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Michael E. Meeker

THE DEDE KORKUT ETHIC

The *Book of Dede Korkut* is an early record of oral Turkic folktales in Anatolia, and as such, one of the mythic charters of Turkish nationalist ideology. The oldest versions of the *Book of Dede Korkut* consist of two manuscripts copied sometime during the 16th century. The twelve stories that are recorded in these manuscripts are believed to be derived from a cycle of stories and songs circulating among Turkic peoples living in northeastern Anatolia and northwestern Azerbaijan.[1] According to Lewis (1974), an older substratum of these oral traditions dates to conflicts between the ancient Oghuz and their Turkish rivals in Central Asia (the Pecheneks and the Kipchaks), but this substratum has been clothed in references to the 14th-century campaigns of the Akkoyunlu Confederation of Turkic tribes against the Georgians, the Abkhaz, and the Greeks in Trebizond. Such stories and songs would have emerged no earlier than the beginning of the 13th century, and the written versions that have reached us would have been composed no later than the beginning of the 15th century. By this time, the Turkic peoples in question had been in touch with Islamic civilization for several centuries, had come to call themselves "Turcoman" rather than "Oghuz," had close associations with sedentary and urbanized societies, and were participating in Islamized regimes that included nomads, farmers, and townsmen. Some had abandoned their nomadic way of life altogether.[2]

Since the early years of the Republic of Turkey, the *Book of Dede Korkut* has attracted a great deal of attention in that country. Just as in Europe a century before, when nationalism was coupled with the study of folklore (Herzfeld 1982), nationalist sentiments have inspired interest in the manners and customs of Turkic peoples, especially those of the ancient Oghuz who have come to be seen as the original founders of the Turkish nation in Asia Minor. Turkish scholars have commented on the *Book of Dede Korkut* in numerous articles for learned journals. Critical editions of the earliest extant manuscripts have been published. Modern translations in prose and in verse have been undertaken, the most successful of which have run into numerous printings. Some of these translations, accompanied with illustrations, have become a staple of children's literature. A few of the stories have been adapted for the stage, and at least one has been recorded on cassette and marketed in state bookstores.[3]

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THE ORIGINS OF THE *ODYSSEY* AND THE *BOOK OF DEDE KORKUT*

Curiously, European interest in the *Book of Dede Korkut* antedates modern Turkish interest by almost a century. The Dede Korkut tale of a one-eyed, man-eating giant named Tepegöz bears a striking resemblance to the story of Polyphemus in book 9 of the *Odyssey*. When this resemblance came to the attention of H. F. von Diez (1815) in the early 19th century, he proposed that the Greek story of Polyphemus had been borrowed from oral traditions current in the East, perhaps among the ancient Oghuz Turks of Central Asia. Von Diez thereby initiated a controversy that was to be sustained for more than a century.[4] Was the story of Polyphemus an original? Or was it borrowed from more ancient folk variants? By the turn of the century, over a hundred folktales of a one-eyed, man-eating giant had been collected among different peoples all over the world (Hackman 1904). However, the progressive classification and comparison of these tales did not lead to a definitive resolution of the problem. As late as the 1950s, D. Page (1955) maintained that the story of Polyphemus was certainly derived from earlier folk variants, while C. S. Mundy (1956) argued that some episodes of the Oghuz story of Tepegöz, the very tale which had begun the controversy, had been taken directly from book 9 of the *Odyssey*.

This controversy over origins aligned the story of Tepegöz with the category of "folktale," encouraging appraisals of the *Book of Dede Korkut* as a written variant of oral traditions circulating among the ancient Oghuz of Central Asia. As a consequence, the question of why and how an author subjected these oral tales to written redaction at a given time and place has received less attention than it deserves. Among western European scholars, Mundy is perhaps alone in his attempt to discover the hand of an author in the *Book of Dede Korkut*, but his analysis is more destructive than constructive. Mundy attempted to show that episodes from the *Odyssey* had been inserted into the story of Tepegöz, the rest of which he considered to be based on an Oghuz folk tale. Deconstructing (*avant la lettre*) the story of Tepegöz, he tracked down a series of gaps and sutures in its episodes. He thereby saw the work of an author in illogicalities and inconsistencies that had been introduced into a previously coherent oral version.

Mundy evaluated the Turkish story by comparing it with the Greek story, expecting that the former should follow the same logic and convey the same message as the latter. Finding that this was not the case, he concluded that the story of Tepegöz had been spoiled here and there. If the story is read instead as one of twelve comprising the *Book of Dede Korkut*, however, the work of its author appears in a different light. All the Dede Korkut stories emphasize a distinctive ethical problem underlying personal identity and social relations. It is never explicitly stated, yet it serves as an organizing theme of each tale. Of the twelve, moreover, the story of Tepegöz is perhaps the most artful expression of this ethical problem. If some of its episodes have been borrowed from the story of Polyphemus, they are nonetheless designed to convey an outlook on person and society very different from what one finds in book 9 of the *Odyssey*.

In what follows the Dede Korkut ethic will be analyzed as an aspect of Oghuz pastoral tradition. The story of Tepegöz will then be compared to the story of

Polyphemus in order to confirm the distinctiveness of this ethic as an argument about the relationship of person and society. This carries the discussion of the *Book of Dede Korkut* to a new ground: Why did an author choose to present a cycle of oral tales as a statement of a Turkic outlook on personal identity and social relations? And given the intense interest in the *Book of Dede Korkut* in Turkey today, what is the significance of this statement for Turkish national identity?

THE DEDE KORKUT ETHIC AND OGHUZ PASTORAL TRADITION

The Dede Korkut ethic has two sides: one concerning personal values and another concerning social values. On the one hand, personal identity is established by a heroic performance. Every story tells how an individual (usually a man rather than a woman) proves himself by overcoming an opponent on the field of battle. The titles of eleven of the twelve stories refer to the name of some specific individual, implying that his name and the related exploit are inseparable.[5] The stories are said to be told and sung by Dede Korkut, who, as keeper of Oghuz tradition, upholds the task of commemorating Oghuz heroes. The hero's victory is assumed to be the basis of his personal renown and reputation among all the Oghuz. The principle, that personal identity equals heroic performance, is expressed on other sublevels as well. In some of the stories, a young man is named at an early age when he performs an amazing feat like overpowering a bull (no. 1, p. 31)[6] or a horse (no. 8, p. 140). In these stories, the individual's name itself alludes to the feat. One story refers to an ancient Oghuz custom in which "until a boy cut off heads and spilled blood they used not to give him a name" (no. 3, p. 60).

On the other hand, the actions of the individual must be consistent with the affective unity of society. Every story concludes with the restoration of the emotional bonds of family and society after the latter have been disrupted by internal deceit or external attack. Virtually every story begins with an incident when two closely related individuals are set apart from one another, usually by kidnapping and imprisonment, more exceptionally by insult or slander. Later, at the end of the story, these separated individuals are reunited. This reunion usually consists of an emotional embrace of son and father, more exceptionally of son and both parents, brother and brother, groom and bride, or husband and wife. Here is an example: "Then Yigenek went up to his father and fell at his feet. The father clasped his son to his heart and kissed his eyes and embraced him. They withdrew to a place apart, they clung together, they who had longed for each other talked together and howled together like wolves of the wilderness" (p. 139).[7] In other stories, the reunion is supplemented with a wedding, sponsored by the father. It may be a great one, attended by all the Oghuz nobles and lasting many days. In one story, the reunion also brings lord and prince back together and unites all the Oghuz after a period of division and strife. In another, almost all the preceding events take place: a son is reunited with his father and mother, a lord with his prince, a great wedding feast is offered, and the Oghuz assemble to celebrate.[8]

The two sides of the Dede Korkut ethic constitute a problem. The individual establishes his personal identity by contesting others in deadly combat on the field of battle. The individual is therefore the locus of an explosive force and energy for

purposes of aggression. At the same time, the individual must have a capacity for affection for others in the context of family and society. The individual is therefore the locus of sentiments of devotion communicated through conventional restraints. How are these different personal responses reconciled with one another? While none of the stories explicitly asks this question, each implicitly provides an answer to it: heroic feats are of value only as acts of self-sacrifice that lead to the emotional reunion of family and society.

