

CONSTRAINTS ON POETIC LICENCE IN THE QUTADĠU BİLİĠ :
THE CONVERB AND AORIST VOWELS ¹

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In Azeri Turkish, the opposition *atır* : *atar* bears the weight of a full-fledged grammatical (aspect) category. Not so in Turkey-Turkish: A foreigner uttering the sentence *Beni kim görer?* instead of *Beni kim görür?* 'Who would see me?' would no doubt be understood correctly, although having clearly violated a strict norm of the language. The aorist vowels may occasionally be necessary for disambiguation: *kuş* would be subject in *Kuş dama konar mı?* but object in the impersonal *Kuş dama konur mu?* Somebody who says *yap-ıl-ar* instead of *yapılır* (in analogy to *yapar*, say) might be understood as having meant *yapı+lar* 'the buildings', or as having constructed the aorist of a new denominal verb *yapı+la-*, which the hearer may think he would need to learn. But then, in this case, an ambiguous context is hard to think of.

In Old Turkic, both the vowel of the aorist and that of the converb (as a rule equal to the former) bear very little functional load, obviously varying like in Turkey-Turkish. Whatever grammatical content different converb/aorist forms may have had in Proto-Turkic, this was already lost by the time of the earliest existing texts. The semantic emptiness of the converb/aorist vowel must have been encouraged, if not caused, by the metanalysis of verbs which retained an original stem vowel in these forms, as *barı-r* > *bar-ır* and *käli-r* > *käl-ır*². But perhaps, things were the other way around: Perhaps the reason that the original vowel was retained *here* was the fact that the content of the other (originally morphological) converb/aorist vowels had already become empty.

1 Practically all of the Qutadġu Bilig material for this paper was generously handed over to me by Prof. G. Doerfer; I am deeply grateful to him for this and for other reasons. During work on this paper, I was holder of an Alexander von Humboldt fellowship.

2 See Erdal, 1979a : 111 ff.

One would want to set up the hypothesis that rules and norms violated by *poetic licence* tend to be of this type: The poet who wrote the line *As those move easiest who have learned to dance* instead of 'As those move most easily who have learned to dance' used an adjective instead of an adverb, but caused no difficulty to understanding. This happens, in any case, with the converb and aorist vowels of the Qutadğu Bilig. Rhyme and meter have been among the domains of poetic licence everywhere. When attempting to determine vowel length by meter in this text, scholars have been trying to solve one equation with two unknowns: The question of how much vowel length is in fact present in Qarakhanid Turkish on the one hand, and the extent to which Yūsuf modifies this by poetic licence on the other. The liberties which the poet permits himself for the sake of assonance are much easier to determine³, but have not yet been investigated. As far as the situation of the converb and aorist vowels in this matter is concerned, all that needs to be done is to determine first the place of Yūsuf in the general tendencies of this aspect of Turkish grammar, and then the well-observable deviations which assonance brought about in his text.

Four points of reference are discernible in the early development of converb and aorist vowels :

- A) The classical Old Turkic system, which Erdal, 1979a tries to describe and explain⁴.
- B) Change of the converb and aorist vowel of the *t*-causative from /I/ to /U/ and of *ögir*- 'to rejoice' from /ä/ to /ü/, as documented in Erdal, 1979b: 153-55.
- C) The stage corresponding, more or less, to Yūsuf's work.
- D) The converb and aorist vowel situation in the latest Uigur texts, corresponding to Mongol rule.

³ One difficulty and source of doubt is the vocative particle *ä/a*, which is added also to inflected verb forms. Among them is the imperative, which is thus made to look like the converb. In 3937, for instance, both lines end in this particle, as the translation (Arat, 1974: 285) also shows :

bu aymış sözüüm çm ürür mü körä
çm ärsä hava bas bürü käl tura

As Clauson, 1972: 736 remarks, Yūsuf constantly uses the imperative *kör* 'See!' almost meaninglessly, to supply a syllable in a verse which would otherwise lack one, in 1727, 5445 etc., *kör-ä* is used in this manner at the end of the verse, in 5453 even at the end of both verses of a couplet. Such practices are scorned by modern taste; otherwise, as we shall see, Yūsuf is much less the slave of form.

