



GLOBAL JOURNAL OF HUMAN-SOCIAL SCIENCE: A  
ARTS & HUMANITIES - PSYCHOLOGY  
Volume 22 Issue 5 Version 1.0 Year 2022  
Type: Double Blind Peer Reviewed International Research Journal  
Publisher: Global Journals  
Online ISSN: 2249-460X & Print ISSN: 0975-587X

## Turkmen Epos: Origin and Modern Conditions

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**Annotation-** The epic branch is one of the central directions of the oral musical and poetic heritage of the Turkmen. The carriers of the epic tradition in Turkmenistan are the bagshy-dessanchy, the modern heirs of the ancient art of ozans. The centers of epic storytelling are located in the Dashoguz and Mary regions, they differ significantly from each other in terms of repertoire, genre and performance features. The main genres in the repertoire of bagshy-dessanchy are the monumental cycles of epic tales "Gokut ata" and "Gorogly", numerous author's and folk dessans, legends with music, as well as musical transcriptions of literary works of Turkmen classical poets. The structure of epic genres is based on the alternation of poetic and prose sections. Poetic lines are sung in the form of songs, and prose is recited in a performing manner characteristic of each school. Songs determine the development of musical dramaturgy in dessans. The performances of the bagshy-dessanchy represent a consistent movement towards the climax, where each stage of the narrative is characterized by a certain type of epic songs.

**Keywords:** *turkmen epic art; oral tradition; bagshy-dessanchy; epos; dessan; epic song.*

**GJHSS-A Classification:** DDC Code: 808.2 LCC Code: PN1040.A5



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# Turkmen Epos: Origin and Modern Conditions

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The article describes the main stages in the formation of the schools of the epic tradition in Turkmenistan, and also presents the genre classification of the modern oral musical and poetic heritage of the Turkmens.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The epic branch is one of the central directions of the oral musical and poetic heritage of the Turkmens. The carriers of the epic tradition in Turkmenistan are the *bagshy-dessanchy*, the modern heirs of the ancient art of *ozans*. The art of epic storytellers is the highest achievement of Turkmen folk art. It reflects the national features, concentrated high moral and patriotic ideals of the people.

The repertoire of Turkmen storytellers includes a number of author's and folk *dessans*, including "Shasenem and Garyp", "Leyli and Medjnun", "Nedjep oglan", "Baba Rovshen", "Zohre and Tahyr", "Sayat and Hemra", "Asly and Kerem", as well as the epic cycles "Gorogly" and "Gorkut ata". The tradition of performing the Gorogly epic is still very popular in the northern region of Turkmenistan, while the performing tradition of the Gorkut ata epic has been completely lost. Local schools differ significantly from each other in terms of the use of musical instruments, genre varieties of performed works and performing features.

The purpose of the article is to describe the stages of the formation of the schools of the epic tradition in Turkmenistan, to characterize the bearers of

the tradition, their repertoire, and also to compose the genre classification of the genres of epic tales currently existing.

## II. RESEARCH METHODS

Turkmen storytellers have traditional methods of transmitting oral heritage, allowing them to store a huge number of epic songs and texts in their memory. Poetic lines and prose are the main components of epic tales. The differences between the performers of local epic schools are most clearly manifested in the manner of singing and in the recitation of prose sections. Analysis of samples of the epic heritage, the sources for which were samples of epic genres from the fund of the Turkmen National Conservatory, as well as field audio and video materials from the personal archive of the author, made it possible to classify the genre varieties of epic legends that exist today, as well as to identify the structural features of epic songs and determine their role in the story. As a methodological base, the works of famous epic scholars V. Bartold [2; 3], E. Bertels [5], V. Zhirmunsky [9], A. Lord [15], E. Meletinsky [18], K. Raihl [22], a number of Turkmen researchers, including M. Kosyaev [29], B. Karryev [10; 11], S. Garryev [28], B. Mametyazov [16; 17], S. Agajanow [1], Sh. Gullyev [7] and others were used.