The problematical relationship of person and society in the *Book of Dede Korkut* reflects a structural feature of a pastoral ecology, one that was especially prominent among mounted, pastoral nomads like the Oghuz. Because of the character of their wandering way of life, pastoral groups found themselves competing with one another for scarce grazing and water resources and drawn into mutual raiding and warfare. Such circumstances privileged the aggressive role of the fighter, especially among younger men. Other aspects of pastoralism determined that the fighter was conceived as a heroic identity, an autonomous and independent individual. The pastoral patriarch, as an owner of flocks and herds, was master of considerable resources, and the wandering way of life placed considerable responsibility on his shoulders. The ideal of an autonomous and independent patriarch was therefore basic to the pastoral way of life, and the heroic identity was a version of this same ideal of the person in the domain of fighting and warfare.

Despite the concept of an autonomous and independent individual, pastoral nomads were nonetheless crucially dependent on norms of mutual cooperation and solidarity. Precisely because scarce resources—herd, pasture, and water—could not be perfectly controlled or defended, pastoral families and groups were keenly dependent on their relationships with one another. This gave weight to an ideal of submission to family and group norms and of honoring the contracts and agreements between families and groups. Among pastoral peoples, there is a clear concept of individual identity in opposition to others, but also a contradictory concern with the way personal force and passion must be circumscribed by familial and social restraints.

Typically a segment of the oral traditions of pastoral, nomadic groups directly reflects the two contrary sides of pastoral experience. These are oral compositions that can be styled as "self-representations." Usually in the form of poetic declamations, these self-representations depict strong personal passions as well as lay claim to a heroic identity. At the same time, they reveal a strong pressure to reconcile the hero's aggressive energy with the constraints of familial and social norms. Very commonly, these two contrary sides of pastoral tradition are portrayed by conflict in the relationship of son and father or in that of younger brother and older brother. The son or younger brother is identified with the aggressive qualities that enable him to confront and oppose others. The father or older brother is identified with conventions that make possible a cooperative and sociable way of life.

While tension between person and society is a typical feature of the experience of many pastoral peoples, the institutional coding of this tension varies widely in accordance with different historical and ecological factors (Meeker 1979, 1980, 1988, 1989; Meeker, Barlow, & Lipset 1986). For our purposes, it is not necessary

to work out the specific way in which tension between person and society was a key aspect of Oghuz pastoral institutions. The essential point is rather that the Dede Korkut ethic is based on a structural feature of pastoral ecology, not that it is directly drawn from pastoral experience. On the contrary, the Dede Korkut stories may well have been composed and written by an individual who did not lead a pastoral way of life. As Boratav (1983a) noted fifty years ago, the character of the stories suggests that an organizing intelligence has reworked preexisting narrative topics and tropes:

> In all likelihood the writer [of the *Book of Dede Korkut*] heard and learned a set of stories which had been transformed as they were nativized with the place names of the new Turcoman homeland. He then determined the final form of his topics in the course of reworking these stories according to his own artistic standards. . . . In any event, it is certainly not correct to interpret the Dede Korkut stories as a totality which came into being through an act of gathering together anonymous epics which had an indefinite relationship to one another. . . . Rather the writer must have melded together a few motifs and themes from old stories and epics in order to form a collection of entirely new stories.[9]

In all probability the Dede Korkut stories do not address the implications of the real time and places of pastoral experience. They feature an idealized representation of person and society that is derived from pastoral experience but presented as a cultural heritage.[10]

THE DEDE KORKUT ETHIC IN THE STORIES

While each of the twelve Dede Korkut stories is plotted differently, a dominant paradigm is clearly evident:

> One of the Oghuz is treacherously separated from loved ones and subjected to imprisonment by an infidel prince. After many years, he is liberated from confinement by a hero who defeats infidel forces on the field of battle. The defeat is accomplished with the support of all the Oghuz warriors. A reunion of loved ones concludes the tale. This occasion is accompanied by feasting and celebration among all the Oghuz. (author's summary)

As the plot unfolds, the individuality of the hero is amply portrayed. He speaks through a series of poetic declamations. His adventures are related, and his accomplishments are extolled. But his heroic feats are endowed with a moral value. They are acts of self-sacrifice for others, which lead to the joyous and happy reunion of family and society. The hero, his identity, experiences, and feelings, always point toward family and society as a mutually loving and affectionate group.

Six of the stories are about sons and fathers.[11] Four of these six have the most basic form of the pattern: separation of son and father by capture and imprisonment, heroic feat of self-sacrifice, reunion of son and father. In two of the four, father saves captive sons (nos. 2 and 4). In the two others, son saves father (nos. 7 and 11). In the remaining two of the six, a son performs heroic feats in battle to aid his father, but there is no capture and imprisonment (nos. 1 and 9). In one of these two, the son is divided from his father by jealous associates who then attempt but do not succeed in selling the father into captivity (no. 1). In the other, the son restores the position of his injured and disgraced father by repulsing the

enemy in battle (no. 9). All six of the stories end with the reunion of son and father. In two, the mother is included.

A seventh story tells of a younger brother who rescues an elder brother who has been captured and imprisoned (no. 10). Since elder brother stands to younger brother as father to son in Oghuz (as in Turkish) tradition, it is structurally equivalent to the preceding stories of father and son. The emotional reunion in this story is described as follows: "The two brothers embraced. Egrek kissed his younger brother's neck, and Segrek kissed his elder brother's hand. . . . Prince Koja came to meet his sons. He dismounted and greeted his sons, embracing them. 'Are you all right, are you well my sons?'" (p. 170).

Of the remaining five stories, two are about a hero who would win his bride from a brother or father who is preventing the marriage. These two stories are of special interest because in each the hero refuses a marriage that violates, in different ways, the Dede Korkut ethic. In one (no. 3) the hero must sacrifice himself for his imprisoned companions rather than marry at long last his sweetheart of many years. In another (no. 6), the hero cannot marry the bride he has won from an infidel prince because her assistance has compromised his reputation for self-sufficiency in battle. In most of the Dede Korkut stories, no such conflicts appear in connection with marriage. Husband and wife are usually portrayed as father and mother of a son who wins fame and honor. Accordingly, marriage is set in the context of a child's attainment of a personal reputation by fulfilling his social obligations. Proper biological reproduction is made one with proper cultural reproduction. In the two stories of heroes who would win their brides, however, marriage contradicts the ethic of person and society.

In one (no. 3), the hero eventually convinces a recalcitrant brother to give his sister in marriage. Then the hero and his companions are captured and imprisoned by an infidel prince on the eve of the marriage. After sixteen years, the hero escapes just in time to prevent the marriage of his bride to another; however, he refuses to proceed with his own wedding until he has rescued his companions who remain imprisoned. Accomplishing this, he then marries, not his long awaited bride, but the daughter of the infidel prince who helped him to escape and save his companions. In the second story (no. 6), the hero wins his bride, the daughter of an infidel prince, by performing heroic feats. When they are treacherously attacked by infidel forces as they return to the Oghuz, the princess herself takes up arms and helps him win victory. The hero then feels obliged to kill the woman for fear that she will later taunt him with his dependency on her during the battle. When the heroic bride declares that she will die at his hands out of love for him, he spares her.

In the first story, the hero does not take the bride he has won at great cost, even though he is urged by others to do so. He must sacrifice his own narrow personal desires to save his companions. In the second story, the heroic bride is ready to sacrifice herself for her groom even though she is fully able to defend herself against him. Despite the different outcome, each story consistently affirms the principle of heroic sacrifice out of devotion to others.

