



OĠUZ KHAN NARRATIVES

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The Oġuz Khan narratives constitute a cycle of mythical accounts associated with the life, conquests, and descendants of Oġuz, who is also called Oġuz Khan, Oġuz Qaġan, Oġuz Āqā, or Oġuz Atā—the legendary ancestor of the Oġuz tribes (see [ĠOZZ](#)). The title *Oġuz-nāma* is frequently used to designate various versions of the narrative, although as a generic title for the Oġuz narratives it appeared much later.

Origins and early textual examples. The first two datable versions of the Oġuz narrative are found in Rašid-al-Din's (d. 718/1318) *Jāme' al-tawāriq*. The first and shorter version, which is found at the beginning of the *Jāme' al-tawāriq*, is based on a second and longer narrative found in the second volume of the same work (Rašid-al-Din, 1995, I, pp. 47-63; Idem, 2005, pp. 1-62). The former differs from the latter, as it includes interpolations by Rašid-al-Din, such as the account on the [Aġaç Eri](#) tribe, which is absent from the longer version (Rašid-al-Din, 1995, I, p. 54). The Arabic version of the *Jāme' al-tawāriq* includes only the shorter version (MS Ayasofya 3034, fols. 27a-37b); the longer version of the narrative in Arabic has not come down to us.

In the earliest manuscripts of the *Jāme' al-tawāriq*, the Oġuz narrative does not bear any title (Topkapı Saray Library, MSS Hazine 1653 [copied in 714/1314], fols. 375b-391a, and Hazine 1654 [copied in 717/1317], fols. 237b-251b). However, later Timurid copies do have titles, such as *Tāriq-e Torkān wa Oġuz wa ħekāyat-e jahāngiri-e u* (Topkapı Saray Library, MS Ahmed III 2935, fol.



309a), or *Tāriḳ-e Oğuz wa ḥāl-e u* (Topkapı Saray Library, MS Bağdad Köşkü 282, fol. 590b). The latter title was adopted by Moḥammad Rowšan, who edited the text (Rašid-al-Din, 2005, p. ix). The term *Oğuz-nāma* was first used by the Mamluk historian Ebn al-Dawādāri (*fl.* 786/1335-6) in his *Dorar al-tijān wa ḡorar tawāriḳ al-azmān* and by the Ottoman historian Yazıjıoğlu ‘Ali (*fl.* 840/1436) in his *Tāriḳ-e āl-e Saljuḳ*. However, in the case of Ebn al-Dawādāri, it refers to a variant of the *Ketāb-e Dede Qorqut*, and not to the Oğuz narrative (Graf, p. 55; Yazıjıoğlu, fol. 2b).

Rašid-al-Din’s *Tāriḳ-e Oğuz* is a collation of five narrative layers: 1) the story of Oğuz; 2) the stories of the Oğuz *yabḡus*; 3) the stories of the Qarā Khans and Buḡrā Khans; 4) the story of Šāh Malek and the early Saljuḳs; 5) narratives on various Turkic and Islamic dynasties, such as the Samanids, [Ghaznavids](#), and Salghurids (Sümer, p. 360; Jahn, pp. 45-63). The style and language of these narratives suggest that the text of the *Tāriḳ-e Oğuz* had been collated anonymously before Rašid-al-Din composed his chronicle. The following discussion focuses exclusively on the first narrative layer and its subsequent reception in Persianate historiography.

The *Tāriḳ-e Oğuz* begins with a short genealogical and topographical introduction connecting the family of Oğuz to that of Japheth, or Öljej/Oljāy Khan, as he is called in the text, and his son Dib Yāwqu Khan, who lived nomadic life around the lakes of Issyk-Kul and Balkhash. Oğuz was born to the family of Qarā Khan, son of Dib Yāwqu Khan, and his unnamed wife (Rašid-al-Din, 2005, pp. 1-2). There are three main themes in the following story of Oğuz: conversion, conquest, and etiology. Oğuz was born as a monotheist; he first converted his mother by threatening her to starve himself to death, and then his wife, who was also his cousin. Oğuz’s monotheism causes a cataclysmic clash between the generations, in which Oğuz kills his father and two of his uncles (incidentally, the surviving uncles are portrayed as ancestors of the Mongols). Then, Oğuz sets out to conquer the entire world including India, *Karal wa Bāšḡird* (that is, the Hungarians and the Bashkirs), the land of the Dog-men (*Qıl Baraq*), the Land of Darkness (*Qarā hulun*), Šervān and Šemāḳi, Arrān and Muḡān, Diār Bakr and Šām, Kordestān, Rum (Anatolia) and Farang (Europe), Damascus, Baghdad, Kerman, ‘Erāq-e ‘Ajam, Māzandarān, Gorgān, Dehestān, Ḳorasān, and finally Qohestān (Rašid-al-Din, 2005, pp. 8-54).

