

REVIEW

**By Assoc. Prof. Galina Lozanova, PhD,
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Bulgarian Academy of Sciences,
Member of the Academic Jury in the Competition for the Academic Position of
“Associate Professor” at Shumen University “Episcop Konstantin Preslavsky”
Under Higher Education Area: 2. Humanities, Professional Field: 2.1. Philology
(Folklore Studies – Turkish Folklore and Intercultural Communication),
Announced in State Gazette Issue No 4 of 14.01.2020,
On the Works of the Candidate Senior Assistant Nevrie Chufadar, PhD**

Dr. Nevrie Chufadar is the only candidate in the competition for the Academic position of “Associate Professor” announced by Shumen University “Episcop Konstantin Preslavsky” for the needs of the Department of Turkish Language and Literature at the Faculty of Humanities. She was born on December 22, 1968 in Targovishte. She was a student at the Faculty of Philology at the Shumen University “Episcop Konstantin Preslavsky” from 1993 to 1999 r. and after six years of education N. Chufadar received her Master’s degree in Turkish and Russian Philology. In the period from 2005 to 2010 she was a regular post-graduate student in Folklore Studies (Turkish Folklore) at the Department of Turkish Language and Literature of Shumen University “Episcop Konstantin Preslavsky” and on March, 8, 2013 successfully defended the doctoral thesis on the theme of “Mythologemes ‘Fate’ and ‘Death’ in the Epos of ‘The Book of Dece Korkut’” and was awarded the educational and academic degree “Doctor” (PhD) at the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum (BAS), Sofia. Dr N. Chufadar successfully participated in a competition for the academic position of “Senior Assistant” in Folklore Studies (Turkish Folklore), Intercultural Communication and History of Turkish Culture at the Faculty of Humanities of Shumen University in 2014. Since 2014 she is a lecturer at the same Department of Shumen University and teaches 4 compulsory, 5 elective and 1 optional subjects (“Ethnolinguistic Aspects of the Tourist Discourse”, “Introduction to the History, Geography and Culture of Turkey and Business Tourism”, “Practical Turkish Language”, “Turkish Folklore” (since 2018); “Intercultural Business Communication”, “Business Etiquette”, “Cultural Aspects of Turkish Ads Business”, “Intercultural Communication in Tourism”; “Culture Aspects of Tourist Routes of Bulgaria and Turkey” and “Symbols and Stereotypes of Turkish Folk Culture”), and lectures in eight of these courses are held in Turkish, in conformity with the Department’s profile. Besides Dr. Nevrie Chufadar has been an academic tutor of two graduate students and has been engaged in

numerous expert activities, as writing references for two university textbooks and 5 master theses; she is a member of the editorial boards of two international academic journals for Turkish language and culture and she is the author of 4 editorial references of papers for these journals and for editions of Shumen University.

Dr. Nevrie Chufadar entered the competition for the academic position of “Associate Professor” by submitting: **I. Two monographs**, the first being published on the basis of her successfully defended thesis for the educational and academic degree “Doctor” (PhD) (*Mythologemes “Fate” and “Death” in the Epos of “The Book of Dede Korkut”*, University Publishing House “Episcop Konstantin Preslavsky”, Shumen, 2013, 326 pp., ISBN 978-954-577-791-2), and the second book (*Fantastic Elements in Kyoroglu Destans*, University Publishing House “Episcop Konstantin Preslavsky”, Shumen, 2019, 192 pp., ISBN: 978-619-201-339-4) was represented as a habilitation work; **II. Two large papers (studii)**, one of them in cooperation, and **III. Articles** (in total 14, one of them in cooperation), focused mainly on different aspects and problems of Turkish epic tradition, or, more generally – on Turkish culture and society. The publications submitted by Dr. Chufadar fully cover National minimum required by the Law of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria for the occupation of the academic position “Associate Professor”.