⁴ Some aberrant forms like *käs-ü* and *ter-ü* found in the Moyun Çor inscription are either dialect features or particularly archaic, or misreadings.

The movement from stage C to stage D is reflected in the history of the text of the QB, as will appear below⁵.

Before I discuss that, however, a word will be in order concerning a misunderstanding about converbs. Some verbs seem to be connected with some indeclinables in such a way that the latter seem to consist of the stem of the former plus a vowel. This vowel is often not the one found in the converb and the aorist. Such cases are the conjunctions *azu* 'or', *udu* 'then' and *taq* 'and' with the verbs *az-* 'to go astray', the base of *udun-* and *uduz-* found first in the QB⁶ and *taq-* 'to fasten on to'; the adverbs *örü* 'up' and *qudu* (thus !) 'down' and *tägrä* 'around' with *ör-* 'to rise, *qod-* 'to put' and the hypothetical **tägir-*; finally the adjective *alqo* 'all' with *alq-* 'to waste, destroy'. Converbs are freely productive gerunds implying a particular syntactic setting. Even assuming that the above connections are semantically sound, it cannot be determined whether a) these particles are prehistoric converb forms which, being remnants, are irrelevant to the living system, or b) whether they are remains of altogether different classes of verbal derivatives. Yet, many studies concerned have, up till now, listed them among the converbs, often without so much as a word concerning their deviance. Here they will be disregarded. A split as the one postulated in alternative a) occurred in the language of the QB between *täg-* 'to reach' and *tägi* 'up to, until'. The converb of the former (to be discussed again below) is *tägä*, while the postposition *tägi*, formerly no doubt the converb of *täg-i(r)*, has remained as it is⁷.

The converb and aorist vowel in the QB is /U/ or /A/ for polysyllables and /A/, /U/ or /I/ for monosyllables⁸. With polysyllables, /U/ is unmarked: As in Old Turkic⁹, /A/ appears only with polysyllabic verbs ending in /K/ or /r/. Most of them belong to one of the following formations: +XK⁻¹⁰ (as *birik-*, *çarıq-*), -sXK- (as *alsıq-*, *arsıq-*, *ursıq-*),

5. For the constitution of the text I follow the sound guidelines set out by Dankoff, 1979.

6. Probably a back-formation.

7. Once, in 5872, it even appears as *tägü*.

8. *ög(i)r-ir* 'oyalamak' in Arat, 1979: 356 is to be analysed as *ügri-r*; cf. Clauson, 1972: 114. Other errors which have crept into the index in this matter include *öldürür* in 2292 (all three mss.) and *äymänür* in 5069 (all three mss.), and not with '-er', i.e. -är, as listed.

9. See Erdal, 1979a: 106.

10. *östik-* another .K-Ar verb in the QB, apparently really comes from *öz-tik-*, as MK says; *ahq-* may be an -XK- verb, if it can be connected with *ahg* ('to become

+*KIr-* (*bürkir-/büwkir-*) and +*Ar-*. Like in Old Turkic¹¹, this latter formation has /A/ in the converb and aorist if the verb ends in. *Ur-* (*bül-gür-är, qadgur-ar*) but /U/ if it ends in. *Ar-* (*qarar-ur*). A number of opaque verbs, like *adur-*, *ävür-*¹², *qadur-*, *ögür-*, *tälür-* and *yalvar-*, also have -*Ar* aorists both in Uigur and in the QB, for no reason I can see: *yügür-*, which is also opaque, has a /U/ as converb and aorist vowel both in Old Turkic and in our text. Such cases, where there is no functional load on the vowel opposition and not even a rule in sight, are obviously most prone to arbitrary variation. This happens with *ädür-* in two nearly adjacent couplets. 3536 b (all three mss.) :