The plots of the three remaining stories do not focus so uniquely on the relationship of two individuals (father and son, brother and brother, or groom and bride). Two of them, the story of Basat (no. 8) and the story of Wild Dumrul

(no. 5), could be described as "myths" of the Oghuz heroic identity. The first of these tells of a young man who saves all the Oghuz from the one-eyed, man-eating monster named Tepegöz. The structure of this tale is more elaborate than the others. It will be analyzed in the next section of the article. The second story is the only one of the twelve to depart from the form of separation, heroic feat, and reunion. It nevertheless features the same ethical problem as the other stories.

In the story, God sends Azrael, the angel of death, to take the life of Wild Dumrul, a rough young hero who had become known throughout the land for his readiness to fight all other men. Learning of the greatness of God through his struggle with the angel of death, the young man brashly expresses his readiness to submit to God, but requests the favor of continued life. Impressed by the complete submission of this otherwise defiant hero, God agrees to spare his life if Wild Dumrul can find someone to take his place. His father and mother refuse, but his wife agrees out of love for him.[12] Wild Dumrul cannot bear to see his wife suffer and asks that God either take or spare both their lives together. In recognition of their mutual devotion to one another, God grants the young couple a long life and instructs Azrael to take Wild Dumrul's aged parents in their place. While Wild Dumrul defies all men, he submits to God in admiration of His superior power. This submission fulfills the law of readiness for self-sacrifice (here not to others but to God's higher authority) that is incumbent on the otherwise defiant hero.

The final story (no. 12) describes how the rebellion of a jealous prince is put down by the Oghuz khan. Provoked by a personal slight, an Oghuz prince murders an aging, beloved hero of the Oghuz and calls on his followers to rise against the Oghuz khan. After loyal Oghuz warriors come to the support of their khan, the traitor prince is defeated in battle, and the unity of the Oghuz is once again restored.

In each story the contradiction between the two sides of the Dede Korkut ethic is concealed by the plot design. The aggressive attributes of the hero are "naturalized" as a response to savagery and violence. The emotional reunions that are part of familial and social relations are naturalized by a long period of separation and imprisonment. But this work of naturalization is easily undone by considering the experiential background of the stories. The story theme of long confinement by an infidel ruler is correlated with severe patriarchal norms of self-restraint among a people who also value autonomy and independence: pressure to conform to domestic and communal rules inspires interest in tales of heroic individuals forcefully contesting a cruel tyrant who captures and imprisons. And conversely, the story theme of personal sentimentality is correlated with individual norms of autonomy and independence among a people for whom solidarity and cooperation are essential: Pressure to act and speak for one's self inspires interest in tales of reunion in which intense individual passions find legitimate expression in family and society. Seen against the backdrop of the two contradictory sides of pastoral experience, the plotting of the Dede Korkut ethic unravels.

Among the Oghuz pastoralists, contrary aspects of individual behavior and attitude communicated with one another, mutually infecting and shaping one another. The *Book of Dede Korkut* converts these pastoral experiences into an ethical outlook on person and society. What was once part of life has become an idealized

cultural complex of individual action and disposition. The story of "How Basat Killed Tepegöz" best illustrates how this is so.

The Story of "How Basat Killed Tepegöz"

Episode 1: The Coming of Age of the Hero Basat. The first episode is a story within a story. It tells how the infant child of Uruz Koja, an Oghuz noble, was separated from his family by an enemy attack, nurtured by a lioness, and then brought back, with some difficulty, to live among the Oghuz.[13]

> It is related, my Khan, that once while the Oghuz were sitting in their encampment the enemy fell upon them. In the darkness of night they broke and scattered. As they fled, the baby son of Uruz Koja fell. A lioness found him, carried him off and nursed him. Time passed, and the Oghuz came back and settled in their old home. One day the horse-drover of Oghuz Khan brought him news. "My Khan, there is a lion comes out of a thicket roaring, but he walks with a swagger, like a man. He attacks the horses (*at urur*) and sucks their blood." Said Uruz, "My Khan, maybe it is my little son who fell that time when we scattered." The nobles mounted their horses and came to the lair of the lioness. They drove her off and seized the boy. Uruz took him to his tent. They held a celebration, there was eating and drinking. But for all that they had brought the boy home he would not stay; back he went to the lion's lair. Again they seized him and brought him back. Dede Korkut came and said, "My boy, you are a human being; do not consort with wild beasts. Come, ride fine horses, amble and trot in company with fine young men. Your elder brother's name is Kiyan Seljuk, your name shall be Basat (*bas at*, attack horse). I have given you your name; may God give you long life." (p. 140)

The episode points to two sides of the person. One is animal desire and strength; the other is human intelligence and sociability. Nurtured by a lioness, the child behaves like a wild predator who stalks and attacks his prey. This animal behavior is deep-seated. The child feels compelled to return to his lair even after discovery by his father and inclusion in a celebration. Finally, through the counsel of Dede Korkut, the child is persuaded to take his place in society. He is invited to adopt the customs of other young nobles and join in their companionship. He is told the name of the man who is immediately senior to him, given a name of his own, and placed under the protection of God.

The episode does not suggest that human and animal existence are opposed to one another, but rather that they are closely related. The animal desire and strength of the child who has been fostered by a lioness are unduly exaggerated. Nonetheless, the lion boy is still human. He has a manly swagger as he bursts out of the bushes roaring like a lion. Since the lion boy is the son of an Oghuz noble and would ordinarily be a rider of horses, even his attacks on horses, like his manly swagger, reveal something of his suppressed human origins. After the lion boy is taken to the tent of his father, he is not successfully socialized by an occasion of feasting. Social eating and drinking are an essential part of his humanity, but they are that part closest to the animal side of the person. The lion boy is humanized only when Dede Korkut, the keeper of Oghuz tradition, appeals to his intellect, instructs him in social custom, and places him under the protection of God. The boy then acquires the ability to control his bodily passions and strengths. The

episode tells us that the animal side of the person must be channeled through an understanding of social practices and beliefs.

Episode 2: The Coming of Age of the Monster Tepegöz. The ministory of Basat is followed by a second ministory of another child that is similar and yet also different. Going ahead of the Oghuz during their annual migration to mountain pastures, a shepherd of Uruz Koja, the father of Basat, chances upon a group of peris (fairies) at a famous spring. The peris begin to fly away when they are discovered, but the shepherd captures one of the beautiful creatures, and desiring her (*tama^{c} idüp*), couples with her (*cima^{c} eyledi*). Beating her wings and flying away, she says: "'Shepherd, you have left something in trust with me. When a year has passed, come and take it. But you have brought ruination on the Oghuz.' Fear fell on the shepherd's heart and his face turned pale with anxiety at the peri's words" (p. 141).

The ministory of little Basat tells how bodily passion and strength are channeled by tradition and religion. The second begins with a marginal infraction of this lesson. A common shepherd in a distant mountain pasture violates a supernatural being. Supernaturals like peris and jinns have certain powers not well understood by humans. They should be carefully respected and are best left to themselves. The warning of the peri indicates that the lapse of propriety on the part of the shepherd will have devastating consequences for all the Oghuz.

Time passes, the Oghuz return to their summer pastures. Finding himself once again at the distant spring, the shepherd makes a discovery: "He saw a brightly glittering shape lying on the ground. The peri appeared and said, 'Come, shepherd, take back your property. But you have brought ruination on the Oghuz.' Seeing this shape, the shepherd was seized with dread" (p. 141).

