

Karl Reichl as an eminent scholar in Turkic oral traditions and epic studies

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Received: 26 October 2024; **Accepted:** 28 December 2024; **Published:** 30 January 2025

Abstract: This article investigates the important contributions of Karl Reichl to folklore studies, specifically concerning Turkic oral traditions and epic poetry. As an esteemed academic, Karl Reichl has utilized an interdisciplinary framework that merges philology, folklore, and literary analysis, thereby providing fresh perspectives on the examination of oral epics, storytelling, and the performative dimensions of Turkic literatures. His comprehensive research has resulted in the documentation, translation, and interpretation of a broad spectrum of oral narratives, which have been instrumental in safeguarding cultural heritage and comprehending historical influences on Turkic-speaking communities. Karl Reichl's influence remains a source of inspiration for emerging scholars in the domains of oral literature, comparative folklore, and cultural studies.

Keywords: Turkic oral traditions, folklore studies, epic poetry, cultural heritage, oral literature, storytelling, philology, performance studies, comparative folklore, linguistic analysis.

Introduction: Karl Reichl is Professor Emeritus of the University of Bonn, Honorary Professor of the University of Nukus and a member of the North-Rhine Westphalian Academy of Sciences. Karl Reichl stands as a towering figure in the academic realm, particularly in the fields of Turkic oral traditions and epic studies. His extensive body of work has significantly contributed to our understanding of oral literature, particularly the epic narratives that have been a central aspect of Turkic cultures across Central Asia and beyond. Karl Reichl's scholarly endeavors have spanned decades, during which he has meticulously analyzed, translated, and interpreted a vast array of Turkic oral literature, offering invaluable insights into the complexities of these traditions and their role in shaping cultural identities [1].

Karl Reichl was born in Austria. Details about his early life, including his birth date and initial education, often serve as a prelude to his extensive academic pursuits. What is well-documented, however, is his transition into higher education, where he developed a keen interest in languages and literature, particularly focusing on the Turkic languages and their rich oral traditions. Over the years, Karl Reichl has distinguished himself as a leading authority on Turkic oral literature.

His scholarly work encompasses a broad range of topics within this domain, including the study of oral epic traditions, performance aspects of oral poetry, and the comparative analysis of oral and written narratives. Reichl's approach to these subjects is marked by a multidisciplinary methodology, drawing upon linguistic, anthropological, and literary perspectives to deepen our understanding of Turkic oral cultures.

Karl Reichl's contributions to the study of Turkic oral traditions are vast and multidimensional, spanning from deep textual analyses to explorations of performative aspects of oral poetry. His work has significantly advanced our understanding of the cultural, historical, and linguistic complexities of Turkic oral literature. Below are key areas where Karl Reichl's contributions have been particularly impactful: Karl Reichl has played a crucial role in the documentation and preservation of Turkic oral traditions. By recording, transcribing, and translating oral epics and narratives from various Turkic-speaking communities, he has helped safeguard these cultural treasures for future generations. His meticulous work ensures that the richness of Turkic oral literature, with its diverse themes, characters, and motifs, remains accessible to both scholars and the general public.

Karl Reichl's scholarly analysis and interpretation of Turkic oral epics have provided profound insights into their structures, themes, and narrative techniques. He has explored how these narratives serve not only as entertainment but also as mediums for cultural expression, education, and social cohesion. Through comparative studies, he has highlighted the similarities and differences between Turkic oral traditions and those of other cultures, showcasing the universality and particularity of oral literature. One of Reichl's significant contributions is his focus on the performance aspect of oral traditions. He has emphasized that Turkic oral epics are not merely texts but dynamic performances that involve a complex interaction between the storyteller and the audience. This perspective has led to a deeper understanding of the role of oral literature in Turkic societies, where storytelling is an art form that engages with historical memory, social values, and communal identity.

Karl Reichl has contributed to the development of theoretical frameworks for the study of oral traditions. By applying and adapting concepts from folklore studies, linguistics, and literary theory, he has provided scholars with new tools for analyzing oral texts. His work has encouraged a multidisciplinary approach, opening up new avenues for research in oral literature and its intersections with history, anthropology, and cultural studies.

When Karl Reichl arrived in Uzbekistan, he performed his research under the supervision of Tora Mirzaev. During the summer of 1988, he collaborated with Tora Mirzaev in the Folklore Department at the Institute of Literature in Tashkent. Thus, he regarded the renowned Uzbek folklorist Tora Mirzaev as both his mentor and friend. Tora Mirzaev acknowledged that the works "Uzbek Versions of the Epic Alpamysh" and "Epic Repertoire of Folk Singers" are undeniably significant resources in the exploration of not only Uzbek folklore but also the epic narratives of various global cultures. As a result, these works saw considerable use. He even translated several of them, hoping they would serve folklorists worldwide. "This isn't merely my assertion," he remarked. "You can see this acknowledgment from Russian, Turkish, and American scholars as well," he stated. In Putilov's latest publication, *Epic Creativity*, he references excerpts from Tora Mirzaev's works over 300 times. He underlines that this single reference illustrates the stature of Uzbek folklore. Karl Reichl also carried out various studies on Uzbek bakhshis and their epics. His 1992 research, *The Heroic Epic of the Turkic Peoples*, was released in English in New York. This book details Bakchisaray traditions and the distinctive aspects of the heroic epics among the Turkic peoples. From 1978 until