+ — — / + — — / + — — / + —

ädürsä qaçar qaçsa ädürür seni And 3538 b (all three mss.) :

+ — — / + — — / + — — / + —

qah qaçsa andın ädürür seni

The meter is the obvious reason for the disappearance, in the first instance, of the vowel which is scanned as long in the second one. But why the change in the aorist vowel? The verb is attested consistently as *edürür* in Man I 35,7, Suv 364, 14 and MK (= Kaşgari), *edürü* in BTT III 164. Assonance, in any case, cannot have caused this¹³. Curiously enough, Xaladj shows a similar distribution with bisyllabic stems, as Doerfer 1980: 40-41 shows: -*Ur* aorist when they remain bisyllabic, -*Ar* when they are syncopeated.

We pass on to monosyllabic verbs, about which more has to be said. The choice between /U/, /A/ and /I/ actually applies only to the aorist in this text, as *i/i* is no longer found in converbs. The verbs with /I/ are the same as in Old Turkic: *käl-*, *qal-*, *al-*, *bar-*, *bil-* and *täg-*. The converbs

bad' and 'bad'). In this paper, capitals mark archphonemes (/I/ = /i/i/, /X/ = /i/i/ü/u/ etc.), with the exception of /K G/, which are phonemes. ' marks morpheme chopping, ' verbal, '+' nominal junction. The abbreviations of Old Turkic text names are the usual ones.

11 See Erdal, 1979a: 106-7.

12 Not in a single place is there consensus on *ävürür*, although all mss. do have it; consensus on *ävürür*, however, is found several times. It should be investigated whether this fluctuation in the mss. is not linked to the behavior of *edür-* described below.

13 Such irregularities can, of course, always be ascribed to the copyist of the archetype, or to any one preceding him.

of the first five always show up with *-U*: *kälü*, *qalu*, *alu*, *baru* and *bilü*. *täg-* is *sui generis* because it does not end in a continuant or a dental, and we shall return to it below: Its converb is *tägä*. The converb forms of these verbs have different histories in Uigur: **bilü* and **qalü* are never attested¹⁴, and I know of no converb of *qal-* before our text. Really verbal *tägi* also remains unfindable. *bilü* then steps in for the absent **bilü*, in texts which otherwise stick to *alü*, *kälü* and *barü* (as partially documented in Erdal, 1979b: 156). *alu* appears in texts which are later than the QB (ib. 158) and *tägä* turns up in the Avadāna text from the Mongol period published by Shōgaito. The QB text also shows a slight tendency towards the aorist forms corresponding to these late converbs in their vowels, even outside assonance situations: In three adjacent instances, all three mss. have *bilür*¹⁵; there is consensus on this form also in 391 and 3973. In the verse prologue (which is later than the original) there are several instances of *-Ur* instead of *-Ir* without rhyme or assonance: *barur* in 76, *kälür barur* in 37. Single mss. also show the /U/ forms. Here are the percentages (to the nearest integer) of *-Ur* aorists of verbs otherwise getting *-Ir*, where not justified by assonance, as against the aorists in general :

	alur	qalur	barur	kälür	bilür	tägär
ms. A	6 %	7 %	14 %	18 %	25 %	19 %
ms. B	3 %	4 %	7 %	3 %	7 %	6 %
ms. C	0	1 %	1 %	2 %	5 %	3 %

A, the latest ms., has the greatest percentage of late forms, as expected: For each verb, it has more than the two other mss. taken together. The surprise is C which, although considered to be younger than B¹⁶, is more conservative as far as the aorist vowel is concerned. Since all three mss. do have such *-Ur* forms, the rare instances of consensus on them can be considered coincidental: They may not even have to be

14 The common *qalısız* probably comes from **qalıssız* : +sXz is added only to nouns; for the development $V\text{ss}V > V\text{s}V$ cf. *qavıř-sar*, written $q\ b^1\ s^1\ r^1$ in Toñ 12. According to Nauta, 1969: 309, *tosıq* (KT and BQ; actually *tosuq*) is also an example for $-s\text{ř-} > -\text{ss-}$, being from *toř-*.