As the story continues, the treatment of the mysterious shape is described in terms that are inversions of the proper form of infant nurturing and child socialization: "[The shepherd] turned round and began to rain stones on it from his sling. As each stone struck it, it grew bigger. The shepherd abandoned the shape and fled, and the sheep followed him" (p. 141). The shape is subjected to abuse, but this only causes it to grow in size and in strength. The Oghuz Khan and nobles now come across it and discover its terrible quality: "Now it happened that at that time Bayindir Khan and the nobles had gone out riding, and they chanced on this spring. They saw a monstrous thing lying there, its head indistinguishable from its arse" (p. 141). The creature's head is indistinguishable from its body. It is not a normal human, part mind and part body, but a monster human whose mind has collapsed into its body.

In the scene that follows, the storyteller takes the first step in "elevating" the significance of the monster human. Having originated in a marginal indiscretion on the part of a shepherd, the creature is now surrounded by Oghuz nobles and warriors. Here it will be accorded a "relationship" with the hero Basat.

> They surrounded it (*çevre aldılar*), and one warrior dismounted and kicked it. At every kick it grew in size. Several other warriors dismounted and kicked it, and still it grew at every kick. Uruz Koja also dismounted and kicked it. His spur drove into it and the shape split down the middle, and out came a child. Its body was that of a man, but it had one eye at the top of its head (*tepesinde bir gözü var*). Uruz took this child, wrapped it in the skirt of his

garment and said, "My Khan, give this to me and I shall rear it (*besleyeyim*) together with my son Basat." "Take it," said Bayindir Khan, "it's yours." Uruz took Tepegöz and brought him to his house. (p. 141)

Once again there is an inversion of proper nurturing. The heroes kick the shape and it grows in response. Then the father of Basat "delivers" a child with more kicks and the blow of a spur. Like the shape from which he issues, the child is one whose head, the seat of the intellect, is imperfectly differentiated from his body, the seat of passion. He has but one freakish eye. Representing rapacious bodily desires, this freakish eye marks him as a monster human. This bodily mark will also provide him with a name: he will be called *tepegöz*, literally "top-eye."[14]

The "birth" of the monster human takes place in the midst of the Oghuz warriors. It is accomplished by Uruz Koja, father of Basat, and overseen by the Oghuz khan. The monster child, Tepegöz, has some kind of relationship with the heroic Oghuz and some especially intimate relationship with the lion-child Basat. The two boys will have the same father. They will be raised in the same family. Although not natural brothers, a kind of fraternal kinship will exist between them.

As the ministory of the coming of age of Tepegöz continues, the bodily desire and force of Tepegöz prove to be extraordinary:

Uruz took [Tepegöz] and brought him to his house. He ordered a wet-nurse to come, and she put her nipple into the child's mouth. He gave one suck, and took all her milk; a second suck, and he took her blood; a third, and took her life. Several other wet-nurses were brought and he destroyed them. Seeing that this was impossible, they decided to feed him on milk, but a cauldronful a day was not enough. They fed him and he grew; he began to walk, he began to play with the little boys. He started to eat the nose of one, the ear of another. The upshot was that the whole camp was greatly upset at him, but there was nothing they could do. They complained and wept in chorus before Uruz. Uruz beat [Tepegöz], he abused him, he ordered him to stop it, but he paid no attention. Finally, he drove him from his house. (pp. 141–42)

The cannibalistic acts of Tepegöz are initially tolerated. The family of Basat makes every effort to nurture the monster and to include him as part of the family and the camp. When he consumes his wet nurses, they provide huge amounts of milk. Even when he begins to gnaw on the body parts of his fellows, they attempt to punish him and correct him. But it is no use. The behavior of the monster child, his inability to restrain his bodily desires, afflicts the camp with anxiety, complaint, and dissension. The ideal of a mutually loving and affectionate society has been destroyed.

The next incident parallels, again by way of contrast and inversion, the concluding scene of the coming of age of Basat. Dede Korkut succeeded in taming Basat by instructing him in Oghuz tradition. He invited him to ride horses and associate with young men. He told him the name of his brother, gave him a name of his own, and commended him to God. Tepegöz is also counseled by a mentor, his peri mother, as he comes of age: "[Tepegöz's] peri mother came and put a ring on her son's finger, saying, 'My son, this is so that no arrow will pierce you or sword cut you.'" Tepegöz is given, not instructions in tradition and religion, but a magic charm by his peri mother. The ring will make his body invincible, enabling him to fight against all men and consequently to express his bodily passion and force with impunity.

After Dede Korkut tamed Basat, the boy became a young Oghuz hero ready to engage in raiding and warfare among the infidels. Similarly, but also differently, Tepegöz becomes a terrible "heroic" fighter who afflicts, not alien unbelievers, but the Oghuz themselves.

> [Tepegöz] left the Oghuz land and came to a high mountain. He infested the roads, he seized men, he became a notorious outlaw. Many men were sent against him; they shot arrows, which did not pierce him; they struck at him with swords, which did not cut him; they thrust at him with lances, which did not penetrate him. No shepherd, no herd-boy was left; he ate them all. Then he began to eat people from the Oghuz. The Oghuz assembled and marched against him. Seeing them, [Tepegöz] was angered; he uprooted a tree, threw it, and destroyed fifty or sixty men. He dealt a blow at the prince of heroes, Kazan, and the world became too narrow for his head. Kara Göne, Kazan's brother, became helpless in [Tepegöz's] hand. Alp Rustem son of Duzen was killed. So valiant a man as the son of Ushun Koja died by his hand. His two pure-souled brothers perished at his hand. So too did Bugduz Emen of the bloody moustaches. White-headed Uruz Koja he made vomit blood, and his son Kiyan Seljuk's gall-bladder split with terror. (p. 142)

The monster child has become a monster hero. The tropes that refer to his feats in battle are the same that elsewhere refer to the strength and force of Oghuz heroes.[15] The monster hero subdues the most famous of the Oghuz warriors—Kazan and Kara Göne—and kills still others—Alp Rustem and Ushun Koja. He even assaults his own foster family, Uruz Koja and Kiyan Seljuk, the father and elder brother of Basat, respectively. Furthermore, the injuries of the latter two individuals are not so much external, as internal injuries: "White-headed Uruz Koja he made vomit blood, and his son Kiyan Seljuk's gall-bladder split with terror." Those with whom a normal child should be united by love and affection he besets with extreme fear and anxiety. In the case of the elder brother—we later learn—these psychic injuries prove fatal.

Finally the Oghuz can resist no more and are obliged to submit to Tepegöz. As they do so, they are reduced from the status of humans to the status of animals.

> The Oghuz could do nothing against [Tepegöz]; they broke and fled. [Tepegöz] hemmed them in and barred their way, he would not let them go, he brought them back to where they were. In all, the Oghuz broke seven times, and seven times he barred their way and brought them back. The Oghuz were totally helpless in [Tepegöz's] hand. (p. 142)

Tepegöz has become a monstrously exaggerated version of his shepherd father. He is not just a "sheepherder" but a "manherder" who corrals and consumes the Oghuz people.

Finally the Oghuz send Dede Korkut to the giant to make terms. Tepegöz insists that the Oghuz provision him with sixty men each day, but Dede Korkut argues that the supply will soon be exhausted. He suggests they provide instead two men and five hundred sheep each day. The giant agrees but requires that the Oghuz also furnish two cooks to prepare his meals of human and animal flesh.

The levies proceed day by day until all the Oghuz have turned over one of their sons in turn. Then a second round is necessary, and each family must now offer up a second son. As it was the turn of one family to give the last of their two sons, "the mother screamed and cried and lamented." The horrible depredations of

Tepegöz have the effect of revealing the sentiments that bind together family and society among the Oghuz. In the next episode, these sentiments will motivate the hero Basat to engage in a self-sacrifice.

