

THE TWILIGHT AGE OF THE KIRGHIZ EPIC TRADITION

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With love and admiration
I dedicate this essay on the fragility of intellectual achievement
TO LAURIE

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Frontispiece. Kirghiz of the Bugu tribe on a *barımta* against the Kirghiz of the Sarıbagıš tribe. Drawing by P.M. Košarov, 1857 (Abramzon 1953).

Abstract
"The Twilight Age of the Kirghiz epic tradition"
Daniel G. Prior

This dissertation evaluates the stages of the Kirghiz oral epic tradition in terms of correlations between narrative structure and ethos. At issue is a new, structural definition of heroic poetry. The comparativist Arthur Hatto has suggested the structural importance of certain high points of oral epic plots called "epic moments," and John D. Smith has observed in an Indian epic that the oral bard narrates epic moments at the junctures when characters enact and fulfil the "contracts" that move the plot. In the Kirghiz (Central Asian Turkic) epic tradition, the occurrence of epic moments and narrative contracts in the mid-nineteenth century epics is strongly correlated with an era of documented "heroic" phenomena in Kirghiz society. This correlation underlies the dissertation's new definition of heroic ethos in terms of distinctive plot structures in the performance of oral epic poetry. Later, when the Kirghiz lived at peace under Russian rule, bards no longer relied on these structures in composing their epic narratives. Epics in this period tended to be either shorter or longer than before, with fragmented and rearranged themes. This period is called the Twilight Age, in reference both to the transition that occurred and to the fact that the few sources from this period have been neglected by scholarship.

The dissertation includes chapters on the Older Period (to 1862), the Twilight Age (1863-1922), and the Later Period (since 1922). Each chapter includes social, political, and cultural background and textual analyses of epic poems. The textual samples from the Older Period and the Twilight Age are exhaustive. Appendices present renderings of four Twilight Age texts that were previously unpublished or unavailable in English, totaling over 15,000 poetic lines.

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Introduction

(A poet sings: "The paramount hero of Our people was a lonely leader without brothers or sons, but he had a perfect wife. One day he called his Forty Companions by name and exhorted them to go with him on a raid to plunder the Enemy people. His wife clairvoyantly warned him not to go, but he ignored her; she blessed him anyway. He also ignored the warning of his junior wife, and she cursed him. On the way, the hero met his long-lost cousin who had been living in exile among the Enemy. Rejoicing, he welcomed his kinsman back home with a feast and presided over his conversion to Our religion. But the cousin was up to no good: he invited the hero to a feast to reciprocate the hospitality, and there attempted to murder him. The hero ignored the offense [this was his close kinsman!]. Then it was time to resume the campaign against the Enemy people. The hero ordered his cousin to spy on the Enemy camp. The wretched man's guts gurgled inside him, and the intelligence he brought back was later thrown into doubt. It fell to the paramount hero's friend, himself a convert from the Enemy side, to go on a personal reconnaissance. In the Enemy camp, the hero's friend found a lovely, clairvoyant maiden and decided to take her for a wife. Our people attacked the Enemy and were about to win when the paramount hero turned his horse and galloped away. His friend hurried after him and begged him submissively to return to battle, for the enemy were gaining the upper hand. The hero turned back and led a massed counter-attack that routed the Enemy. His friend took the lovely, clairvoyant maiden for a wife. On the way home, the cousin poisoned the hero and his companions, and finished off the hero with a gunshot. The hero's wife came immediately and treated him with drugs. She and a holy man working together managed to resurrect him. The hero went on a religious pilgrimage and thus won

his companions' resurrection from the dead. At home, the hero's wife had a dream that he and his companions were coming, that he would kill his evil cousin, and that she would give birth to a son. The paramount hero came and killed his cousin. Then he was about to kill his friend's new wife, the lovely, clairvoyant Enemy woman, when his own wife held him back and pleaded for her life.")¹

1. Structure

"The poet must be more the poet of his stories or Plots than of his verses, inasmuch as he is a poet by virtue of the imitative element in his work, and it is actions that he imitates." —Aristotle, *Poetics* ix

Aristotle probed the significance of narrative structure in genre with an intensity that gave momentum and direction to the tradition of literary studies in the West. Yet not until the 20th century have scholars reaffirmed and reformulated for a new age of inquiry the essential practicality, and the inescapable practicalities, that are bound up with aesthetics in the poet's act of creation. This reaffirmation of practice partly rested upon the evidence of the Homeric epics themselves, by illuminating a characteristic of Homer's art about which Aristotle had bequeathed scarcely a hint: oral composition-in-performance.

Milman Parry's demonstration that formulaic narrative poetry is or is derived from orally composed poetry stands as a resounding exploit of modern ethnography.² Field researchers in oral traditions, notably including but not beginning with Parry among the South Slavs in the 1930s, had the insight that the bards they observed in performance must use the same basic techniques of composition that had shaped the poems that we

¹ The Kirghiz epic plot briefly summarized here is that of *Köz-kaman*, discussed in detail in Chapter 1, below.

