In Azeri Turkish, the opposition atur : 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: küş would be subject in Küş dama konar mı? but object in the impersonal Küş dama konur mı? Somebody who says yap-ı-ar instead of yapıır (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 verb (as a rule equal to the former) bear very little functional load, obviously varying like in Turkey-Turkish. Whatever grammatical content different verb/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 verb/aorist vowel must have been encouraged, if not caused, by the metanalysis of verbs which retained an original stem vowel in these forms, as bar-i-r > bar-ı-r and kâli-i-r > kâli-ı-r. 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) verb/aorist vowels had already become empty.

1 Practically all of the Qutadgu 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 verb and aorist vowels of the Qutadgu 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 Qarakhânid Turkish on the one hand, and the extent to which Yûsuf modifies this by poetic licence on the other. The liberties which the poet permits himself for the sake of assonance are much easier to determine, but have not yet been investigated. As far as the situation of the verb and aorist vowels in this matter is concerned, all that needs to be done is to determine first the place of Yûsuf 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 verb and aorist vowels:

A) The classical Old Turkic system, which Erdal, 1979a tries to describe and explain.

B) Change of the verb and aorist vowel of the t- causative from /I/ to /U/ and of ögir- 'to rejoice' from /ü/ to /ü/, as documented in Erdal, 1979b: 153-55.

C) The stage corresponding, more or less, to Yûsuf's work.

D) The verb and aorist vowel situation in the latest Uigur texts, corresponding to Mongol rule.

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

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{bu aynu } & \text{sözüm } \text{çın } \text{ävir } \text{mi } \text{kärä}
\text{çın } \text{äräsä } \text{hava } \text{bas } \text{bärä } \text{käl } \text{tura}
\end{align*}
\]

As Clauson, 1972: 736 remarks, Yûsuf 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-ã 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, Yûsuf is much less the slave of form.

4 Some aberrant forms like ké-si and tér-ã 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 below.

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 asu ‘or’, uđu ‘then’ and taqi ‘and’ with the verbs az- ‘to go astray’, the base of uđum- and uđuz- found first in the QB and taq- ‘to fasten on to’; the adverbs őrüş ‘up’ and quůs (thus !) ‘down’ and tǎğrás ‘around’ with őr- ‘to rise, qođ- ‘to put’ and the hypothetical *tāğir-; 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 derivates. 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 tǎğ- ‘to reach’ and tǎği ‘up to, until’. The converb of the former (to be discussed again below) is tǎğā, while the post-position tǎği, formerly no doubt the converb of tǎğ-i(ř), has remained as it is.

The converb and aorist vowel in the QB is /U/ or /A/ for polysyllables and /A/, /U/ or /I/ for monosyllables* with polysyllables, /U/ is unmarked: As in Old Turkic*, /A/ appears only with polysyllabic verbs eding in /K/ or /r/. Most of them belong to one of the following formations: +XK-10 (as birik-, çawq-), -sXX- (as alsuq-, arsuq-, ursuq-),

5 For the constitution of the text I follow the sound guidelines set out by Dankoff, 1979.
6 This appears as tǎğû.
7 Once, in 5872, it even appears as tǎğû.
8 őğ([r]-)ir ‘oyalamak’ in Arat, 1979: 356 is to be analysed as őğri-r; cf. Clauson, 1972: 114. Other errors which have crept into the index in this matter include oltûrür in 2292 (all three ms.) and oymênür in 5069 (all three ms.), and not with ‘-er’, i.e. őr, as listed.
9 See Erdal, 1979a: 106.
10 östik- another -K-Ar verb in the QB, apparently really comes from őz-tık-, as MK says; alq- may be an -XX- verb, if it can be connected with alq (*to become
+Kr- (bürkär-/böökär-) and +Ar-. Like in Old Turkic\textsuperscript{11}, this latter formation has /A/ in the deverb and aorist if the verb ends in. Ur- (bül-gür-är, qađgür-är) but /U/ if it ends in. Ar- (qarar-ur). A number of opaque verbs, like adër-, üvär\textsuperscript{12}, qađär-, ogär-, tülımär- and yałvar-, also have -Ar aorists both in Uigur and in the QB, for no reason I can see: yūgür-\textsuperscript{11}, which is also opaque, has a /U/ as deverb 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 üdär- in two nearly adjacent couplets. 3536 b (all three mss.):

\[+-----/+-----/+-----/+----- \]

ādārsā qaçar qaçsa ādārār seni And 3538 b (all three mss.):

\[+-----/+-----/+-----/+----- \]

qaļ qaçsa andin ādārīr 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 edārār in Man I 35,7, Suv 364, 14 and MK (= Kāşgāri), edārū in BTT III 164. Assonance, in any case, cannot have caused this\textsuperscript{13}. 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 syncopated.