Episode 3: The Sentiments of Family and Society. At this point, Basat returns from raiding the infidel, bringing with him both booty and captives. Hearing the news, the miserable woman who is faced with giving up her second and last son determines to ask the hero for one of his infidel prisoners as ransom for her son. She goes to him and tells him of the terrible ravages of the monster. Basat is greatly moved when he learns of the death of his elder brother. As "his dark eyes filled with tears," he declaims:

> Your tents, pitched in a place apart,
> Can that pitiless one have overthrown, brother?
> Your swift running horses from their stalls
> Can that pitiless one have stolen, brother?
> Your sturdy young camels from their file
> Can that pitiless one have taken, brother?
> The sheep you would slaughter at your feasting
> Can that pitiless one have slaughtered, brother?
> Your dear bride I proudly saw you bring home
> Can that pitiless one have parted from you, brother?
> You have made my white-bearded father mourn his son;
> Can this be, O my brother?
> You have made my white-skinned mother weep;
> Can this be, O my brother?
> Brother, pinnacle of my black mountain yonder!
> Brother, flood of my lovely eddying river!
> Brother, strength of my strong back!
> Brother, light of my dark eyes!
> I have lost my brother.

So saying, he wept and lamented greatly. (p. 144)

Loss and separation have served to reveal the emotional tie between brother and brother, and soon after, between son and parents. Granting the woman a prisoner, Basat rejoins his father and mother: "Basat kissed his father's hand and they cried and wept together. . . . His mother came to meet him and pressed her dear son to her heart. Basat kissed his mother's hand, they embraced and wept together."

The inverted parallel of Basat and Tepegöz is now complete. As we have seen, both hero and monster are portrayed as powerful fighters who engage in raiding and warfare, but this similarity is intended to highlight a difference between them. In taking booty and captives, Basat's acts of violence are truly heroic because they are performed against infidels in devotion to his own family and people, a devotion that is overtly expressed in the preceding scenes of his agony and distress. Tepegöz's own acts of violence are only "heroic" in form since they are wholly carnal acts performed against his own family and people in the service of his bodily desires.

When the hero announces to the Oghuz that he will meet the giant, "for my brother's sake," Kazan warns him of the monster's ferocity and counsels him: "Do

not make your white-bearded father cry! Do not make your white-haired mother weep!" But Basat is resolved. Girding himself for battle with the giant, he kisses the hands of his parents, makes peace with all, and leaves, saying "Goodbye!" (p. 145)

Episode 4: Basat Blinds Tepegöz and Escapes from His Cave. This next episode of the tale brings to mind the story of Odysseus and Polyphemus in book 9 of the *Odyssey*. Basat proceeds to the crag of Salakhane where Tepegöz lives in a cave.[16] Approaching from behind, he lets fly his arrows. At first, the monster mistakes them for biting flies as they break upon striking his back. Then, catching sight of an arrow, Tepegöz realizes what is happening. He grabs the hero, stuffs him into a boot, and instructs his cooks to prepare "the Oghuz spring lamb" for his supper. Later Basat escapes from the boot, learns from the two cooks that the eye of Tepegöz is the only soft spot on his body, and succeeds in blinding the giant by driving a kitchen spit into his eye as he sleeps. As the giant awakens in terrible pain, Basat hides in the cave among the sheep. Somehow aware that Basat is hiding among his flock, the giant stands at the entrance of the cave, a foot on each side, and calls for his animals to pass through one by one. As the favorite ram of the giant rises up, Basat seizes it, cuts its throat, flays it, and hides himself in the skin with the head still attached. Although the giant realizes what Basat has done, the hero succeeds in escaping by handing over the head of the ram into the hands of the giant as he passes through his legs. Mistaking the muzzle for the hero, the giant is left grasping the skin of the slaughtered ram.

The motif of a hero who blinds a cannibalistic monster shepherd and then escapes from his cave disguised as a ram is found in folktales all over Eurasia. Here, the two essential characteristics of the motif, the blinding of the giant and the escape from the cave, have been carefully designed to convey a particular meaning consistently from start to finish.

The blinding of the monster. Tepegöz's magic ring protects his body from the swords and arrows of the Oghuz heroes, but a kitchen spit, an instrument of the hearth (a key symbol of family love and affection among the Oghuz), has the power to inflict injury upon the monster. Before plunging the red-hot spit into the fleshy eye of the giant, Basat "invoked blessings on Muhammad of beautiful name" (p. 146). Acting in the name of the Prophet of Islam—the religion in the Dede Korkut stories that legitimizes Oghuz social practice and belief—Basat is able to overcome the protective power of the giant's magic ring. The inflicted wound is an especially terrible one for the monster since his eye, the symbol of his bodily desires, is as dear to him as family and society are dear to the Oghuz: "So loud did he scream and bellow that the mountains and rocks echoed." Tepegöz now suffers for the loss of his eye just as the Oghuz who have lost their sons. Thus, on the symbolic level, the Oghuz version consistently opposes bodily force and passion to familial sentiments and social constraints.[17]

The escape from the cave. When Basat dons the skin of the flayed ram, Tepegöz is not taken in by the disguise in the way that Polyphemus is deceived by Odysseus. The monster knows exactly what Basat has done. He even knows which of the approaching animals is really the hero wrapped in a skin: "Now [Tepegöz] knew that Basat was inside the skin" (p. 146). But the monster is nonetheless unable to

capture Basat. His failure to do so shows that he is unable to distinguish human from animal.[18] This debility has been insisted upon in the tale again and again in the description of the way in which the giant consumes his wet nurses, eats his playmates, corrals the Oghuz like sheep, and lives upon the meat of their finest which he orders prepared by his two cooks. This failure of Tepegöz to distinguish human and animal is the consequence of his monstrosity. The giant is not without the power of knowing or even of reasoning as he relentlessly pursues the satisfaction of his appetite. But as a creature who is all bodily desire, he lacks that side of human intelligence that enables the person to understand tradition and to become a member of society. Thus, he cannot tell the difference between animal and human, a failing that allows the hero to hand him the skin of the ram and slip through his legs. After Basat has escaped from the cave, the monster asks him, "Boy, have you escaped?" and the hero replies, "My God has saved me" (p. 146). Basat is in some ways like an animal—he has been nurtured by a lioness after all—but it is Basat's recognition of divinity that complements his animal side with a human side.

The story continues with further confrontations of hero and monster. These incidents are not part of the story of Odysseus and Polyphemus, but they do appear in similar stories found in many parts of Eurasia.[19] Again, however, what is at issue here is the way these motifs have been designed to make a point about the Oghuz heroic identity.

Episode 5: Like the Monster, the Hero also Has a Body. After Basat escapes from the cave, Tepegöz addresses him as a child, calling him "boy" (*oğlan*). This suggests a filial relationship between monster and hero on a symbolic level. Hero, like monster, is a creature of unusual bodily desires which were fostered in extreme by his infancy as a lion child. When the monster addresses the hero as "boy," he raises the problem of the authority of bodily desire as it applies to the person of the hero. Basat, in his reply to the monster, responds to Tepegöz by invoking that side of his person differentiated from bodily desire. He responds, "My God has saved me."

Tepegöz addresses Basat once again as "boy," offering to make the youth his client: "Boy take this ring which is on my finger and put it on your finger and arrow and sword will have no effect on you." As peri mother stands to monster so now Tepegöz would stand to Basat. Basat takes the ring and puts it on his finger. Tepegöz asks him if he has the ring and is wearing it. When the hero replies that he has, the monster charges him and attempts to kill him with a dagger. Basat jumps away from the giant and sees the giant standing on the ring, which has fallen from his finger. Again Tepegöz asks, "Have you escaped?" and again Basat replies, "My God has saved me." Basat has been saved partly by his personal prowess, an attribute of his person that is part of his animal existence and bodily capacities. But more decisively he has been saved by his trust in God. And on the symbolic level, what he has been saved from, as he fails to keep the ring from the giant, is the patronage of bodily passion and strength, which carries with it the threat of death.

The monster tries once again, this time by proposing an alliance with the hero whom he again addresses as a child: "'Boy, do you see that vault?' 'I see it,' he replied. [Tepegöz] said, 'I have a treasure; go and seal it so that the cooks don't take it'" (p. 147).