## III. THE HISTORY OF THE FORMATION OF THE EPIC TRADITION IN TURKMENISTAN

For the first time, people began to populate the territory of Turkmenistan eight to nine thousand years ago, in the Neolithic era. The first examples of archaic epic genres trace their origins to folk art, which arose at the dawn of fire worship. Folk holidays, rituals and customs of modern Turkmens contain many pre-Islamic elements associated with the paganism of the ancient Turks and with the Zoroastrian cults of the inhabitants of the oldest Central Asian oases. "Traces of the ancient beliefs of the population of the Turkmen steppes: the designation of evil spirits – *maidens*, *peri*, *azhdarha*, *shamar* (black snake) and good geniuses – *the bird Simurg* – are preserved in the fabulous epic of the Turkmens" [12, 18-19].

The era of the formation of shamanism among the Turkic peoples is distinguished by a developed sphere of ritual folklore. The song accompanied the performance of magical rites performed by the tribal team in order to ensure the well-being of the family in war, hunting, or in collective labor processes. Gradually, the practice of collective performance of folklore passes

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to specialized performers – professional oral musicians. In the past, among the Turkic peoples, it was a widespread custom to sing songs before the battle and tell an epic about the glorious deeds of their ancestors. So, in *Turkmen dessans*, before meeting with a strong enemy, heroes always play the *dutar* in order to attract patron spirits to the battlefield, which should help the hero during the battle. Hence the combination of the profession of singer and shaman, common in primitive society [4; 8].

The period of the early nomads became the time of the birth of epic storytelling itself, archaic tales appear, the beginnings of works of the heroic epic. The first examples of ancient Turkic literature are the *Orkhon-Yenisei* texts. They are inscriptions made in ancient Turkic, the so-called *runic writing* on stone steles, which are part of the complexes of burial structures erected along the *Orkhon River*, near the city of *Ulan-Bator*. The first information about Turkic runic inscriptions appeared at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In 1894, the researcher V. Radlov made the first translation of the inscriptions dedicated to the Turkic ruler *Kül-tegin* [24, 8].

The era of runic writing in the ancient Turkic culture left works not only on stones, but also on paper. One of the oldest monuments is the ancient *Uighur* manuscript “The Tale of the Oguz Kagan” (or “Oguznama”), which tells about the origin of the *Oguz tribes*, the oldest ancestors of the *Turkmens*. “In their heroic epic, the Oguz – Turkmen tribes included, as a rule, materials of a genealogical nature – myths, legends and traditions about the first *Oguz* heroes, descendants of *Oguzkhan* (*Oguz-Kagan*), the legendary ancestor. This literature was designated by the term “*Oguzname*”. It spread mainly by word of mouth” [12, 20].

“Classical Turkic-language literature appeared on the basis of other aesthetic ideas associated with Muslim culture, as a result of the penetration of Arab-Persian poetics into the Turkic language environment” [24, 18]. Examples of the heroic poetry of the *Oghuz* are contained in the dictionary of the Turkic language “*Divan lugat at-Turk*” by *Mahmud Kashgari*, compiled in 1072 – 1077. In an effort to get to know different Turkic dialects better, Mahmud Kashgari traveled around cities, villages and pastures and collected language material, on the basis of which he compiled his dictionary “Collection of Turkic words”. “*Divan*” is a valuable source on the languages, history and ethnography of the Turkic peoples.

The world of the Turkic epic reached its heyday during the Mongol conquests in the 13<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. Along with Islam, a movement is born, called in the literature *Sufism*. “Sufism is not a single trend, it has absorbed many features from Christian monasticism, Buddhism, widespread in Central Asia, to Islam and Greek pantheism, which penetrated here through Syria and Iran. The main aspects of Sufism are asceticism

(removal of a person from earthly affairs) and mystical pantheism (ecstatically enthusiastic merging with God)” [12, 107]. The Muslim preacher *Sheikh Ahmed Yasawi* (died in 1166) was a representative of Turkic Sufi poetry. Yasavi's work “Collection of Philosophical Sayings” is of a mystical and philosophical nature and expounds the dogmas of Islam.