15 1932, 1939 and 2223; one fancies that, in this stretch, a copyist relegated the task to an apprentice.

16 See Dankoff, 1979: 89.

ascribed to the archetype. Interestingly, the highest percentages appear with *bil-*, which had a /U/ converb already in good Uigur texts. These forms also have parallels elsewhere: *kälür*, *abur* and *bilür* are found in MK also without rhyme, and in general represent stage D: *bilür* in BTT III and economical documents of the Mongol period, *tägür* in TT VII 28.

The monosyllabic verbs having /U/ as standard converb and aorist vowel all end in /l r n d t/, with the exception of *ay-* and *qorq-*¹⁷, to which we shall return below. They are *bol-*, *bul-*, *ol-*, *qıl-*, *öl-*, *tol-*, *qol-*, *ıl-* and *yu-l-*; *kir-*, *tur-*, *ür-*, *ber-*, *kör-* and *ür-*; *yan-* 'to threaten'¹⁸; *ıd-* and *qod-* and, finally, *elt-* and *yat-*. These kept the aorist and converb vowel they had in Old Turkic.¹⁹ *täg-*, *ay-* and *qorq-* differed from the verbs listed above by the fact that their final consonant was not among the ones appearing at the end of those verb formatives which demanded /U/ (or /I/) as converb and aorist vowel (i.e. -Xl-, +Ad- etc.). Therefore, they were under analogical pressure from the monosyllabic verbs having /A/ as converb and aorist vowel, which were also the most numerous ones. It is this pressure that brought about *tägä* as the converb of *täg-* instead of *tägü* (like the other -Ir verbs); for this reason it was that *qorq-* retained its vowel in *qorqu* but succumbed to analogy in *qorqu* but succumbed to analogy in *qorqar*. *ay-u(r)* resisted, no doubt because of the great frequency of its occurrence. On the other hand, ms. A and to a much lesser extent B also showed a tendency towards *körür*: 16 % in A, 3 % in B. Then there is, only in A, *ölür* and *qodar* (both 10 %). These three verbs appear in this ms. in the usual Middle Turkic forms (excluding Ottoman Turkish): See Doerfer, 1980: 43. In a few cases, assonance also brings about a passage from -U(r) to -A(r), to be discussed below.

The converb and aorist vowel of all the monosyllabic verbs not listed above is /A/. This is also prone to assonantal assimilation, making these verbs temporarily change over to the -U(r) class.

Influence of parallelism and assonance on the converb and aorist vowels starts with the inscriptions. In KT N 1 and BQ E 29, the aorist of *bar-* in *ärür barur ärklü* has been influenced by *ärür*: /ı/ was the inherited aorist vowel here, and remained steadfast for centuries. The same

17 For some reason, *säcü* (148) and *sançu* (139) also appear, although *sança* is found in Höllen 103, *sançar* in TT VIII I and MK, and *säç-ä(r)* in the QB itself.

18 *yan-* 'to return' has -A(r).

