Kazan, why should I not cry and sob, when I have no share of sons, no portion of brothers? God Most High

humiliated me my lords. I weep for my crown and my throne; a day will come when I shall fall and die and none will be left in my place and my house'. 'Is that what you are concerned about', asked prince Kazan. 'Certainly it is" replied prince Bay Bure. 'If I too had a son who could stand before Bayındır Han and serve him, I could look on and rejoice and be proud and confident.' At these words the nobles of the teeming Oğuz turned their faces heavenward, lifted their hands and prayed: 'May God Most High grant you a son'. In those days the nobles' blessings were blessings and their curses were curses, and their prayers used to be answered." (The Book of Dede Korkut; 1974: 59)

Bay Bican Bey, who sees the nobles praying, ask them to pray for him as well, so that he may have a daughter. The nobles fulfill his wish and pray for him too. Upon this Bay Bican turn to the beys and says: "Nobles, if God Most High gives me a daughter, be your witness that my daughter is to be betrothed in the cradle to the son of Bay Bure. Time passed, and God Most High gave prince Bay Bure a son and Bay Bican a daughter." (The Book of Dede Korkut; 1974:60)

As could be seen from the summary, in this story too there is a "crisis", which is essentially the problem of childlessness. Similar to the story of Boğaç Han, here the anxiety of having no children is not caused by society's approach; rather, the childlessness is seen as a approach by God. Thus, the anxiety caused childlessness has a religious connotation. On the other hand, the problem of childlessness is approached from the point of view of family's need and social struc-

ture. As Bay Bure explains, what makes him cry is the prospect of not having a heir who would take his place after he dies. His grief is also directly related to society's need for male children, which was already mentioned. This is reflected in Bay Bure's desire to have by his side his son (who would also serve Han of the khans) at the court of Bayındır.

In terms of searching for a cure to childlessness, the story of Bamsı Beyrek differs from that of Boğaç Han; here there is a different practice. While Dirse Han had his wish fulfilled by the prayers of the poor he fed and clothed, in Bamsı Beyrek the wish is fulfilled as a result of God's acceptance of the prayers of the Oğuz nobles, whose "prayers were prayers and curses were curses". This reflects the respect nobles had among the Oğuz; this respect was due to their successes at wars, as well as their acceptance as semi-religious personalities. Being presented as such in the story might very well have to do with the ideological concern of preserving the respect shown to them.

Thus, these epic stories from the book of Dede Korkut relate the birth of their respective heroes to the social structure and lifestyle, emphasizing the importance given by society to male children. This importance is reinforced by religious elements as well.

### 3. Manas:

This epic too deals extensively with the "crisis" of childlessness, the parents' search for a cure, and, ultimately the birth of the hero, Manas. I will concern myself with the parts related to my subject, omitting the lengthy episodes dealing with the adventures of Manas, his son Semetey and his grandson Seytek.

The epic *Manas* starts with the anxiety felt by the parent of the hero for not having a child. Jakıp Han is rich person of about 50 years of age with two wives, Beybişe Çıyrdu and Bakdovlet, but no children. He is in grief because has no children. To solve the problem, he visits “Mazar” “The Holy Tomb”, where he prays to God to give him a son. One day the older wife, Beybişe seen an old man, “Ak-sakka” who gives an apple to her and she becomes pregnant in her dream. At the very same time Jakıp too sees a dream, where a bird covered with a gold and silver appears. The husband and wife tells their dreams to each other and Beybişe suggest to give feast. Jakıp accepts this and makes preparations and call everybody for the feast where he tells his dream. A man by the name of Bayjigit interprets the dreams of Jakıp and his wife and says that soon they will have a son who is going to be very strong and brave; a son who will continue the bloodline. (Manas-I; 1984: 13-33)

Two years after Beybişe Çıyrdu sees herself pregnant in her dream, she actually becomes pregnant. In the third month of her pregnancy she desires to eat a tiger’s heart, which is provided by a hunter. In the ninth month of her pregnancy Jakıp sacrifices a white horse. When Çıyrdu is about to give birth, Jakıp leaves the house and goes away, telling that he should be informed if has a son, but not if he has a daughter.