Bright scientific discoveries marked the period of the Middle Ages, which received the name “Muslim Renaissance” in Eastern culture [19, 7]. An outstanding monument of the medieval *Oguz* epic is the cycle of legends “The Book of My Grandfather Korkut”. Among the *Turkmens*, the cycle about Korkut is distributed under the name “*Korkut ata*”. It consists of several chapters, each based on an alternation of prose and poetry sections. “Three modern Turkic-speaking peoples are ethnically and linguistically connected with the medieval *Oguzes* – *Turkmens*, *Azerbaijanis* and *Turks*. For all these peoples, the epic tales deposited in the “*Book of Korkut*” represent an artistic reflection of their historical past. This book is a record and literary processing of epic tales that were composed and transmitted among these peoples in the oral-poetic tradition from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. This wonderful monument of ancient national culture is in its way the only reflection of the folk poetic creativity of the Turkic-speaking peoples in such a distant historical era” [9, 11]. The composition of the epic is attributed to Korkud. “With a *kobza* in hand, from people to people, a singer goes: which of the men is brave, which is unworthy, the singer knows. In “*Kitab-i Korkud*” the singer who sings songs is denoted by the term “*ozan*”. Korkud is the ideal *ozan* (*bagshy*)” [25, 17].

The epic “*Gorogly*” is widespread among many peoples of Central Asia and the Caucasus. “National versions have absorbed numerous historical events from the life of the Central Asian peoples, their final cyclization continued for several centuries” [16, 101]. The origin of the epic goes back to real historical events, which are subsequently overgrown with all kinds of fiction, which turns them into a legend. “The first information received about *Koroglu* speaks of his belonging to the *Tekeli* tribal group. This indication is of great interest in the sense that it encourages the study of the origin and path taken by this tribe. The ethnic characteristics of this group correspond exactly to the personality of the hero” [14, 12].

Barely emerging, the legend of *Gorogly*, thanks to its plot and the exceptional personality of the main character – the son of the grave, a poet-singer, a warrior, a native of the people's environment – began to be famous among many peoples of the East. Its distribution went beyond the boundaries of the territory that was its cradle, this exclusively Turkic theme spread in all directions.

The legend spread in two ways: as a result of the movement of nomadic tribes who carried their

cultural heritage with them, and folk singer-storytellers who spread stories and songs in their most complete form. Therefore, the song parts of the work are relatively stable, while the narrative parts, the evaluation of which depends on the narrator, undergo much more changes. They depend on the ethnic group, which preserves and develops what suits its thinking the most.

In the XVI-XVII centuries, new monuments of the epic heritage were created. The text of the legend about the Oghuz Khan, included in the "Genealogy of the Turkmens" by the *Khiva Khan Abulgazi* (1603-1664), can be interpreted as the history of the Oghuz and as a work of fiction [26]. In the oral works of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, people discovered history for themselves, learned about the traditions and customs of their ancestors. A fertile, favorable ground is being created for the development of oral literary creativity, in which the exploits of historical and legendary heroes of the past are sung. The people needed examples that could excite strength and desire to fight, this was facilitated by the mythical and fantastic elements of the epic. The spreaders of the legend, the folk bagshy-dessanchy, were able to understand and satisfy the new demands of tribal associations.

The development of epic art in Turkmenistan is closely intertwined with the history of national literature. The 19<sup>th</sup> century turned out to be generous in talents for the Turkmen people. Many of the bagshy's songs are based on the poetic creations of the poet and philosopher *Magtymguly Fragi*. Researchers are unanimous in their opinion that "Magtymguly's works are not intended for reading, but for song performance" [21, 65]. The poet spoke with the people in the language of song, through the mouth of a singer-bagshy. The immortal legacy of the classic of Turkmen literature has become an inexhaustible source of inspiration for folk singer-storytellers. The moral and aesthetic traditions of Magtymguly were continued by the classical poets *Seidi*, *Kemine*, *Myatadiji*, *Zelili*, *Dovan Shahyr*, *Kyatibi*, *Zynkhari*, *Sayly*, *Changli*, *Pidayy*, *Misgingylych*, *Dosmamet*, *Baily Shahyr*, whose inspirational work had an exceptional impact on the art of the Turkmen dessanchy.

#### IV. CARRIERS OF TRADITION AND PERFORMING DIRECTIONS

The creators and bearers of oral professional art in Turkmenistan are bagshy. "The Turkmen bagshy has a professional singer-musician, a living book" [23, 131]. The profession of bagshy is ancient and respectable. A number of proverbs are dedicated to them in Turkmen folklore: "Her işiň wagty ýagşydyr; toýuň gelşigi bagşydyr" ("Every deed is good in its own time, bagshy is an attribute of *toy*<sup>1</sup>") or "Ýurda bela geler bolsa, töre bilen tozan geler; ýurda döwlet gonar bolsa, bagşy bilen

ozan geler" ("Tore<sup>2</sup> and dust will appear – expect trouble for the country; bagshy will appear – expect happiness for it").