The habilitation monograph of Dr. Nevrie Chufadar, *Fantastic Elements in Kyoroglu Destans* (2019) is the most important among publications, submitted for the competition. It is devoted to origins, semantics and functions of fantastic elements in the *destans* of Kyoroglu – one of the most popular characters in the epic of Turkic peoples, a well-known champion of social justice, a singer and a poet. At the same time, as the author has emphasized, the epic plots of *destans* “do not result from the creativity of a single culture”. They have been spread in different variants in a broad ethno-cultural area among nations of different ethnic origins and of different religions – Turks, Azerbaijanians, Armenians, Georgians, Kurds, Gagauz; the *destans* of Kyoroglu are also known among North Caucasian peoples, in North Iran, and also among Turkomans, Uzbeks, Kazahs and Tadjiks of Central Asia, and Tatar population of Siberia. The theme of the study is innovative for Bulgarian Folklore Studies, as there are practically no publications on the exploits of this epic hero, except for the early book of the founder of Turkish Folklore Studies in our country, Riza Mollov, “The Well-known Kyoroglu”; and generally, studies on Turkish epic tradition are scanty. That is why I would like to stress on one of the very important achievements of Dr. Nevrie Chufadar – she has made efforts during her fieldwork to trace and to gather evidence of plots (though sometimes rather fragmentary) of Kyoroglu in the oral tradition and memory of Turks in North-East Bulgaria,

and folk interpretations of his character. (The issue is discussed in the paper III.10. – “Past, Present and Future of Studies on the Stories of Kyoroglu in Bulgaria (Analysis of Folk Stories of Kyoroglu in North-Eastern parts of Bulgaria)”, published in 2017 in Turkish). The efforts of Dr. Chufadar in Turkish Folklore Studies deserve even more respect as the academic interest to classical Folklore Studies recently has threateningly lost grounds before studies of contemporary processes, identity construction, new religious movements, migrations, reassessment and uses of cultural heritage, etc.

The book is well-structured and consists of an introduction, four chapters and afterword (conclusions).

In the “Introduction” of the monograph are presented the subject of the study, the theoretical background, literary and documentary sources used by the author. The aim of Dr. Chufadar was to reveal mythical and religious roots of fantastic elements in the *destans* of Kyoroglu in the context of the mythical picture of the world and to trace shared motifs, characters and *topoi* of Turkish epic tradition and fairy tales. To achieve her aims N. Chufadar had to get into the swing of a broad chronological span of time and to use interdisciplinary or theory-of-culture approaches with elements of linguistic, semiotic analyses and hermeneutics.

The first chapter of the monograph (“Epic stories of Kyoroglu and the time of their origins”) is centered on several problems. First, the *destan* is defined as a syncretic musical-poetic epic genre and is made a detailed review on the history of studies on Kyoroglu epic and academic opinions on the time and the historical and political milieu of its formation, and efforts to unveil the historical prototype of the epic character. Finally, the comparative analyses of different epic versions lead to the confirmation of the wide-spread academic opinion that the *destans* most probably appeared during the life-time of Kyoroglu, or, immediately after his death, and the formation of the epic (the “eastern version”) took place in Azerbaijan and Asia Minor (in Eastern Anatolia). The Central Asia version has developed independently, while Caucasian and Middle-Eastern variants of the epic (Turkish, Kurdish, Georgian, Armenian, etc.) had derived from the Azerbaijanian version. Second, in the chapter are presented also typological characteristics of the *destans* and the “heroic” tale, their common and different traits, as well interrelations between these genres.

The second chapter of the book (“Shamanistic myths as a source of fantastic elements in the *destans* of Kyoroglu”) is devoted to the proper characteristic of the epic hero. A linguistic and semantic analysis is made of his different names and titles; motif versions about his miraculous birth and time-and-space frames of the plot (places where Kyoroglu lives in, or, moves around) are also analyzed in detail on the lines of their semantic meanings and specific

functions. A special attention is given to the functions of the helper-horse and hero's attributes (the sword, the mirror, the musical instrument *kobuz*), outlined by N. Chufadar in the context of Turkic mythological picture of the world and shamanistic beliefs, and according to their functions in hero's initiation as a shaman. In some of the texts cited there is evidence of his connections with mystic Sufi brotherhoods (for example, with wandering *kalandari* dervishes) which have been properly analyzed.