19 *elt-i(r)* had changed within Uigur: See Erdal, 1979b: 154-56.

can be said about *yet-* in *öli yetü* (KT E 27 and 28 and twice BQ E 22), and about *qal-* in *yatu qalur*, Toñ 19²⁰. The vowel of the second converb in *aga tägilä* is no doubt influenced by the first, as polysyllables ending in /l/ otherwise never have /ä/ as converb vowel. In *vya basa umadın* (TT II B 74-5), parallelism helps *basa* resist the influence of *u-* described in Erdal, 1979a: 105-6, which is universal in Uigur. *yalvarur* in Irq B LIV, TT IV A 7²¹ and Suv 10, 15 should be explained through assonance with the near-synonym *ötünür*, *yalvaru* in ETS 13, 146 through end-of-verse parallelism with *tavranu*. Aorist parallelism is not absent either from popular verse quoted by MK. Just one example with *bular* instead of *bulur*:

*Uluqm tilär män
Tavarın yölär män
Tiläkni bular män
Yalqm añgar üplänür. (fol. 481).*

Such assimilation is very far from being universal, however. It does not come through in *bodunumın terü qwratı altım* in Moyun Çor N 5, for instance, on the one end of our temporal scale, nor in the first aorist in ETS 12, 37-39, at its other end, in a poem which otherwise shows final assonance throughout²²:

*öñgi körki oqşadıǵı anın yoq ärip
üküş tınlg yertinçülär antın bälğürär
öqvi yetvi öqmä yaruq top tolup ärip
üç ödki alqu tüzinlär mundın törünür*

That it allows assonance to influence the converb and aorist vowels is not a novel feature of the QB, then. What is new is the frequency of the phenomenon, as so often in matters of style and also in various other aspects of language change. What, then, does Yüsuf permit himself for the sake of assonance? We shall see that his behavior in this domain is linguistically quite explicable.

20 Examples for *qalur* in Old Turkic are listed in Erdal, 1979a: 112.

21 Actually, neither this, nor *yalvarar* a couple of lines further on, are really usable: The edition, apparently arbitrarily and uncritically, mixed the readings of several mss.

22 All four lines have 13 syllables. One cannot expect it to influence *-yUr*, which never had a variant *'-yAr'*.

Monosyllabic verbs with /U/ as converb and aorist vowel are rarely influenced by assonance: Only ten cases in the whole text, four among these in the couplet pattern

nägü ter üşitgil + — — kür är
 + — — + — — *yağsın urar*

Among the remaining six instances, one (*ayar // atar*) turns up in the verse prologue, which is not by Yūsuf; two (*ura* and *körä*) in the concluding didactic poem, in which 41 couplets are linked by assonance and alliteration: Not too much poetic licence for the circumstance. What remains is *körär // yüdür*, *yatar // yıqar* and *çıqar*, and *to-n-ar // ağar*, *inär* and *tnar*. With *tonar*, Yūsuf appears to have introduced a dialect form: MK II 27 says that it belonged to Ğuzz and Qıfçaq usage. If he wanted to save his assonance, the poet had a choice only as far as *körür > körär* (3391)²³ is concerned: Only in this case could he have changed *yüdür* to *yüdir*. But then, general pressure for *körür > körär*, mentioned on the previous page, may already have started building up.

The passage *A > U* with aorists and converbs of monosyllabic verbs in assonance positions is much more common than *U > A*, but is, in our text, limited to verbs ending in /n d t ʃ/. We find

qanar > qanur // berür
tnar > tnur // öür
ünär > ünür // turur; alur; yanur 'to threaten'; *bolur*
onar > onur // turur; ögränür; qavlanur; bolur; sanur; bulur
kädär > kädür // bädär-r
küdü > küdü // udu
küdär > küdür // turur
toda > todü // udu
todar > todur // qodur
yetü > yetü // teyü
tüşür > tüşür // bulğaşur,

some of these more than once. This phenomenon in the QB is not isolated either: MK quotes the two proverbs

eväk sinğäk sütkä tüşür (II 13, 23) and
kökkä sağursa yüzkä tüşür (II 81, 9),

23 *kürä-r* hardly fits the context.

which have no parallel word to influence them. As the aorist suffix *-r* had been replacing *-yUr*, *-Ur* may have come in for differentiation: *tüſä-r* is also attested in MK. Kāſgarī also has *küdiir* (written with *wāw*) in III 22, in a position which would lead us to expect assonance with *baqar* (written with *alif*). /n d t ʒ/ are phonemes found at the end of verb formatives which habitually have the converb and aorist vowel /U/; but then /l/ and /r/ are conspicuously absent from this list.