Unlike other genres of folk art, the performance of songs by Turkmen bagshy is not associated with everyday rituals and ceremonies. Bagshy sing about everything, at any time, under any circumstances. Their songs, the most diverse in content, are heard at family celebrations and national holidays. Thanks to folk singers, who memorized many songs and dessans by ear, the creations of folk art were passed down from generation to generation and have survived to this day.

Separation from the folklore tradition of the carriers of epic art – bagshy-dessanchy – is the result of many thousands of years of development of the culture of Turkmenistan as a whole. Since ancient times, there has been an idea among the people that the singing and poetic gift descends on people at the behest of the spirits. The idea of poetic inspiration as a miraculous prophetic gift, born from above, was connected with the survivals of such a faith. "In the eyes of the population, the bagshy possessed miraculous powers. In the past, Turkmens had a belief that singers and musicians were patronized by supernatural beings – "ubiquitous" erens, fabulous saints, characters of pre-Muslim, shamanistic legends, pagan mythology" [10, 132].

Turkmen storytellers continue the creative traditions of the Oguz ozan, the earliest examples of art of which date back to the period of the Turkic Kagans. The Turkmen language has preserved the word "bagysh" ("gift", "donation"), from which comes the verb "bagyshlamak" – "to give", "to dedicate", "forgive". According to the assumptions of the researchers, the performers of the "bagysh" ("sacrifice") rite, which was carried out with the use of music and singing, were called "bagyshchy". Then this word turned into "bagshy" [7, 109].

Simultaneously with the process of the formation of storytelling art, the genre formation of the performing repertoire took place. Depending on the genres they perform, Turkmen bagshys are classified as instrumentalists (*sazanda*), singers (*tirmechi-bagshy*) and performers of epic genres (*dessanchy-bagshy*). Each direction characterizes its repertoire and arsenal of performing possibilities.

Most of the territory of Turkmenistan is occupied by the *Karakum desert*. The specific living conditions of the Turkmen tribes in the past left an imprint on their spiritual culture. Evolutionary processes led to the formation of five local bagshy schools. Initially, tribal features prevailed in the names of these schools (*Akhal-teke yoly*, *Yomut-goklen yoly*, *Salyr-saryk yoly* and *Chovdur yoly*), but starting from the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the territorial feature began to dominate in the names of schools [27, 15]. To date, the bagshy schools

<sup>1</sup> Toy (Turkmen) – holiday.

<sup>2</sup> Tore (Turkmen) – Priest.



in Turkmenistan are called *Akhal yoly*, *Dashoguz yoly*, *Lebap yoly*, *Balkan yoly* and *Mary yoly*.

The main performing schools of epic storytelling in Turkmenistan are the *Dashoguz* and *Mary*. The stylistic features of each school appear in the instrumentation, repertoire, melody and genre varieties of the performed works. The stylistic diversity of the art of Turkmen storytellers is given by the manner of performing the epic, which is different for each school.

*Dashoguz yoly* (northern region of Turkmenistan) is the main center of *dessan* performance. It focuses a lot of stylistic directions, each of which is original and unique. The repertoire of the *Dashoguz* *dessanches* includes the chapters (*shaha*) of the "Gorogly" epic, as well as a number of love-fantastic *dessans*.

The founder of *Mary yoly* (the second branch of epic storytelling, located on the southeastern of Turkmenistan) – is considered *Gurt Yakubov* (1929-1985). Unlike the repertoire of the *Dashoguz* *dessanches*, the genre of legend with music, as well as religious and philosophical tales is especially popular in *Mary*.