1988, he was part of the "Sonderforschungsbereich" Special Research Group for Central Asia at the University of Bonn. In 1975, he was appointed as an honorary professor at Nukus State University named after Berdakh in the capital of Karakalpakstan. In 1999, he became a member of the North Rhine-Westphalian Academy of Sciences. Since 2010, he has served as a scientific advisor at the Institute of Ethnic Literature of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing, the capital of China. His teaching achievements at the University of Bonn and internationally can be highlighted in this context. This data essentially outlines the professional biography of the scholar. The fact that Karl Reichl represents a contemporary academic researcher is also evident in his published works. Notably, the scholar made substantial efforts to substantiate each scholarly perspective articulated in his initial book "Uzbek Folk Tales" (1976, Bochum), adhering to the criteria of current folklore studies, comparative literature, Turkic studies, translation, and advanced methodologies relevant to these fields. His approach, dedication to providing essential commentaries and dictionaries within the book, and his keen focus on the quality of fairy tale translations earn him high regard. It's important to mention that a defining characteristic of Karl Reichl's works is the integration of the ideological and artistic attributes of specific epic narratives (be it fairy tales or epics) with a thorough analysis of both the original and translated texts. Through this method, the scholar made a noteworthy contribution to the enhancement and consolidation of scientific and theoretical foundations for publishing folklore pieces in two languages that are unrelated to one another and in a foreign language linked to different systems.

Karl Reichl has authored and edited several seminal books on Turkic oral traditions that have become fundamental texts in the field. These works encompass a broad range of topics, including studies of oral epic poetry, analyses of narrative and performative aspects, and translations of Turkic oral literature [4]. Below are some of his key publications related to Turkic oral traditions:

"Singing the Past: Turkic and Medieval Heroic Poetry"

In this influential work, Karl Reichl examines the heroic poetry traditions among Turkic peoples and compares them with those of medieval Europe. The book provides a comprehensive analysis of the narrative structures, themes, and motifs that pervade Turkic heroic poetry, highlighting the significance of oral traditions in preserving historical memory and cultural identity.

"Turkic Oral Epic Poetry: Traditions, Forms, Poetic

Structure"

This book delves into the rich tradition of oral epic poetry among Turkic-speaking peoples. Karl Reichl provides an in-depth analysis of the formal and structural elements of Turkic epics, exploring how these narratives are constructed and performed. The work is notable for its detailed examination of poetic devices, thematic elements, and the role of the bard in Turkic cultures.

"From Bard to Poet: A Study of the Oral Tradition in the Kyrgyz Epic Manas"

Focusing on the epic of Manas, an immensely important narrative in Kyrgyz culture, Reichl explores the transition from oral to written forms of the epic. This book offers insights into the processes of textualization and the implications for the interpretation and preservation of oral traditions. It sheds light on the figure of the Manaschi (the Manas storyteller) and the cultural context of Manas narratives.

"Edige: A Karakalpak Oral Epic as Performed by Jumabay Bazarov"

In this volume, Karl Reichl presents a transcription and translation of the Karakalpak oral epic Edige, performed by the renowned bard Jumabay Bazarov. The publication includes a comprehensive introduction to Karakalpak culture, the epic tradition, and an analysis of Bazarov's performance. It stands as a significant contribution to the documentation and study of Central Asian oral literature.

"Words of the Loom: Textiles and Oral Traditions in Central Asia"

Though broader in scope, this work touches upon the interplay between material culture (specifically textiles) and oral traditions in Central Asia, including Turkic-speaking communities. Karl Reichl explores how textiles serve as carriers of narrative and memory, akin to oral epics, and examines the symbolic meanings embedded in both forms of cultural expression.

Beyond these monographs, Karl Reichl has contributed numerous articles and chapters to academic journals and edited volumes, further exploring various aspects of Turkic oral literature and its comparative study with other traditions. His writings have significantly influenced the field, offering critical insights and fostering a deeper understanding of the complexity and diversity of Turkic oral traditions.

These publications by Karl Reichl not only highlight his profound scholarship in the field of Turkic oral traditions but also underscore his dedication to preserving and elucidating these rich cultural narratives for future generations.

Beyond his research, Karl Reichl's contributions extend to education and mentorship. He has educated countless students in the fields of Turkic studies and oral literature, inspiring a new generation of scholars to explore these rich traditions. His teaching and mentorship have helped to cultivate an academic community that values the study of oral traditions and recognizes their importance in understanding human culture. Karl Reichl's numerous publications and translations are testament to his enduring impact on the field. His books, articles, and translations of Turkic oral narratives have become essential resources for anyone interested in Turkic cultures, oral literature, and epic studies. Through his translations, Karl Reichl has made these complex and beautiful narratives accessible to a wider audience, bridging cultural and linguistic divides.

Karl Reichl's contributions to the study of Turkic oral traditions have been instrumental in elevating the academic and cultural appreciation of these narratives. Through his comprehensive research, innovative theoretical approaches, and dedicated mentorship, Karl Reichl has significantly advanced our understanding of the complexities and nuances of Turkic oral literature. His work continues to inspire scholars, students, and enthusiasts, ensuring that the rich oral traditions of the Turkic world are recognized, preserved, and celebrated for their invaluable contribution to the tapestry of global culture.

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