He goes to the mountains, where he sees a horse giving birth to a colt; he takes the colt and gives it the name Kambarboz. This colt going to be *Manas*’ beloved horse, which will never leave his master alone and helps him very much.

Çıyrdu’s labor pains last for eight days and ultimately, with the help of twelve women, she gives birth to a boy with blood in the hollow of his hand. The strength of his hand is that of a 30 years old man, and his weight is that of a 15 years old boy. The first time he is breast fed he sucks all of his mother’s milk and eats three bulls for a meal. A dispatched to Jakıp, who is informed about the birth of a son and his characteristics. (Manas-I; 1984: 33-48)

As seen, the parts related to the birth of the hero are and those related to his very early childhood are told together. The grief felt by the parents in the mentioned stories of Dede Korkut is felt by Jakıp too, for he also wants a son who could continue the bloodline of the family and prays to God to grant him a son. Elements such as having a dream, visiting holy places, and giving a feast reflect the Turkic culture. All those elements, which could constitute separate subjects for examinations, are related to the shamanistic as well as Islamic beliefs of the Turkic speaking people. Visiting holy places and tombs of persons considered to be holy is a tradition that still exists; people still seek answers to their problems by visiting such places. Giving a feast and animals sacrificed for it also have to do with ancient belief systems of the Turkic people, they too exist today as part of Turkic traditions and religion. Though the Kırğız people could not be said to eat horse meat today, they continue to drink “kımız”, which is also seen in the book of Dede Korkut. This also reflects the importance given to horses in the Central Asian Turkic societies of the past, where horses were used for

transportation and as sources of milk and meat, and where people and horses lived interdependent life. This is still seen partly in Central Asian Turkic people's daily life.

As for the dreams, they should be approached from two different points: religious (their shamanistic and Islamic features), and psychological. Before Islam, Turkic belief system was shamanism, which found reflections in dreams. Those who were to become shamans first saw dreams, which was followed by their becoming sick and ultimately a shaman. As a natural consequence of this, dreams found a place in the epics. On the other hand, dreams have an important place in Islamic belief as well. That is why Turkic culture continued to contain narrative and events related to dreams, which were expressed in stories and epics and used as means to obtain information about future developments. As for the psychological side of the matter, it should not be wrong to say people saw dreams, interpreted them and acted on them.

Folklore and anthropological studies have found that what a woman eats during her pregnancy affects the child physically and mentally and that this feature could be seen in different folkloric applications in the folklore of the world. Thus in Manas there is a connection between the mother's eating of a tiger's heart and Manas' being a strong person.

In general, the first part of the epic of Manas, which includes the birth of the hero is permeated with motifs and is highly traditional. Therefore it is possible to say that the epic reflects, to a con-

siderable degree, the culture and folklore of the society in which it originated.

Characteristics that will be displayed by the hero in the future are referred to when his birth is told; it is pointed that everything about the boy will be extraordinary. It is signaled that he is going to be an epic hero. The birth of the hero's horse is told simultaneously with that of the hero, which shows that just as in the real life, here too the importance of the relationship between man and horse is emphasized.

#### 4. Alpamiş:

Alpamiş starts from an account of the wealth Bay Böri, the hero's father and continues with the childlessness of this wealthy Kazak Bay. In addition to being childless, Bay Böri has no relatives except for a distant one named Kultay who is working for Bay Böri.. Bay Böri, who is about 80 years of age, grieves because he has no children; to have a son he turns to the direction of Mecca and prays to God. He attributes his wish to have a son to his desire to prevent somebody else from taking his place and inheriting his wealth. One day Kultay becomes father of a son who is adopted by Bay Böri. Yet as the boy grows, he starts insulting and tormenting Bay Böri and His wife Beybişe.

