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## Notes for reflection paper

### What cultural information can we gain from Bok-murun?

#### Politics

- the stories reflect the current enemies and friends at the time
- chinese caravans are mentioned, which gives insight into the trade at that time
- Kogand raised taxes in the name of islam (superficially)

#### Culture

- the death of a khan is celebrated by a feast and nomadic games in his honor
- some nomads (the heroes) are Muslim, but not all of them
- being good at fighting, horse racing is a high honor, also highly rewarded
- horses and weapons are given names because of their deeds (maybe only bards)
- to get to the feast, there is a long route that seems like part of the ritual
- the feast is generally respected, so no bloodshed (in V as BM bids M)
- lewd camel games are crowd pleasers, as seen in V
- manly warrior women are not really liked, but they talk back to men (in V)
- burning a khan is not liked, as burial is the standard
- men will follow the fate of their khan to not dishonor him and themselves
- the companions are bound to their khan in life and in death
- woman were not really supposed to talk back, and Orongu gets insulted really badly, presumably for the entertainment of the listeners
- Manas beats his wives Kanikey and Akilay, when they try to hold him back, he whips them, which I guess was kinda ok, even though he is a hothead
- the image of a boar survived islamization
- the islamization of the Kyrgyz at that time is pretty superficial, they don't really follow all the rules
- khans grow up really fast, do stuff at a young age
- Manas is deeply misogynistic, maybe a reflection of the time and the audience
- he epics were most likely more connected, with the bards frequently referring to heroes that have their own stories, suggesting that they knew something about that as well
- male bonding over the degradation of Orongu? tradition of men impersonation women to make fun of them
- Kazakh heroes are part of the story, no big deal

#### History

- the story is rather contemporary to the time of its telling, there are guns and actual historical people in it
- besides guns, the nomads had whips, axes, spears etc

- they show pretty good historical and political awareness
- the bards reference real historical events, which shows their awareness of the surrounding area, going back over 100 years, which is pretty awesome considering it is only by oral stories that they remember
- some of these people are still loved after 100 years
- the bard in R mentions an old province in Afghanistan, showing how far knowledge reached without writing
- tribes liked to claim heroes as their own, so they changed ethnicity quite often
- the weapons were made in center of trade in Tashkent or in Kazakhstan
- the Samarkand Khanate is also over 100 years ago and still remembered
- a lot of the historical things mentioned suggest that the story takes place in the 18th century, many of the real people lived in the 17th and 18th c.
- the death of a khan leads to a time of uncertainty, which the Kyrgyz are experiencing rn as the Russians begin to colonize CA

## Language

- many of the words the bards use are from Persian, Arabic, Mongolian, Kazakh suggesting a mingle of languages and no “Kyrgyz”
- while the people could not write, they knew the importance of writing and the power of the seal of kings and khans
- the Kalmak/Oirat khanate is a threat to the Kyrgyz
- the words are from Kyrgyz, Kazakh, Persian, Arabic, Mongolian: Kaz from trade and general contact, Persian for religious and educational stuff -> suggest no set language, but rather a kind of language soup

## Compare Valikhanov’s to Radloff’s text.

### Transcription

- V is 1854, R 1862; both have transcription errors and the like, that H points out
- in V a kazakh is invited to the feast first, V is kazakh
- V changed some parts that did not fit him, R made errors
- the bards sometimes make logical errors that only matter because they were written down, otherwise they would probably never have struck anyone as strange

### Style

- in both texts the moment of performance and the audience’s reception is what matters, not necessarily the accuracy/authenticity
- a performance is hard to judge afterwards, the moment counts
- both bards use a ton of formulas: “Nogay teeming like shadows”, “when my hazel eyes have passed beyond” and “When you ride on thence... find him and bring the news” in R
- V is more difficult, more poetic
- R is simpler, more story focused
- R is clearer and arguably more enjoyable, shorter sentences, more normal vocabulary
- R starts straight with prose, no poem (unique to V’s bard?)
- V has a poem/idiom at the start, R does not: less embellished, is less elite
- R starts with BM sending messengers to all corners of the world to invite people, the bard repeats formulas >20 times

### Content

- V has instructions on what Kokotoy-khan sees as good ruling

- M is not at all a hero in V, he is blue, has lice and is an asshole (e.g. to Orongu), in R he is not as appalling, but still a brute that likes to randomly kill people
- there is a vow by Manas to profane the feast, he is a hothead still
- M is not kirgiz in V
- in V the chars are not introduced, suggesting familiarity on the listeners side
- the death of a ruler is the start in both texts, leaves power vacuum and uncertainty for a new hero to fill
- R does not have a long speech by KK, getting right to the action
- the route of BM in V is the annual route of the sarybagysh tribe, in R it is different
- R starts with BM sending messengers to all corners of the world to invite people, the bard repeats formulas >20 times
- the camel game in R is described in more detail, suggesting that it might not have been known to the people as well, it also differs from V where the camel is the prize instead of some ingots; Manas no longer insults Orongu, but she gets insulted by Almambet and does not talk back
- in R's camel game the focus is on Manas and his companions, while it is more on the crowd in V
- Manas is "princely" in R, but still backhandedly insults O and lets his companion steal from her
- Manas also moved to a noble seat when before he was in the middle of the rabble
- in V. he is the insulting party, he curses her and is not a leader figure in the slightest, more of an asshole
- in R. he calls his companion to tell him that although she is a woman, a khan should be shown some honor and bids him to cover her and give her a horse, here he is a lot more princely and nice
- also the fact that Manas has a noble seat in R. is a sign of his status
- **PS:** p. 517 (167) Manas seems to be nice here, and to unknowing eyes does seem so, but he is treating Orongu like a poor fool that needs to be given a horse and a cloak because she does not have one, a very petty insult that invalidates the impression of being nice here, the name of Orongu's horse is even given
- the fact that M seems to have been poor before is in V but not in R
- the insults are very similar: taint to river bed and clitoris to helmet/cauldron are in both: some kind of standard phrasing?
- some people were changed/their brother mentioned, as the names fit the kyrgyz meter of poetry
- Joloy is an Oruz in R and a Kalmak in V
- in R a close female relative is mentioned, but not by name, suggesting a superficial knowledge of Manas