The Oğuz narrative is also an etiological myth, explaining the formation of the twenty-four Oğuz tribes, as well as the Qarluḳ, Qalač, Qipčaq (see [QEPCĀQ](#)), Qangli, and the Mongols (*Movāl*). Oğuz divides his six sons into two main



branches: *Bozoq* (Gün Khan, Ay Khan, and Yulduz Khan) and *Üčoq* (Gök Khan, Țaq Khan, and Dengiz Khan), and he stipulates that the *Bozoq* are always superior to the *Üčoq*. After Oğuz's death, İrqıl K̄vāja, the advisor of his eldest son Gün Khan, recommends that Oğuz's twenty-four grandsons be organized in a way that future clashes among them can be avoided. Hence, the advisor gives a nickname to each grandson of Oğuz and defines the *tamğas* (brands of their animals) and the *onquns* (totemic animals) of each of them (Rašid-al-Din, 2005, pp. 53, 56; see the genealogical tree of the Oğuz in [TABLE 1](#)).

That the *Tāriq-e Oğuz* is a collation of different narrative traditions, both oral and literary, is beyond doubt. With some variations, and without the etiological narratives and the figure of Oğuz as an ancestor, the list of the Oğuz tribes is already found in Maḥmud Kāšgari's *Divān loğāt al-Tork* (Kāšgari, I, pp. 101-2). The story of the Dog-Men closely resembles the expedition of the Mongol armies to the Land of the Dogs in de Bridia's *Historia Tartarorum* (Skelton, pp. 70-72). Similarly, Oğuz's relationship with Yuši K̄vāja, an elderly person who secretly attends Oğuz's campaigns, and his voyage into the Land of Darkness show striking resemblances to the story of Eskandar in Neẓāmi Ganjavi's *Šaraf-nāma* and in the Alexander romance by the Syriac monk Jacob of Serugh (d. 521; see Neẓāmi, pp. 505-13; Budge, pp. 170-75; Boyle, p. 224). These textual connections might support Zeki Velidi Togan's argument of locating the place of composition of the *Tāriq-e Oğuz* in Azarbaijan (Togan, 1982, p. 120).

Besides Rašid-al-Din's *Tāriq-e Oğuz*, the most important, yet enigmatic, text of the early history of the Oğuz narrative is the story of Oğuz Qağan written in Ūighur script in an undetermined Turkic dialect. This narrative reached us in a unique but incomplete manuscript preserved in the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris (MS Supplément turc 1001). It shares the conquest and community formation themes with the *Tāriq-e Oğuz*, but the theme of conversion is absent in it. As opposed to the *Tāriq-e Oğuz*, it features many 'miraculous' themes, such as one of Oğuz's wives descending from the sky in a light, and a male wolf playing the role of Yuši K̄vāja (Shcherbak, pp. 22-63). There is no agreement among scholars on how and where the Oğuz Qağan narrative should be contextualized. Opinions vary from early 14th-century Eastern Turkestan (Pelliot, p. 358; Shcherbak, pp. 101-7) to late 13th- or early 14th-century Il-khanid (see [IL-KHANIDS](#)) Iran (Sümer, p. 389). The historian of [Nāder Shah](#) (r. 1736-47) [Moḥammad-Mahdi Khan Astarābādi](#) (d. between 1172/1759 and 1182/1768), included a fragment of this narrative in his



Chaghatay-Persian dictionary *Sanglāk* (Moḥammad-Mahdi Khan, fol. 180a).

Another early variant of the Oğuz narrative is the so-called Üzünköprü Narrative in Eastern Turkic dated to the 13th or 14th century. Unlike the Oğuz Qağan narrative, it closely follows Rašid-al-Din's *Tāriḳ-e Oğuz*, although it is not certain whether it represents an independent narrative or a popular verse rendering of the latter (Eraslan, pp. 176-90).