Entering the vault, Basat is faced with heaps of gold and silver. The spectacle of wealth serves to awaken his passion and hence to scramble his consciousness: "Looking at it, he forgot himself." The monster now closes the door of the vault and begins to shake it so as to crush the hero within. This time Basat's escape from death involves no element of his animal prowess at all:

> There came to Basat's tongue the words "There is no god but God; Muhammad is the Messenger of God." Straightway the vault split and doors were opened in seven places, through one of which he came out. [Tepegöz] put his hand against the vault and pushed so hard that the vault crumbled to bits. Said [Tepegöz], "Boy, have you escaped?" Basat replied, "My God has saved me." Said [Tepegöz], "It seems you can't be killed." (p. 147)

More decisively than the two previous occasions, Basat has escaped death, not by means of his heroic strength and courage, but by regaining consciousness of his humanity. He turns to God.

A crucial point has been made in three steps. The monster cannot tell human from animal because he is nothing but bodily power and desire. He therefore fails to seize Basat as he passes through his legs. Next the hero is saved in part by his own prowess—he jumps away to avoid the attack—but also more decisively by God who causes the ring to fall and the monster's dagger to miss. But in the final analysis, it is trust in God that differentiates the human from the animal. Basat is saved not by any action of his own other than his pronouncement of the Muslim witness of faith. This crucial point having been made, the true significance of Basat's heroic capacities can be demonstrated in a fourth step. His feats in battle are under the sponsorship of God. They are a sacrifice of self out of devotion to others.

Tepegöz next reveals to Basat how he the monster can be killed, hoping that the youth will not survive the performance of the awesome task:

> "Do you see that cave?" "I see it," said Basat. "There are two swords in it," said [Tepegöz], "one with a scabbard and one without. The one without a scabbard will cut off my head. Go fetch it and cut off my head." (p. 147)

Basat goes into the cave and sees the sword without scabbard and is obliged to demonstrate his powers of intelligence, courage, and strength.

> "I shan't get hold of this," said he, "without a bit of trouble." He drew his own sword and held it out, and the moving sword split it in two. He went and fetched a tree and held it against the sword, which split it in two also.[20] Then he took his bow in his hand, and with an arrow he struck the chain by which the sword was suspended. The sword fell and buried itself in the ground. He put it into his own scabbard and held it firmly by the hilt. He came out and said, "Hey [Tepegöz]! How are you?" [Tepegöz] answered, "Hey boy! Aren't you dead yet?" "*My God has saved me*," replied Basat. "It seems you can't be killed," said [Tepegöz]. (p. 147, italics mine)

The hero has special bodily powers of intelligence, strength, and courage, but they are practiced in recognition of God. This recognition makes the hero invincible against the monster and the monster vulnerable to the hero.

Realizing that Basat cannot be killed, Tepegöz despairs. This initiates an exchange of declamations between monster and hero, concluded by Basat's beheading of Tepegöz and the celebration of this victory by all the Oghuz.

Episode 6: The Declamations of Tepegöz and Basat. In their exchange of declamations, monster and hero declare their identity and feelings. Tepegöz begins by declaring his devotion to his destroyed eye:

> My eye, my eye, my only eye!
> With you, my only eye,
> I once routed the Oghuz.
> Man, you have robbed me of my chestnut eye;
> May God Almighty rob you of your sweet life!
> Such pain I suffer in my eye,
> May God Almighty give no man pain in the eye. (pp. 147–49)

As we have seen on the occasion of the blinding, the monster's lament for his eye, the symbol of his bodily passion and force, seems to stand in opposition to the Oghuz laments for their killed and captured. Any doubt that this is so will soon be removed, but leaving the issue aside for the moment, let us read on. Tepegöz continues his declamation. He asks Basat to declare his identity by asking whence he hails, by whom he swears, under what khan he serves, who leads him to battle, the name of his parents, and his own personal name. In his response, Basat answers each of the questions in turn, identifying himself as one of the Oghuz and naming himself as "Basat son of Uruz."

Hearing the name of his opponent, the monster replies, "Then we are brothers!" and appeals to Basat for mercy, "Spare me!" Tepegöz now speaks in the name of the very sentiments of mutual love and affection of which he has been so ruthlessly destructive. Infuriated, Basat honors these sentiments and affirms his intention to kill the monster:

> You filthy scoundrel, you have made my white-bearded father weep,
> You have made my old white-haired mother cry,
> You have killed my brother Kiyan,
> You have widowed my white-skinned sister-in-law,
> You have orphaned her chestnut-eyed babes;
> Shall I let you be?
> Till I have wielded my pure black steel sword,
> Till I have cut off your pointed-capped head,
> Till I have spilled your red blood on the ground,
> Till I have avenged my brother Kiyan,
> I shall not let you be. (pp. 148–49)

Tepegöz is now certain of his death. He declaims again, confessing his intentions to oppress the Oghuz, to consume their young, destroy their forces, and put an end to his own life as he does so. For the monster, clearly the only alternative to the violent satisfaction of bodily desire is death. As he declaims, he reaches the conclusion that it is the very sentiments he has violated—the social sentiments of mutual affection—that have caused his downfall.

> I have made the white-bearded old men weep much;
> Their white beards' curse must have smitten you, O my eye!
> I have made the white-haired old women weep much;

Their tears must have smitten you, O my eye!
Many the dark-moustached youths I have eaten;
Their manhood must have smitten you, O my eye!
Many the maidens I have eaten, their little hands dyed with henna;
Their small curses must have smitten you, O my eye!
Such pain I suffer in my eye,
May God Almighty give no man pain in the eye.
My eye, my eye, O my eye, my only eye! (p. 149)

Basat has been ready to give up his life out of devotion to those whom he loves, his father, his mother, his brother, and all the Oghuz. But Tepegöz has no feeling for others. He is only devoted to his eye, the symbol of his bodily desire. This is the meaning of his first declamation. As he is about to be killed by the hero, the monster is aware that the weeping and crying of the Oghuz fathers and mothers has indeed brought him down: It is this weeping and crying for others that lies behind the readiness of the hero to confront him and kill him.

At this, hero slays monster: "Basat, enraged, rose up and forced him down on his knees like a camel, and with [Tepegöz's] own sword he cut off [Tepegöz's] head." All the Oghuz nobles then come to the lair of the monster in the high mountains, and his head is taken out of the cave for all to see. Dede Korkut arrives to "play joyful music." He relates "the adventures of the valiant fighters for the Faith" and invokes "blessings on Basat" (p. 150).

PERSONAL IDENTITY IN THE *ODYSSEY* AND IN *DEDE KORKUT*

Detecting numerous gaps and sutures in the story of Basat and Tepegöz, Mundy concluded that the tale was a clumsy adaptation of the Homeric story of Odysseus and Polyphemus. He claimed that: (a) Basat's boyhood was unconnected with the account of Tepegöz which follows it; (b) the wish of Uruz to bring up the infant giant did not make sense; (c) the gift of the ring to the giant by the peri was an artificial addition; (d) there was no reason for the peri to appear before Konur Koja a second time to announce her vengeance; (e) the passage where Basat returns from raiding the infidels was an awkward addition to the tale; and (f) the logical connection between the blinding of the giant and the escape of the hero from the cave had been suppressed. The preceding analysis shows that Mundy was wrong on each account. The incidents to which he refers have been carefully calculated to fit into its overall construction, conveying a consistent and well-articulated message about person and society by contrasting Basat as the good self with Tepegöz as the bad self. This says nothing about the question of whether the Dede Korkut tale has been, or has not been, influenced by the Homeric story. But if there was such an influence, the elements carried over from the Greek version have been consistently organized to carry a quite different meaning.