In the past, *Dashoguz* storytellers performed up to 44 chapters of the *Gorogly* epic. Indicative in this respect is the pedigree of the narrator *Palvan-bagshy* "The skill of the singer and the performance of many branches of the "Gorogly" epic was taught by his father *Ata-bagshy* (or *Hoja-bagshy*, 1866-1929) from the *Hoja* clan. He, in turn, inherited this art from his father, the head of the school of storytellers "Gorogly" *Atanazar-bagshy*, who is the son of *Koch-bagshy*. *Palvan-bagshy* was illiterate, but from him in 1937 the epic "Gorogly" was recorded. It was one of the most complete and artistically perfect versions of the "Gorogly" epic. [6, 10-11].

At present, modern *dessanches* no longer perform the entire cycle, most often the chapters "The Birth of *Gorogly*", "Harmandali", "Bezirgen", "Arap *Reihan*", "The Marriages of *Gorogly*" are performed. The plots underlying these legends are dynamic and understandable to the modern listener. This suggests that the traditions of *dessan* performance passing from generation to generation are being adjusted based on the modern needs of listeners.

In addition to the repertoire, a distinctive feature of local *bagshy* schools is the set of melodies that epic singers use as the basis of their songs. The songs in the *dessans* are not fixed melodically, that is, when performing them, the *dessanchy* independently chooses melodies for them. Each direction characterizes a certain complex of melodic tunes. More than a hundred melodies-themes have been recorded in *Dashoguz*, the most popular of which are "Sandyk", "Yashylbash", "Yylgailar", "Kasym Han", "Baba Gambar" and others. Popular tunes in the *Mary* region are "Zohrejan", "Tuniderya", "Chykdyg guller", "Novai" and others.

In characterizing the style of local schools, an important point is the manner of recitation of prose sections. Throughout the legend, the *bagshy-dessanchy* use various types of speech intonation: declamatory, melodious and spoken [20, 264]. The performers of the *Dashoguz* school are characterized by an energetic, "spoken" recitation of prose sections and a mobile, "screaming" manner of singing songs. An important role in the songs of the *Dashoguz* *dessanchy* is played by the *gyjak*<sup>3</sup>, which saturates the melodic line with melismas. The juicy timbre of the *gyjak*, as it were, competes with the voice of the *bagshy*, introducing an element of competition into the song.

The manner of speaking of the storytellers of the *Mary* school is characterized by slowness and melodiousness, both in the prose and in the song sections of the *dessans*. The *dessanches* use the *dutar* as an accompanying instrument, without the participation of the *gyjak*.

For centuries, the art of Turkmen *bagshy* has been passed down orally from generation to generation. The status of a professional obliged folk singers to create songs of such a quality that the listener would receive aesthetic satisfaction. In striving for this, the skill of the *bagshy* was constantly improved in terms of means of musical expression, poetic language, and performance. The style of each epic storyteller is deeply individual, and, at the same time, is firmly connected with tradition.

The tradition of succession occupies an important place in the culture of Turkmen epic storytelling. In order to earn the right to be called *bagshy*, each novice musician was hired as a student (*shagirt*) to a venerable mentor (*halypa*) and for several years, while the training lasted, was next to the teacher, lived in his house, accompanied him on trips. The Turkmen have a proverb: "If the student does not surpass his mentor, the craft will disappear". This wise saying is the essence of mentoring. Before blessing the pupil, the mentor, in the presence of the elders, arranged a kind of examination of skill. And only upon completion of the test, the young *bagshy* received the long-awaited blessing of the mentor – *Ak pata*.

Modern *bagshy-dessanchy* continue the traditions laid down by ancient *ozans*. Researchers call the art of Turkmen storytellers a one-man theater. The narrative is based on the general laws of drama: exposition, plot, development, climax, denouement. Most often, storytellers perform at weddings and other holidays, when the audience is in high spirits. Depending on the degree of interest shown by the listeners, the *bagshy* is free to stretch or shorten the epic narrative. The choice of plot and the detailed processing of individual episodes are also guided by the

<sup>3</sup> *Gyjak* – a three-string bowed musical instrument.

composition of the audience: among older listeners, the narrator will sing differently than among young people.

The emotional mood of the narrator is directly dependent on the level of "preparedness" of the listeners. Good *dessanches* have their own "admirers" (*goende*), who accompany the singers to their performances, at the necessary moment they cheer the performer with exclamations of "Sag bol!" ("Thank you!") or "Berekella!" ("Well done!"). After performing *tirme songs* aimed at attracting attention and warming up the voice of the narrator, the *dessanchy*, addressing the guests, announces his repertoire. According to the established tradition, the listeners themselves choose the *dessan*, which the narrator will have to perform that evening.