One day Bay Böri and his wife make preparations and go to visit the tombs of some saints. They visit all tombs and pray; they also give the treasures they brought with them to the poor. For ninety days there is no sign telling them that they will have children. Then, after they pray and go to bed, a saint by the name of Şastı Aziz comes and wakes them up, telling them that



their charities and prayers have been accepted and that they are going to have a son with the name Alpamiş, and a daughter with the name Karlıgaş. In the morning they return to their home, filled with joy. (Alpamiş Batır;1961:7-15)

Their joy is increased when, some time later, Beybişe becomes pregnant. During her pregnancy she sees a tiger, who dies because of some injuries. She takes the liver of the tiger and eats it. When the time comes, she gives birth to a son. Bay Böri gives a feast and feeds all, and gives the boy the name Alpamiş. Three years after they are given a daughter, whom Bay Böri names Karlıgaş. It should be also mentioned that Bay Böri and his brother Bay Sari have an agreement, according to which their children, if one of them has a son and the other a daughter, will marry each other. (By the time Alpamiş was born, Sari bay has a daughter, who is given the name Gülbarşın. (Alpamiş Batır;1961:15-20)

Alpamiş is similar to the epic Manas in the sense that in both of them there are wealthy families that are tormented because they do not have children. As is the case in Manas, the father figure in Alpamiş is in grief and prays to God to give him a son so that he could have somebody who would inherit his property and take his place.

Another similar feature with the Manas is the visiting of holy places, praying, and helping the poor, all which is rewarded by the news brought by a saint, who tells the parents that they are going to have children. This parts of those epics contain religious and cultural elements incorporated into them.

Eating a tiger's liver is another similar event that brings Alpamiş close to Manas. Although in Alpamiş the tiger's liver is not presented as the reason for the hero's being a strong man in the future, the similarity is self-evident. That the boy will grow up to be a great warrior who will lead his tribe in victorious battles is heralded by the saint who brings the news that a son will be born. On the other hand Alpamiş the hero has a sister, which is one of the features that puts Alpamiş closer to Dede Korkut.

One characteristic that makes parts related to the hero's birth in Alpamiş similar to the same part in the story of Bamsı Beyrek is that before his birth the hero is betrothed to the daughter of his uncle or a friend of the father. Another characteristic present in both epics is that both parents are willing to have a child who will take their place and keep their bloodline.

What is seen again in the epic Alpamiş is that the birth of the hero is related to the social and cultural structure, which is dependent on children especially boys, who could inherit their families' properties, continue the bloodline, supply manpower so defend the family and the society and serve as leader. Patriarchal family structure needed male children to continue the family and the society.

##### **5. Köroğlu:**

This particular epic has a number of versions, which are divided into two groups- the Western and the Eastern. Whether or not a particular version includes parts dealing with the birth of the hero depends on whether that version belongs to the Western or the

Eastern group. In the former this part does not exist, while in the latter they have supernatural character. Therefore, my purpose I will take one of the Eastern versions, namely, the Turkmen one.

Like the epic *Manas*, the Turkmen version of *Köroğlu* constitutes a circle made up of number of episodes. The first episode deals with the introduction of the father and the uncle of the hero, as well as his birth; the other episodes are an account of the hero's battles. The summary of the first episode of *Köroğlu*, entitled "the Appearance of *Köroğlu*", is as follows: The epic starts with the introduction of the family. *Köroğlu*'s grandfather, *Cıgahı Bek*, lives in *Çardaklı Çendibil* together with his three sons- *Gencim Bek*, *Mümin Bek* and *Adı Bek*. The oldest one, *Gencim* gets married and leaves his father's home; *Mümin Bek* is not so bright, so nobody wants to marry him. Thus the youngest, *Adı Bek*, becomes the ruler of *Çendibil*. One day, while hunting, he comes across a group of foreigners who are taking a bride to a man by the name of *Reyhan Arap*. *Adı Bek* attacks them and takes the girl, while the group flees, and *Adı Bek* marries her to his older brother *Mümin Bek*. Soon afterwards *Adı Bek* too gets married, yet his wife dies while pregnant. He also passes away, ultimately leaving *Cıgahı Bek* with no grandsons. *Cıgahı Bek* is deeply saddened by this. One day *Hızır* (an Islamic holy figure) appears in *Cıgahı Bek*'s dream, telling him to go the grave of his daughter-in-law (*Adı Bek*'s wife) and see the "miracle of God". Upon waking up he goes to the grave and finds a baby boy laying on the body of his daughter-in-law. *Cıgahı* takes the boy