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/ is no longer found in deverbs. The verbs with /I/ are the same as in Old Turkic: kāl-, qal-, al-, bar-, bil- and tāg-. The deverbs

bad’ and ‘bad’). In this paper, capitals mark archphonemes (/I/ = /i/1/, /X/ = /i/1/1/1/1/1/1/1/, etc, with the exception of /K G/, which are phonemes. ‘ ’ marks morpheme chopping, ‘-’ verbal, ‘+’ nominal conjunction. The abbreviations of Old Turkic text names are the usual ones.

\textsuperscript{11} See Ertl, 1979a: 106-7.

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

\textsuperscript{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: külü, 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 verb is tägä. The verb forms of these verbs have different histories in Uigur: *bili and *qah are never attested ¹⁴, and I know of no verb of qel- before our text. Really verbal tägä also remains unfindable. bili then steps in for the absent *bili, in texts which otherwise stick to alt, külü and baru (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 Shōgaïto. The QB text also shows a slight tendency towards the aorist forms corresponding to these late verbs 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, külür baru 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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>alur</th>
<th>qalur</th>
<th>barur</th>
<th>kälüür</th>
<th>bilüür</th>
<th>tägäär</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ms. A</td>
<td>6 %</td>
<td>7 %</td>
<td>14 %</td>
<td>18 %</td>
<td>25 %</td>
<td>19 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ms. B</td>
<td>3 %</td>
<td>4 %</td>
<td>7 %</td>
<td>3 %</td>
<td>7 %</td>
<td>6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ms. C</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 %</td>
<td>1 %</td>
<td>2 %</td>
<td>5 %</td>
<td>3 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 B ¹⁶, 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 qalüus comes from *qalusus: *s-Xs is added only to nouns; for the development VgsV > VsV cf. gavš-sar, written q b₁ s₁ r₁ in Tof 12. According to Nauta, 1969: 309, tosq (KT and BQ; actually tosag) is also an example for -ss- > -ss-, being from toq-.

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/ verb already in good Uigur texts. These forms also have parallels elsewhere: biñur, abur and bitur are found in MK also without rhyme, and in general represent stage D: bitur in BTT III and economical documents of the Mongol period, täğär in TT VII 28.

The monosyllabic verbs having /U/ as standard verb and aorist vowel all end in /r n d t/, with the exception of ay- and qorq-17, to which we shall return below. They are bol-, bul-, ol-, qul-, ol-, tol-, qol-, ul- and yu-l-; bir-, tur-, är-, ber-, kör- and iyur; yan- 'to threaten'18; id- and qođ- and, finally, eilt- and yat-. These kept the aorist and verb vowel they had in Old Turkic.19 tæg-, 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 formative which demanded /U/ (or /I/) as verb and aorist vowel (i.e. -xl-, +Ad- etc.). Therefore, they were under analogical pressure from the monosyllabic verbs having /A/ as verb and aorist vowel, which were also the most numerous ones. It is this pressure that brought about tægï as the verb of tæg- instead of tægï (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, biłär and qođar (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 verb 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 verb and aorist vowels starts with the inscriptions. In KT N 1 and BQ E 29, the aorist of bar- in ärür barur ärkilii has been influenced by ärür: /i/ was the inherited aorist vowel here, and remained steadfast for centuries. The same

17 For some reason, sœçi (148) and sançu (139) also appear, although sançu is found in Höllen 103, sançar in TT VIII I and MK, and sœç-ü(r) in the QB itself.
18 yan- 'to return' has -A(r).
19 eilt-ü(r) had changed within Uigur: See Erdal, 1979b: 154-56.
can be said about yet- in ölü yeti (KT E 27 and 28 and twice BQ E 22), and about qal- in yatu qalur, Töf 190. The vowel of the second verb in ağa tığılida is no doubt influenced by the first, as polysyllables ending in /l/ otherwise never have /æ/ as a verb vowel. In yci basa umadan (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 İrq B LIV, TT IV A 721 and Suv 10, 15 should be explained through assonance with the near-synonym ötüünür, yalvaru in ETŞ 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:

Uluğm tilür män
Tavran yolur män
Tilakmi bular män
Yulğm aüşar unfold (fol. 481).