Despite the voluminous repertoire, the folk singer knows exactly the sequence and place of performance of each song. The narrator builds his performance according to the principle of emotional growth. At the beginning, *muhannes songs* are performed, sounding in a low register, primitive in intonation-melodic and structural terms. As the dramatic action unfolds, the nature of the sound of the song episodes becomes more and more saturated, their emotional tone rises. The climax of the performance is the final song. It is performed at the ultimate tessitura level and with the greatest emotional intensity.

So, based on a number of intonational and compositional characteristics, epic songs in *dessans* can be classified into three groups:

*initial songs (muhannes)* – sounding in a low register, with a range within a quart, undeveloped in a melodic sense;

*songs of the middle register (ortatap aydymlyary)* – diverse in terms of melody and composition, with a wide range and active dynamic development;

the *final song (jemleiji aydymy)* is emotionally rich, representing the culmination of the whole work and the final *dessan* [13, 75].

This order of succession, typical for most of the epic genres of the Turkmens, indicates the use of the laws of musical dramaturgy in the art of singer-narrators.

The tradition of mentorship continues to this day. With the opening of educational institutions and the Department of "The Art of Bagshy" at the Turkmen National Conservatory, mentoring traditions received a new content. For five years, young musicians have been studying singing and instrumental skills, adopting the tradition from the hands of a mentor. After completing their studies, *bagshy* students receive a state diploma and the traditional blessing of mentors.

## V. GENRE VARIETIES OF THE EPIC HERITAGE OF TURKMENS

The formation of genre varieties of the epic heritage in Turkmen culture took place in parallel with the process of formation of various types of oral tradition

bearers. In the past, professional readers – *ravylar*, *hapyzlar*, *ashiklar*, *kyssachylar* – in a beautiful voice, without songs, singsongly read parts of poetry and recited prose sections of legends. Starting from the 15<sup>th</sup> century, *bagshy* became the main figure in the musical culture of Turkmens.

The classification of works in the repertoire of the Turkmen *bagshy-dessanchy* reveals the following varieties:

1. Monumental heroic cycles.
2. Folk *dessans* and author's poems.
3. Ancient legends with music.
4. Musical and poetic transcriptions of poets and thinkers.

The first group includes the many-part heroic epics "Gorkut ata" and "Gorogly". "Along with lyricism and drama, epic is one of the main genres of narrative fiction, which is characterized by the reproduction of an action that unfolds in space and time, in the course of events in the life of characters" [18, 5]. The heroic epic impresses with its multi-layered events and episodes, its monumentality. It consists of a number of chapters, the so-called *shah*, united by a common idea. Some of the characters, for example, Gorogly himself, his wife Aga-Yunus, adopted son Ovez, horse Gyrat, brave men Sapar Kose, Khandan Batyr, Dyalı Myatel, enemies of the hero Hunkar, Reyhan, Leke and others are participants in many chapters of the epic.

The tradition of performing the epic "Gorkut ata" existed in Turkmenistan in the 30s of the twentieth century. This is evidenced by the records of 16 chapters of the legend, collected by the folklorist *Ata Rakhmanov* from the Turkmens of the *Chovdur tribe*. *Chovdur bagshy* still reproduce stories about Gorkut, but in the form of legends, without singing, which indicates the disappearance of the living tradition of performing the epic cycle "Gorkut ata".

At present, the central genre of the epic heritage of the Turkmens is the epic "Gorogly". Its performance is widely demanded in all regions of Turkmenistan. The starting point for the creation of a folk epic was a historical fact, the nature of which was inevitably subject to change. The people, being at the same time the main character and spectator, wishing for ever new adventures and heroic deeds, themselves led to changes in the content and form of the epic: changes occurred during the story of storytellers who could add episodes, complicate the text and introduce old or new songs into it and cliché.

The formation of the *dessan* genre in the Turkmen heritage dates back to a later time. This is the main genre in folklore and literature, in the plot of which the processing of fairy tales, legends and legends is most often used. The word "dessan" is of Persian origin, in Turkmen literature it is used in several meanings: it means a legend, a story in verse and prose, a fabulously

romantic story, a lyrical epic poem, a love story, a folk (anonymous) novel, a heroic and adventurous work; often epic in general is called *dessan*" [11, 49].