The aorist vowel /I/ is influenced by other words, but never itself brings about any assonantal changes. When *-Ir* changes, it is always changed to *-Ur*, *täg-* excepted: In assonance situations, *kälir* can stay as it is or become *kälür*; similarly *qalir* > *qalür*, *alir* > *alür*, *barir* > *barür* and *bilir* > *bilür*; *tägir*, on the other hand, is attested only as *tägür* when changed for the sake of assonance. The assonance rules /A/ > /U/ and /I/ > /U/ are to be applied simultaneously, as couplet 1394, for instance, shows: In it, *ünür* (< *ünär*) is in assonance with *alür* (< *alir*). We had found that the passage A > U with converb and aorist vowels happens only with /n d t ʒ/ stems and noted that temporary transfer from the *I*-class to the *U*-class is possible only with stems ending in /l r/. Through this complementary distribution, the degree of possible confusion is lessened: After /l r/, the underlying aorist vowel can only be /I/ or /U/, after /n d t ʒ/ only /A/ or /U/, a triple choice being excluded.

By limiting assonantal vowel shifts to /n d t ʒ l r/ stems, Yūsuf tends towards the introduction of phonetic rationality into the otherwise irrational distribution of the converb and aorist vowels: Whether mono- or polysyllabic, all stems ending in /n d t ʒ l r z/ could ideally get /U/ in their converb and aorist, all stems ending in /p v m s ʒ y G ŋg K/²⁴, on the other hand, /A/. The tendency of *tägir* towards *tägür* is in line with this structural goal, which, as far as I know, was never achieved.

We notice two things concerning the /I/ > /U/ shift: Firstly, the introduced vowels are exactly those found in the converbs. The second fact is actually linked to the first: With these verbs, the vowel /U/ was actually replacing /I/ in general usage²⁵. A coincidence is excluded:

24 With the exception of *ayu(r)*, which was maintained due to its high frequency.

25 In Middle Turkic, the replacement is complete (cf. Doerfer, 1980: 44). We were able to make a similar observation concerning the historical setting of *körür* > *körür* in the QB.

Rather, Yūsuf knew the forms which were coming up; he was being conservative in general, as befitted his subject matter, and permitting himself the 'modern', or perhaps colloquial, forms where esthetic considerations demanded it. For the sake of euphony, he took advantage of the low functional load which the converb and aorist vowels had to bear. This is no poetic licence in the sense of the petty rhymester, but realization of potentially natural diction, a selective outlet of analogical pressures already existing in the language.

Ali Nihad Tarlan wrote in the *TDED XIII* (1965): 8 «*San'atın gayesi güzele erişmektir. Fakat bu buluş mutlak değildir. Güzel telâkkisi zamanla değişir. Cemiyetin umumî temayülü muayyen bir zaman için bize bir mi'yar verir. Fakat bu ölçü de bütün istikrarsızlığına, bütün karpislerine rağmen bir vakıdır. Ve hiç şüphe yok ki, bu istikrarsız telâkinin bu vasfının istikrarlı bir kanunu vardır. Sebepler ne derece girift olursa olsun, içerisinde devamlı bir kanun seyrini sezmek imkânsızdır. Bu gün için hayâllerin mîmârîsi, kelimelerin kullanılış yerleri gibi hususiyetler ilmî usul dairesinde inceden inceye tedkik edilir ve istatistikler vücuda getirilirse, her asrın zevk mahiyetine yavaş yavaş nüfuz imkân dahiline girer.*» I have only tried to apply these wise remarks to one aspect of the *Kutadgu Bilig*; the reader may judge how much remains to be done to realize Prof. Tarlan's program.

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