home. There *Hızır* comes again and gives the boy the name *Ravşan*. (Ger-Oglı;1983: 34-36)

As could be seen the birth of *Köroğlu* is presented as a supernatural event. In this epic too the problem of childlessness is presented but it is presented in a manner different from the narratives already examined: In this epic a grandfather who is tormented because he has no grandson, not a father who has no sons. However, the grief is caused by the same reason: not having somebody who would ensure the continuity of the bloodline.

What is different in the epic *Köroğlu* is that the hero's parents are dead and that he is born in a supernatural way by his dead mother at her grave. This gives the epic a unique character. On the other hand the familiar feature of religious themes is embodied in *Hızır*, who herald the birth of the hero.

Being born at a grave will play a role in giving the hero a name; it also the first sign that the boy will accomplish great deeds. His supernatural birth gives the hero a supernatural character, thus underlying his leadership abilities from the beginning of the epic.

This examination of the above mentioned five epics of Turkic origin leads me to make the following conclusions:

In general, the epics of Turkic origin contain, within their chain of events, parts dealing with the birth of the hero. Though the presentation of these parts varies, there are similar structures and events between them.

The parts related to the birth of the hero conform to the peculiarities of each epic but in terms of causes, evolution and results they display similarities.

The birth of the hero is narrated in a manner related to a crisis that the family faces, a crisis caused by various features. The most important causes are the cultural structure, the way of life, and the religious beliefs of the society. The way of life of the society, from which the epic originates, decides in favor of having sons. Though it may appear that it is the culture and religion of the society that causes the approach of a family that has no children, the fundamental element is the society's way of life. The usually high social status of the hero's family requires that they have children, especially sons. Those who are wealthy and in the position of leaders within their society are faced with the problem of having somebody to inherit their properties, thrones and leadership posts, and to continue the bloodline a situation which emphasizes the need to have a son(s). Such families, which could be described as "aristocratic" are tormented by their childlessness, and search for a cure to their problem. In four of the five epic stories examined, the fathers and mothers of respective heroes are in such a situation; it is only in the *Köroğlu* that the grandfather who has the same problem.

Again, in four of these epics cultural and religious methods are employed to have a child. Elements originating from the pre-Islamic belief system and from Islamic belief are combined and mixed in the attempts to have a child. In *Köroğlu*, on the other hand, there are no attempts to find a cure; instead, the grandfather, who is concerned about the continuity of the bloodline, is granted his wish in a supernatural way by God.

With regard to the birth of the hero two other elements, which also come from the Turkic traditions and way of

life, are added. The first one is that the birth of the girl whom the hero will marry takes place along the birth of the hero, or her birth sometime in the future heralded. Even today this feature can be seen in the folklore of Turkic speaking countries. The second one, seen only in *Manas* is the simultaneous birth of the horse of the hero. This should be accepted as natural, for the larger part of the lives of the horse and its masters will be spent together.

In sum, the Turkic epics examined here are well known epics, which invariably contain parts dealing with the birth of their respective heroes. They start with developments leading the birth of the hero and continue with accounts of hero's subsequent deeds. The parts that deal with the birth of the hero closely reflect, as I tried to point, the way of life, the culture, and the religions of the society where they lived.

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