Later historiographical traditions. After its appearance in Rašid-al-Din's *Jāme' al-tawāriḳ*, the Oğuz narrative acquired a canonical status in post-Mongol Persianate historiography (see [HISTORIOGRAPHY](#) v. to viii.). The *Jāme' al-tawāriḳ* was the primary source of Ḥamd-Allāh Mostowfi's (d. 750/1349-50) *Tāriḳ-e gozida*. However, Mostowfi incorporated some oral narratives, such as the intrusion of a wolf into the mythical enclosure Ergene Qun, and he fully integrated the Oğuz narrative with [Čengiz Khan's](#) (d. 624/1227) career by associating those tribes which opposed Čengiz Khan, such as the Kerayit and Nayman, with Oğuz's uncles (Qazvini, pp. 563, 567; Dobrovits, pp. 270-72).

The Timurid historian Šaraf-al-Din 'Ali Yazdi's (d. 858/1454) account of the Oğuz Khan narrative in the *Moqaddama*, the so-called Prologue to his *Zafar-nāma*, is partially based on the *Jāme' al-tawāriḳ* (Yazdi, fols. 16a-17a). However, Yazdi introduced a completely novel genealogical structure for Oğuz's ancestry, resulting in a distinction between "Tātār Khan" and "Moğul Khan,"—a distinction which reflects the 15th-century social and political dualisms, such as steppe vs. sown and Muslim vs. non-Muslim. Yazdi had tremendous influence over the later Timurid and Mughal historiography (see [HISTORIOGRAPHY](#) v. [TIMŪRID PERIOD](#), and [INDIA](#) xvi. [INDO-PERSIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY](#)). The most noteworthy of the later renderings of Yazdi is the anonymous *Šajarat al-Atrāk* attributed to Oloğ Beg (d. 853/1449), which inserts the Ottoman genealogy into the general genealogical scheme by depicting the Ottomans as the descendants of Čin, son of Japheth (Pseudo-Oloğ Beg, fols. 8b-17a).

Whereas the Oğuz narrative was intertwined with Chingizid history in Timurid historiography, it gained an independent status in the Turkmen and Ottoman realms in western Iran and Anatolia. The need to define political authority and legitimize it for non-aristocratic, that is, non-Chingizid, Turkmens was determinant in the elevation of the Oğuz narrative to the level of foundational dynastic myth in 15th-century Azarbaijan and Anatolia, and several dynasties were depicted as descendants of one of the twenty-four



grandsons of Oğuz. The Ottoman historian Şokr-Allāh (d. 894/1488) refers to a certain *Tawāriḳ-e Oğuz* in Ūighur script, propagating genealogical superiority of the Ottoman sultan Morād II (r. 1421-44 and 1446-51) as a descendant of Gök Alp over Qarā Yusof of the Qara Qoyunlu as a descendant of Dengiz Alp (Şokr-Allāh, fol. 158b). Likewise, the [Āq Qoyunlu](#) chronicles *Ketāb-e Diārbakriya* and *Tāriḳ-e ʿālamārā-ye amini* extend the dynastic lineage back to Bayundur Khan, son of Gün Khan, son of Oğuz Khan (Ṭehrāni, pp. 24-25; Kōnĵi, p. 21; Woods, pp. 173-82).

The Oğuz Khan narrative was introduced to Ottoman intellectual circles by Yazıjoğlu ʿAli's *Tāriḳ-e āl-e Saljuq*, which he wrote during the reign of the Ottoman sultan Murad II. Yazıjoğlu's narrative is mainly a translation of Rašid-al-Din's *Jāmeʿ al-tawāriḳ*, although the section on the customs (*töre*), the principles of succession, and the rules of politics set by Oğuz is Yazıjoğlu ʿAli's own contribution preparing the ideological basis for future Ottoman absolutist claims (Yazıjoğlu, fols. 1b-18b; Mustafaev, pp. 11-12).

After Yazıjoğlu ʿAli, alternative Oğuz genealogies going back to Gün Khan or Gök Khan were included in many Ottoman chronicles without providing extensive narrative background. One exception is Maḥmud Bayāti's (*fl.* 886/1481-82) *Jām-e Jam-āyin* (Bayāti, pp. 9-55). As a member of the Turkmen Bayat tribe from Tabriz, Bayāti seems to have integrated some local narratives circulating in Azarbaijan and Kurdistan. Evidence for this comes from the Kurdish historian [Şaraf Khan Bedlisi](#), who used similar narratives in his *Şaraf-nāma* (Bayāti, pp. 30-31; Bedlisi, 1860, I, pp. 16-17), and the *Ketāb-e Dede Qorqut*, which feature protagonists with similar names (Bügdüz Emen) and characteristics (visiting of the Prophet; see *Dede Korkut*, pp. 65, 254).