In the third chapter – “Syncretism of fantastic elements and symbols in the collective consciousness of epos creators (Tengrism, Shamanism, Manicheanism, Islam, fairy tale)” N. Chufadar has delineated epic elements that belong to different religious systems and have historically – at different periods – influenced the worldview of Turkic peoples. She has proved that Islamic elements have been present in all epic text versions – however, refracted through the prism of the fairy-tale genre. The influence of Shiite Islam is especially tangible, as it is evidenced by the anti-Ottoman trends of Kyoroglu's exploits and in the presence of the character of Hazreti Ali who is simultaneously hero's antagonist, his “magic” helper and patron during the initiation ritual. In the next part of the chapter N. Chufadar analyzes peculiarities of the Turkic heroic (*bahadur*) tale – a *destan*-plot based subgenre of the fairy tale, which has most probably originated after the Islamization of Turks and after the disappearance of traditions of musical-poetic performance of epos. The main motifs in different versions of Kyoroglu *destans* have been analyzed along the lines of two structural centers of the heroic fairy tale: hero's journey to the other world (or, realm of the dead), and the fairy-tale space-and-time dimensions. An important contribution of the work is the comparison of shared characters in Turkic epic and fairy tale traditions, and especially of the popular Bald-Boy (Keloglan).

And the last, the fourth chapter of the monograph (“The horrible and the comic in sacred oppositions”) is focused on analyses of oppositions and competitions (verbal and non-verbal) of Kyoroglu and anthropomorphic mythical creatures – Peri, Div, and even Hazreti Ali (whom Kyoroglu initially fails to recognize), – oppositions that are structured as sacred communication. N. Chufadar has paid special attention on the cathartic effect of the epic plot and the transition from ‘the horrible’ to ‘the comic’, achieved by conventional fairy-tale techniques, as demonstrative deviation from social norms, breach of stereotypes and language play. Kyoroglu himself displays unusual cleverness and ingenuity, he disguises to temporarily change his heroic status and behaves in a way that seems illogical in the real world but is fully consistent with the fairy-tale logic.

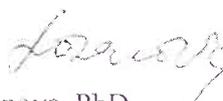
In the “Conclusion” of the book N. Chufadar has delineated general conclusions of her work. She believes that fantastic motifs and elements in epic stories of Kyoroglu are rooted in the Turkic ethno-cultural space with its mythological Shamanistic worldview, interlaced with Islamic belief. The author is inclined also to trace – especially in the eastern version of the *destans* – some Manichean influence. But however, the main source of fantastic, in her opinion, is due to the similarity of Kyoroglu *destans* and the Turkic fairy (heroic) tale and their shared common plot-structure elements, common *topoi* and characters. The ultimate conclusion of the monograph is that Kyoroglu epic belongs to the world treasury of folklore masterpieces because of its “social ideas of defending the downtrodden people and the formation of high moral virtues through the revitalization of traditional values of Turkic peoples”.

Finally, I want to emphasize that the book of N. Chufadar is the first complex investigation of Kyoroglu epic in Bulgaria. The opulence of new folk texts, well-organized and representative of different fantastic elements, are a valuable contribution to Bulgarian Folklore Studies and Turkology. The monograph has all the necessary qualities of a habilitation work and its achievements are well represented in author’s “Reference for original academic contributions”.

The publication of the second and the third group (II: 1–2 and III: 1–14) add to the favorable impression that Dr. Nevrie Chufadar is a knowledgeable, highly industrious and perspective researcher of Turkish folk tradition (oral and literary). An additional evidence of her qualities is candidate’s participation in international and national research projects and academic fora, her lecturing at the university and positions held in the boards of international academic editions. That is why I am convinced to recommend the Academic Jury to vote positively Dr. Nevrie Chufadar for the academic position “Associate Professor” at Shumen University “Episkop Konstantin Preslavsky”.

May, 25, 2020.

Sofia


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