The epic form that has existed since ancient times in Turkic literature, combining poetry and prose in one work, "is not a feature of the exclusively Turkic tradition. In *Sanskrit*, there is the word *champu*, it means an epic in which prose alternates with poetry. Prose, interspersed with passages of poetry, is also a form of the ancient *Irish sagas*" [21, 121].

In contrast to the ideological content of the epic "Gorogly", which is dominated by heroic motives associated with the protection of the family, tribe, native land, in most Turkmen *dessans* the motives are fairy-adventure, associated with the search for a beloved. With an unchanged structure, the plots of *dessans* can be love-lyrical, fairy-tale-fantastic, heroic, realistic, religious, where each subspecies has its branches [28, 38].

According to the nature of the plot, the researchers group the *dessans* into two groups: *Turkmen-Oguz* ("Shasenem and Garyp", "Asli and Kerem", "Zohre and Tahyr", "Sayat and Hemra"), and *dessans, the origins of which lie in Persian literature* ("Leyli and Medjnun", "Gul and Senuber", "Hurlyukga and Hemra", "Yusup and Ahmet") [12, 68]. According to the type of creativity, *dessans* are classified into folk-poetic and individual (author's poems). Local fairy tales and legends are reflected in the plots of folk poetic *dessans*. Author's *dessans* were created based on stories from world literature. In terms of artistic and expressive means, all groups of *dessans* are close to each other.

Unlike the epic, conflicts are significantly transformed in *dessans*, more attention is paid to the images of heroes, song fragments are saturated with emotional expressiveness. In a number of *dessans*, the heroes act as *bagshy*, which speaks of the love of Turkmens for their folk performers. Such, for example, are the legends "Sayat and Hemra", "Hurlyukga and Hemra", "Shasenem and Garyp", "Yusup and Ahmet". A talented singer is the protagonist of the epic "Gorogly", his songs are organically woven into the fabric of the narrative. Among the Turkmen legends, the *dessan* "Nedjep oglan" stands apart – a kind of autobiography of a folk musician, which describes the path of a young man who wished to become a *bagshy*.

The most ancient genre in the repertoire of *bagshy-dessanchy* is the genre of *legend with music*. Widespread in all performing schools, this genre gained the greatest popularity in Mary. The fulfillment of the legend here is a characteristic and ubiquitous phenomenon. Even though they are not narrators, the musicians of the Mary school have a number of legends in their repertoire, in which the narration alternates with songs and instrumental fragments: "Darayi donly", "Jeren bokushi", "Uzuklar", "Kepderi", "Goch egren".

The genre of *transcription of the works of classical poets* appeared relatively recently, but is perceived by listeners with great enthusiasm. The depth and philosophical content of the poetic heritage of the great thinkers of the past – *Hoja Ahmed Yasawi*, *Abdurakhman Jami*, *Alishir Novai*, *Magtymguly* – are not always clear to the modern listener and require a separate explanation. *Bagshy* "decipher" poetic works, focusing on the idea hidden in the works of Turkmen classics. The explanation is conducted in a recitative manner and invariably ends with a song. *Magtymguly's* poetic heritage is an inexhaustible source of inspiration for folk storytellers. Today, the explanation of the poetic works of classical poets has become a tradition and has taken shape in the genre of musical and poetic transcriptions.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Thus, the presented materials reveal the panorama of the formation of the epic heritage of the Turkmens. Associated in their genesis with ritual creativity, epic genres have been formed over thousands of years.

The repertoire of modern Turkmen *dessanchy* includes various genres: these are the legends about Gorkut and Gorogly, huge in length and known to the entire Turkic-speaking world; these are both folk and author's *dessans*; genres of musical and poetic transcriptions; as well as legends with music, the distribution area of which coincides with the boundaries of the residence of one ethnic group.

Dozens of talented storytellers polished and improved the inherent genetic and cultural potential of the Turkmen people with their inspired art. Thanks to the unique art of epic storytellers, the ancient tradition of *Oguz ozans*, passed down from generation to generation, lives on today. Occupying a strong place in the repertoire of folk singers of all performing styles, these genres are enriched and improved.

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