Some Ottoman historians, however, introduced a radical shift in the mythical discourse of the Oğuz narrative. As opposed to the Japhetic paradigm, this new narrative discourse suggests an alternative lineage going back to Esau, son of Isaac. Hence, the term 'Semitic paradigm' referring to Isaac's lineage going back to Shem. Enveri (*fl.* 869/1465) first signaled this new approach in his *Düsturnāme*, where the Oğuz tribesman Tümen Khan has his daughter Turunc Kātun marry a certain ʿAyāz b. ʿOṭmān, a Qoreyshi soldier in the army of Saʿd b. Abi Waqqās (d. in 670s) in Iraq. They have a son, Soleymān, who is also called Oğuz. In this narrative, the name ʿAyāz is most probably a corrupted form for ʿIyāş, that is, Esau, son of Isaac (Enveri, pp. 5-11). [Edris Bedlisi's](#) (d. 926/1520) *Hašt behešt*, as well as the Pseudo-Ruhi (*Oxford Anonymous*), bear some similarities with Enveri's text. According to Edris Bedlisi, Esau, son of



Jacob, went to Turkestan and there became the ancestor of the Turks. Bedlisi adds that Esau was called Qayti Khan, who was the father of Oğuz (Edris Bedlisi, fol. 18a). According to Pseudo-Ruhi, Esau was Oğuz's grandfather, who was also called Qoy Khan (Pseudo-Ruhi, p. 375). The late 15th-century popular legend *Şaltuq-nāma* includes a similar narrative, connecting the Ottoman dynasty to Esau (Abu'l-Ḳayr Rumi, IV, p. 619). The rise of apocalyptic expectations after the conquest of Constantinople in 1453 by Mehmed (Moḥammad) II (r. 1444-46 and 1451-81) seems to have been the main thrust behind the rise of the Semitic paradigm among the Ottoman intellectuals, as Esau was seen as the ancestor of the Banu al-Aşfar, who would appear at the end of time (Flemming, pp. 134-37). The Ottoman historian Neşri's critique of the Semitic paradigm reveals this underlying tension. According to Neşri, those who claim an Esavitic lineage for Oğuz are in error, as Esau was the ancestor of the second Rome. Oğuz, like the Mongols, Turks, and the first Rome, was of the Japhetic lineage (Neşri, I, pp. 56-57). The Semitic paradigm also resonated in the Ottoman mystic Vāni Meḥmed (Moḥammad) Efendi's (d. 1096/1685) commentary to the Qor'ān (*Arā'es al-Qor'ān*, Surah IX [*al-Tawba*], 38-39), where he says that the Turks are the predicted people (*qowm*) whom God would send if the believers were to turn to the pleasures of the world, arguing that Oğuz Khan, the ancestor of the Turks and a contemporary of Abraham, was married to the daughter of Isaac. Hence, according to Vāni Meḥmed Efendi, the Ottomans had a prophetic lineage going back to Isaac via maternal line (Vāni Meḥmed Efendi, fol. 544b).

After the decline of Timurid rule in Central Asia in early 16th century, Shaybanid historians mainly followed the pattern established by their Ilkhanid and Timurid predecessors, and the Oğuz narrative was intertwined with Chingizid dynastic myths, such as the stories of Alan Qoa and Ergene Qun. The anonymous *Tawāriḳ-e gozida-ye noşrat-nāma*, which was written in the early 16th century for Moḥammad Şaybāni Khan (d. 915/1510) combined the versions of Raşid-al-Din and Ḥamd-Allāh Mostowfi, although it had an added section on the Kerayit tribe, which might reflect the prevailing importance of tribes in Ūzbek politics during this period (*Tawāriḳ-e gozida*, pp. 15-31). Likewise, the *Tāriḳ-e Oğuz Kān wa Alan Qoa* (or the *Şībāni-nāma*) relies on Şaraf-al-Din 'Ali Yazdī, but also adds a section on the Qongrat tribe to the narrative (*Şībāni-nāma*, pp. 1-21).