A brief comparison of the *Book of Dede Korkut* and the *Odyssey* illustrates how this is so. In the Homeric version, the story of Odysseus and Polyphemus insists that cunning (*metis*) is a crucial feature of social identity (cf. Beidelman 1989).[21] The story repeatedly contrasts Odysseus's acts of trickery and deceit—by which he forces recognition from his antagonists—with Polyphemus's stupidity,

lack of craft, solitary existence, and ignorance of social custom. When Polyphemus asks Odysseus the location of his ship, he misleads the giant with the lie that it was wrecked on the shore. When Polyphemus asks Odysseus his name, he replies that he is "Nobody." Later when the other Cyclops come to the aid of the giant, this deception saves the Greeks. The two central incidents of the tale, the blinding of the giant and the escape from the cave, are also part of an elaborate stratagem, the formulation of which is described in a dramatic form. The Greeks are trapped in the cave that Polyphemus has sealed with a stone so large that they could not possibly move it. Odysseus realizes that if they kill the sleeping giant with a sword, the Greeks will perish in the cave. Blinded, however, the giant cannot find them among his flock. He must therefore remove the stone, call out his sheep, and hope to catch the Greeks as they try to escape from the cave. Likewise, the Greeks escape from the cave by a trick. Odysseus ties each of his men between two sheep so that they might pass by the giant unnoticed. Odysseus himself does not kill the favorite ram of Polyphemus, but clings to its underside by holding fast to its fleece. In both the Greek and Turkish tales, there is a concern for the difference between a human hero and an inhuman giant, but this difference is not construed in precisely the same way. In the Greek tale, the issue is the hero's strategic devices as opposed to the giant's brute force. In the Turkish version, the issue is Basat's recognition of society and religion as opposed to the giant's uncontrolled and unlimited bodily desires.

Just as the story of "How Basat Killed Tepegöz" conveys a coherent outlook on the relationship of person to society, so too this outlook is consistently expressed in its companion narratives. In the *Book of Dede Korkut*, the person always stands out clearly as an actor and voice with internal thoughts and feelings. What individuals say, do, and feel are the focus of each story. At the same time, the Dede Korkut stories do not speak for an ethic of individualism. Individuals are always under the constraint of their social and familial obligations. The outstanding feature of these obligations is devotion to others, a devotion that requires the sacrifice of personal desires and ambition and the suppression of personal fear and anxiety. A hero or heroine is time and again strong, courageous, and intelligent in his or her fulfillment of such a social obligation. They rarely manifest qualities such as cleverness, deception, manipulation, inventiveness, originality, or imaginativeness, all of which would undercut a social principle of enduring and unqualified devotion to others.

THE ETHIC OF DEDE KORKUT IN CONTEMPORARY TURKEY

As modern translations of the *Book of Dede Korkut* began to appear in Turkey, their readers were able to recognize some piece of themselves in these medieval tales. This recognition has sometimes (Ergin 1964) been heavily freighted by the arguments of Turkish nationalists:

> The *Book of Dede Korkut*, which is one and perhaps the first of the most beautiful masterpieces of the Turkish language, is at the same time one and perhaps the first of the fundamental works of Turkish culture. First, as a national epic, which came from and was created

by a filtering of the social imagination over the centuries, it is a product of the Turkish national genius. Second, as regards its topic, it has the status of a mirror of Turkish society and national life. In brief, its creator is the Turkish nation, its topic is Turkish national life.[22]

Like any nationalist perspective, this portrayal of the *Book of Dede Korkut* leaves many important, disorderly facts out of its picture. The population of Turkey is comprised of peoples of Turkic, Kurdish, Albanian, Bosnian, Armenian, Bulgarian, Greek, Circassian, Georgian, Laz, Abkhazian, Arab, and Iranian origins, and the social and cultural heritage of this population includes elements of the ethnic spirit, religious beliefs, and intellectual wisdom of these many peoples from Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. At the same time, Turkey itself is a land of intense local loyalties that rest on a complex structure of provincial social relations. Since the early Ottoman period, regional social hierarchies and networks have cut across village, town, and city in Anatolia. These social formations were not restricted to their provincial environs but reached into imperial institutions and influenced imperial policies. How was it that a pastoral ethic could have become part of Turkish identity and tradition, given the ethnic and regional diversity of Anatolia?

The context in which the Ottomans came to power ensured that their pastoral origins would have a key place both in their claims to legitimacy as rulers and in their practice of government. For a century and a half, the early Ottoman state was one of a number of successor states—most of them Turkic in their origins and nomadic in their political traditions—who were competing with one another to fill the void left by the collapse of the Mongol world order during the middle of the 14th century[23] (Fleischer 1986). During this period, both the political practices and the ruling ideology of these competing states were based on two not altogether compatible sources: the steppe traditions, which had been brought to the Middle East by the Mongol conquest, and the Irano-Islamic traditions, which had prevailed among the Muslim rulers before the Mongol arrival:

> The Ottomans had sprung from a nomadic background and had built a polity based on conquest and confederation under a paramount clan. Ottoman succession practice through the middle of the sixteenth century, . . . diplomatic practice, . . . and promulgation of a dynastic law code separate from the Islamic *şeriat* all suggest that the Ottomans for some time adhered to the political traditions of the steppe at the same time that they created a new regional Islamic polity. Like Timūr, the Ottomans attempted to reconcile their Islamic identity with their nomadic origins and political traditions through the creation of a religiously based ideology in the form of the *gazi* [warrior for the faith] ideal.[24]

The Ottoman reliance on the steppe tradition of government distinguishes their rule from their Turkic predecessors in Anatolia, the Seljuqs of Rum, who, although Turkic in origin, saw themselves more exclusively as the representatives of the Irano-Islamic high tradition.[25] At the same time, Ottoman government (like that of the Seljuqs of Rum) was not the unique work of ethnically Turkish peoples. The personnel of the Ottoman state was polyethnic just as were the territories over which the Ottomans ruled. The perpetuation of the steppe tradition in Anatolia was the accomplishment of administrators, troops, and apologists of diverse ethnic backgrounds, including among them individuals of Turkic, Greek, Frank, Albanian, Iranian, Bosnian, Serb, Kurdish, Armenian, and Arab origin.[26]

The moral outlook of the Oghuz was in this way transmitted across the generations by Ottoman institutions and policies. Over the centuries, Ottoman rule served to propagate a distinctive system of social prestige and rank, involving a specific language of personal identity and social relations, among the variegated Muslim peoples of Asia Minor. The existence of this Ottomanist public culture, with its ancient Oghuz underpinnings, was eventually of crucial importance for the success of the nationalists even though they have not been keen to recognize openly their debt to an Ottoman past.[27]

Composed by an individual who was reworking Oghuz tales in a specific time and place, the *Book of Dede Korkut* itself bears the marks of social and political history in southwest Asia. The presentation of Oghuz heroes and heroines in the Dede Korkut stories is designed to highlight an Oghuz ethical outlook rather than to celebrate the variety and richness of Oghuz narrative tradition. In this respect, the stories reveal that the Oghuz heritage was, at the time of the *Book of Dede Korkut*, associated with a question about the proper form of personal identity and social relations. This feature of the Dede Korkut stories may itself be a literary reflection of projects of institutional redesign and remaking that had been pursued by Turkic dynasts in Anatolia for several centuries. In any event, the Dede Korkut ethic became part of Anatolian society and culture by virtue of these dynastic projects. Consequently, the modern Turkish reader who is likely to have an Albanian, Circassian, Kurdish, or Arab among his or her forebears is nonetheless able to see a piece of himself or herself in the Dede Korkut stories.

NOTES

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[1]The two manuscripts are usually referred to as the Dresden manuscript and the Vatican manuscript. The first includes twelve stories, the second only six of these twelve.

[2]Lewis's views are in accord with other authorities (Boratav 1983b; Bryer 1975; Planhol 1966; Sümer et al. 1972; Woods 1976).