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

öği körki olaşağı annu yoq uşur
üçüz tinliq yertiqülür antin bülqürür
öçü yelti öçmä yaruq top tolup uşur
üç ödki ağiq tüszinlür munda törünür

That it allows assonance to influence the verb 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

\[ \text{nâgû ter} \quad \text{aşîtgil} \quad + \quad - \quad - \quad \text{kûr ûr} \]
\[ + \quad - \quad + \quad - \quad \text{yasvin ûrûr} \]

Among the remaining six instances, one (ayar // atar) turns up in the verse prologue, which is not by Yusuf; two (ura and kûrû) 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 kûrûr // yûdûr, yatar // yûgar and çgar, and to-n-ar // asgar, inûr and tenûr. With tenûr, Yusuf appears to have introduced a dialect form: MK II 27 says that it belonged to Guzz and Qifçaq usage. If he wanted to save his assonance, the poet had a choice only as far as kûrûr > kûrûr (3391)\(^{23}\) is concerned: Only in this case could he have changed yûdûr to yûdûr. But then, general pressure for kûrûr > kûrûr, mentioned on the previous page, may already have started building up.

The passage A > U with aorists and convorbal 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 s/. We find

\[ qanar > qanûr // \text{berûr} \]
\[ tunar > tunûr // \text{öbûr} \]
\[ ünûr > ünûr // \text{turûr; alûr}; yanûr ‘to threaten’; bolûr \]
\[ onûr > onûr // \text{turûr; ûgrûnûr; çavlanûr; bolûr; sanûr; bulûr} \]
\[ küdûr > küdûr // \text{bûdû-r} \]
\[ küdû > küdû // \text{udu} \]
\[ küdûr > küdûr // \text{turûr} \]
\[ toda > todu // \text{udu} \]
\[ todûr > todûr // \text{godûr} \]
\[ yetû > yetû // \text{teyû} \]
\[ tüsûr > tüsûr // \text{bulûşûr}, \]

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

\[ \text{evûk sîxûk sûûkà tûsûr (II 13, 23)} \quad \text{and} \]
\[ \text{kûkkû saûrsa yûsûkà tûsûr (II 81, 9),} \]

\[ ^{23} \text{kûrû-r hardly fits the context.} \]
which have no parallel word to influence them. As the aorist suffix -r had been replacing -yUr, -Ur may have come in for differentiation: tüşü-r is also attested in MK. Kasgarı also has küdür (written with waw) in III 22, in a position which would lead us to expect assonance with baqar (written with alif). /n d t s/ are phonemes found at the end of verb formatsive 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 asonantal changes. When -Ir changes, it is always changed to -Ur, tág- excepted: In assonance situations, k栗ur can stay as it is or become k栗ur; similarly qalur > qalur, aļur > aļur, barur > barur and bilur > bilur; t栗ir, on the other hand, is attested only as t栗ur 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, ünur < ünur ( < aļur). We had found that the passage A > U with converb and aorist vowels happens only with /n d t ş/ stems and noted that temporary transfer from the I-class to the U-class is possible only with stems ending in /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 ş/ only /A/ or /U/, a triple choice being excluded.

By limiting asonantal vowel shifts to /n d t ş l r/ stems, Yusuf 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 ş l r/ could ideally get /U/ in their converb and aorist, all stems ending in /p v m ş ç y G ńg K/ 24, on the other hand, /A/. The tendency of t栗ir towards t栗ur 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 usage 25. A coincidence is excluded:

24 With the exception of aju(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 kőrü > körü in the QB.
Rather, Yusuf 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 ga-yesi güzelne erişmekti. Fakat bu buluş mutlak değildir. Güzel telâkkisi zamanla değişir. Cemiyetin umumî temayüllü muayyen bir zaman için bıze bir nı'yar verir. Fakat bu ölçü de bütün istikrarılsızlığına, bütün kaprislerine rağmen bir vakıvadır. Ve hiç şıpte yok ki, bu istikrarızı telâk-kininin bu vaidsiniz istikrarı bir kanunun vardır. Sebepler ne derece girift olursa olsun, içerisinde devamlı bir kanun seyrini sezmemek imkânsız-dır. Bu gün için hayallerin mimarisi, kelimele rin kullanılış yerleri gibi hususiyetler ilmi usul dairesinde inceleninceceye tecâib edilir ve istatis-tikler vücuda getirilirse, her asrın zevk mahiyetine yavaş yavaş nihâz imkân dahiline girer.» I have only tried to apply these wise remarks to one aspect of the Qutadğu Bilig; the reader may judge how much remains to be done to realize Prof. Tarlan's program.

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