Another post-Timurid Central Asian historian, [Abu'l-Ġāzi Bahādor Khan](#) (r. 1054-74/1644 to 1663-64), the Chingizid ruler of Kiva, was the first to compose



an Oğuz narrative divorced of the Chingizid history. The *Šajara-ye Tarākema* is mainly based on Rašid-al-Din, but Abu'l-Ġāzi clearly incorporated oral Turkmen traditions (probably from the perspective of the Ersari Turkmen tribe) into the narrative (Abu'l-Ġāzi, 1996, p. 109; Penrose, p. 205). Abu'l-Ġāzi and his son Anuša composed another chronicle entitled *Šajara-ye Tork*, which brings the history of the Shaybanid Chingizids down to 1663. The Oğuz narrative in this work follows the canon established by Yazdi (Abu'l-Ġāzi, 1871-74, pp. 5-61). Around 1204/1789-90, a Chaghatay translation of Yazdi's Oğuz narrative and the *Šajara-ye Tarākema* were edited together with some additions, such as the story of Afšār Khan, in the *Bayān-e Oğuz-nāma*, which reflects the oral traditions of the Afšār tribe in Persia (*Bayān-e Oğuz-nāma*, fols. 34b-67a, 86a-97b; Türkmen, pp. 343-62). The 18th-century Turkmen poet Nur-Moḥammad Andalip's *Oğuz-nāma* was likewise mainly based on Abu'l-Ġāzi's *Šajara-ye Tarākema*, but it features some interpolations, probably oral in origin, such as the Ūighur ancestry of the Qipčaq tribe (Bekmyradov, pp. 105-23).

The *Ketāb-e Dede Qorqut*, which is a collection of twelve stories reflecting the oral traditions of the Turkmens in the 15th-century eastern Anatolia, is also called *Oğuz-nāma*. It is true that Dede Qorqut, the main protagonist of the *Ketāb-e Dede Qorqut*, appears as a wise man in Rašid-al-Din's *Tāriḳ-e Oğuz*, but the figure of Oğuz and the mythical fiction around him are not mentioned (Rašid-al-Din, 2005, pp. 67-71; *Dede Korkut*, pp. 29, 48, 197, 214). The term *Oğuz-nāme* here refers to the story of the Oğuz tribesmen, and not to Oğuz as a mythical person. Besides, the Oğuz narratives and the *Ketāb-e Dede Qorqut* have different discursive structures. While the Oğuz narratives tell the stories of the khans, that is, the supreme rulers of the steppe politics, the *Ketāb-e Dede Qorqut* relate the stories of the Oğuz tribesmen and their chiefs; the supreme leader, Bayundur Khan, is mentioned but never emphasized in the text. This is also true for the Topkapı fragment, an anonymous account found on the front flyleaf of Yazıjoğlu's *Tāriḳ-e āl-e Saljuq* immediately preceding the story of Oğuz (Edgüer, pp. 243-49). Despite these differences, these two narrative circles were apparently brought together during the 14th to 16th centuries. The *Kalemāt-e Oğuz-nāma al-mašhur be Atalar Sözi*, which is a collection of proverbs, including an introduction on Qorqut Atā, mentions Oğuz Atā as a figure in prophetic capacity (*Kalemāt-e Oğuz-nāma*, fols. 4a-4b; Gökyay, p. xxxii). The Golden Horde narratives reflecting the narratives in the Mamluk historian Ebn al-Dawādāri's (fl. 786/1335-6) chronicles, *Kanz al-dorar wa jāme' al-ğorar* and *Dorar al-tijān wa ġorar tawāriḳ al-azmān*, represent a unique



combination of stories on Čengiz Khan, Oğuz, and Dede Qorqut (Ebn al-Dawādāri, pp. 217-31; Graf, pp. 52, 55; Haarmann, pp. 15-16). Finally, the *Tāriḳ-e jadid-e mer'āt-e jahān*, a universal history written in 1000/1592 by a member of the Āq Qoyunlu family, includes the narrative of Oğuz with references to both the Dede Qorqut narratives and the Oğuz Khan narrative (‘Otmān, pp. 13-20; Miroğlu, pp. 49-54).

In several instances, Oğuz was presented as an ancestral figure in hagiographical literature. Moḥyi Golšani (d. ca. 1014/1605-06) depicted the Ottoman mystic Ebrāhim Golšani (d. 940/1533) as a direct descendant of Oğuz Atā in his *Manāqeb-e Ebrāhim-e Golšani* (Moḥyi Golšani, p. 13). There is also a very short narrative appended to a 19th-century manuscript of the *Šajara-ye Tarākema* on a Sufi sheikh called Dāna Atā, who propagated the *Oğuz-nāma* among the Golden Horde (Samoïlovich, pp. 896-98). The now-lost *Tawāriḳ-e mašāyeg-e Tork* by Sayyed Aḥmad Nāṣer-al-Din Marġināni (fl. 1229/1814) also connects Oğuz with Kᵛāja Solaymān b. Barman, the son-in-law of and successor to the Sufi shaykh Aḥmad Yasavi, who lived in Central Asia in the late 12th century (Togan, 1953, p. 525).

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