[3]Gökyay (1973: 5–15, 23–32) lists most of the Turkish editions of the Dede Korkut stories through the 1960s. His bibliography, supplemented by a search of current holdings at the University of California, uncovered over a dozen different Turkish editions of the *Book of Dede Korkut*, four adaptations of all or some of the stories to verse, numerous editions of a few Dede Korkut stories in newspapers, journals, and anthologies, three adaptations of stories for the stage, and five different editions of stories adapted for children. Several of these publications were listed as second printings. One version of the twelve stories in new Turkish has recently run into nine printings. The first modern Turkish edition of the *Book of Dede Korkut* listed by Gökyay (1973) was published in 1916. The first children's edition was published in 1929. Most of the first editions held by the University of California were published in the late 1930s or the late 1960s. These two decades appear to be peaks of activity among Dede Korkut scholars in Turkey while the 1980s were a period of re-editions of previous studies and adaptations. Since 1950, the *Book of Dede Korkut* has also been translated into modern Azerbaijani, English, German, Italian, and Russian. There are two recent English translations by Sümer et al. (1972) and by Lewis (1974). Modern Dede Korkut scholarship has also inspired the documentation of contemporary folktales that are similar to the stories in the *Book of Dede Korkut*. For examples of Anatolian tales of a man-eating, sheep-herding giant, see Yüce (1970) and Brendemoen (1989).

[4]The controversy included contributions from Wilhelm Grimm and A. van Gennep. The account that follows is drawn from Mundy (1956). See Gökyay (1973) for further comments on non-Turkish scholars' views of the *Book of Dede Korkut*.

[5]Nine of the twelve narratives have titles that refer to the name of a young man and his father (nos. 1, 2, 4–7, 9–11). One refers to the name of a father but not the son (no. 3), one refers to the name of a son but not the father (no. 8), and the final narrative refers to the rebellion of the Outer Oghuz but not any specific individual (no. 12). The numbers refer to the order of the stories in the Dresden manuscript.

[6]Any page numbers refer to the Penguin edition of Geoffrey Lewis's translation of the stories (1974). The order of the stories in Lewis (1974) follows the order in the Dresden manuscript with one exception: he puts the introduction that precedes the twelve stories at the end in a thirteenth chapter.

[7]I have followed the spelling for Turkish names used in Lewis (1974) except for the name of the one-eyed monster where I have preserved the Turkish, Tepegöz, in place of Lewis's "goggle-eye."

[8]A son is reunited with his father (four occurrences), a son with his father and mother (two), a younger brother with his elder brother (one), a prince with his lord (one), a husband with his wife (one). The hero is married to his bride (two occurrences), the hero and his brothers are married (one), the hero and all his companions are married (one), all the Oghuz assemble and celebrate (two).

[9]Text is from Boratav (1983a:94–95), translation is mine.

[10]This conclusion is consistent with the processes of sedentarization that were taking place at the time the *Book of Dede Korkut* was being written down (Lewis 1974).

[11]For a discussion of how sexual fantasies and revolt against the father are prominent in the plot structure of contemporary Turkish romances, see Başgöz (1976). Başgöz identifies the romances with postnomadic Turkish culture and society. He argues that a revolt against the father would not have been countenanced where tribal traditions were still in force. While it may be the case that Turkish romances are more explicit about the matter, tension between patriarchal authority and heroic individualism is characteristic of pastoral societies and is evident from the focus of the Dede Korkut stories on the son–father relationship (cf. Meeker 1989).

[12]Like the daughter of the infidel prince, who is ready to die for her hero (no. 6), the wife of Deli Dumrul behaves according to heroic norms.

[13]I have used Geoffrey Lewis's translation (1974:140–50) while consulting Muharrem Ergin's (1964: 85–92) and Orhan Şaik Gökyay's (1973) transcriptions.

[14]The monster is named after his body. The name of Tepegöz is first mentioned just after his physical monstrosity is described: "At the top [of his head], there was an eye" (*tepesinde bir gözü var*). The symbolism of the eye and vision is especially complex in both old and new Turkish tradition. The root for the eye and for vision, *göz*, appears in many expressions with a wide range of meaning. Among these, notions of the eye and vision as representing an interior self of desire and longing are especially prominent, and among these notions, the eye and vision sometimes represent desire and greed. In modern Turkish, the "eye" can refer to the evil eye, and an "open eye" can refer to a selfish or greedy person. The expression "to have one's eyes opened" is a common reference to someone becoming aware of his self interest after being exploited by others.

[15]For example, "he who made so-and-so vomit blood" is a heroic epithet that occurs at least three times in the *Book of Dede Korkut*; see Başgöz (1978:13), and later in the story the hero Basat will also wield a tree in combat against Tepegöz just as the giant uses a tree here against the Oghuz; see n. 20.

[16]Lewis (1974:206) tells us that the name "Salakhane" suggests "slaughterhouse" to a Turkish ear.

[17]In the Homeric version, the elements of the blinding of the one-eyed giant are designed to be part of a different symbolic contrast between the cunning devices of Odysseus and the stupid unsociability of the giant. Odysseus takes the giant's olive staff while he is sleeping, hardens it in the fire, and plunges it into his one eye. Beidelman (1989) pointed out that the olive staff signifies cultivation, a craft given to humanity by Athena, daughter of Metis, and a form of production by technique and labor. Polyphemus is ignorant of the craft of cultivation which is absent from the island of the Cyclops. He "misuses" an olive branch for "laborless" and "craftless" pastoral production. In brief, the symbolism of the olive staff in the Homeric version parallels but contrasts with the symbol of the kitchen spit in the Oghuz version. Both the Greek and Turkish versions feature a subtext of symbolic organization but each with its own distinctive message about social identity.

[18]Here Lewis's translation is touched by the influence of the Homeric story. He correctly translates the line: "[Tepegöz] knew (*bildi*) Basat was in the cave" but then deviates from the meaning of the Turkish text when he translates the line "Now [Tepegöz] guessed (*bildi*) that Basat was inside the skin" (Lewis 1974:146). In the *Odyssey*, the giant is blinded so that the Greeks will be able to escape

from the cave holding to the underside of the sheep as they go out in the morning to their pastures. That Odysseus would trick and deceive the giant is an important feature of his character, so it is essential that the giant does not know Odysseus is beneath the live ram. In the Turkish tale, the giant is also blinded to enable the hero to conceal himself. But later Tepegöz knows that Basat is covered by a ram's skin; nonetheless, he fails to distinguish the human from the animal. This failure, along with Basat's recognition of divinity (which is what makes him human rather than simply animal), is the crucial part of the tale. Mundy argued that the story of "How Basat Killed Tepegöz" must be descended from the account of Odysseus and Polyphemus because the connection between the blinding of the giant and the escape from the cave has been lost in the Turkish version. This argument cannot stand. The blinding of the giant and the escape of the hero in the Turkish version are connected, but in a way that is different from the Greek version.

[19]Mundy (1956) discusses and revises a paradigm for giant-killer tales. The paradigm was developed by Hackman (1904) in a survey of over 120 oral variants.

[20]Recall that earlier in the tale, Tepegöz killed many of the Oghuz by tossing a tree at them; see n. 15. The name of the father of Basat is said to be "mighty tree," *kaba ağaç*, in the closing declamations between hero and monster.

[21]Nn. 17, 18 also touch on the way in which the Greek and Turkish stories differ from one another.

[22]Text is from Ergin (1964:v); translation is mine.

[23]Fleischer (1986:274).

[24]Ibid., 275–76.

[25]Ibid., 286–92.

[26]Ibid., 156–59, 254–57.

[27]By using *Ottomanist*, rather than *Ottoman*, public culture, I mean to refer to a provincial social tradition in Asia Minor that emerged out of Ottoman rule but was distinct from palace culture.

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