² Parry 1933(1971); Parry 1930/32(1971), part II.

know as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Parry recognized that the recurrent formulas of epic diction, which had been noticed for centuries, were distinctive items of narrative vocabulary that were bound to poetic meter and dedicated to the practice of extemporizing an original oral poem at "epic" length. Parry's field work was preceded from 1928 to 1933 by groundbreaking analyses of the Homeric epics which culminated in his classic definition of the formula: "a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea."³ Parry then made the discovery upon which he and his follower Albert Lord built the oral theory, by traveling to Yugoslavia and recording songs from Serbo-Croatian bards in performance. He chose Yugoslavia on the basis of reliable reports of the existence there of the type of oral poetry he sought.⁴ But he had been faced with a choice: the other epic tradition that interested him most, the Kirghiz, had been described by Wilhelm Radloff in an essay⁵ whose insight into the Homeric question had a great influence on Parry.⁶ The decision which Parry made in 1932 to invest his field research efforts in Yugoslavia rather than Soviet Central Asia was, in view of the obvious practical considerations of the times, above question.⁷ However, one looks back with some regret on the historical situation

³ Parry 1930/32(1971), part I (1971, p. 272).

⁴ Parry cites the pioneering South Slavic field work of M. Murko and G. Gesemann; for a summary of the Murko literature see Lord 1960, pp. 280f., Chapter 2 n. 1; on Gesemann's writings see Parry 1930/32(1971), part II (1971, pp. 334f. n. 2).

⁵ Parry acknowledged his predecessor Wilhelm Radloff by quoting at length the passage of Radloff's Preface to his specimens of Kirghiz epic poetry (read by Parry in German), in which Radloff describes the bard's ability to sing a new song fabricated out of existing elements each time he performs (Parry 1930/32[1971], part II [1971, p. 334]). Cf. Radloff, *Obraztsy/Proben*; Foley 1988, pp. 10-13.

⁶ Parry 1930/32(1971), part II (1971, p. 334 n. 1).

⁷ Lord, *Homer, Parry, and Huso*, p. 468. Gregory Nagy writes: "Parry's first choice, as Albert Lord was fond of recounting to his students, had been the Soviet Union; it was only after he had been denied a visa to travel there that Parry decided on Yugoslavia as his destination" (in Reichl 2000, pp. viii f.).

which led to Parry's epochal choice and kept him from devoting his extraordinary inquisitiveness, enterprise, powers of analysis, and aesthetic sensitivity to the heroic songs of the Kirghiz. The Kirghiz epics such as the one summarized above, which was preserved by Radloff and no doubt assimilated by Parry through Radloff's German verse translation, abounds in formulas and verbal patterning in a variety that would have been eminently suited for framing the founding arguments of a theory of oral composition-in-performance.

Parry's work gained further elaboration in the hands of Albert B. Lord, whose book, *The Singer of Tales*, strongly influenced a new school of research in the oral formulaic theory. Among the book's results was a delineation of the parameters of variation in oral composition. By confronting different recordings of thematically "the same" Serbo-Croatian song and noting their differences and common story patterns, Lord was able to demonstrate the emergent quality of oral composition and to conceptualize the tensions and pressures to which a bard reacts in performance.⁸

Parry's discovery of common mental-motor habits in the artistic practice of oral poets was a lasting achievement in the humanistic arena in the twentieth century.⁹ Yet it is perhaps an adequate gauge of how long-awaited the oral formulaic theory was for understanding the fundamental integers of oral literature that this profound concept has been overdue in matching its early promise with a thorough explanation of the art of epic narration. Critics of uncalibrated and mechanistically-minded trends in the application of the oral theory have by no means been limited to outsiders. John M. Foley, a leading

⁸ Lord 1960, esp. chapters 5, "Songs and the song," pp. 99-123, and 2, "Singers: Performance and Training," pp. 13-29.

⁹ We note with interest that, in the same era, quantum physics revealed the building blocks of matter and psychoanalysis exposed empirical causes and natural processes by which the individual psyche takes its composition.

scholar of oral tradition in the direct line of Milman Parry, is a vigilant arbiter of the state of research in the oral theory:

[A]ny approach as successful as the Oral Theory has been in demonstrating the lineaments of structure in dozens of oral narrative traditions must have more to offer than a morphology of multiforms that finally reduce to hackneyed "essential ideas" and stock narrative scenes. There must be more to this grammar of conventions than convenience and base-level compositional fluency.¹⁰

In other words, when we focus on a bard's ability to recite formulas fluently in metrical sequence, we fall short of encompassing the totality of his power to compose an epic poem in performance.¹¹ In oral tradition, compositional fluency—the means—has no real existence independent of the end, which is the singing of a tale. The present essay concerns those levels of structure, and, by extension, those levels of conscious effort on the part of the epic bard, which presuppose and are grounded in the levels of "compositional fluency" already well illuminated by the oral theory. We ask: what plans and contingencies above the level of the formula or theme does a bard anticipate for an epic recitation, and how does he implement them? What cultural expectations and patterns shape the poet's plans and implementation? What role do the audience and the actual performance event play in the structure of the epic? In the following sections we will add another question: what structural specificity lies in the ethos of an oral narrative genre?

Recent trends in the study of oral literature have greatly benefited from the focus on process which the oral theory championed. The performance approach to verbal art

¹⁰ Foley 1995, p. 4; cf. Foley 1991, pp. 3-4, nn. 5-7.

¹¹ Cf. Lauri Honko: "The fact remains that Parry and Lord never paid enough attention to the overall storyline or narrative structure. The oral formulaic theory is almost naive in its neglect of comprehensive narrative models and its innocence in relation to contemporary structuralist trends" (Honko 1998a, p. 104).

has had an enormous impact on the understanding of oral traditional narrative. Developed by folklorists engaged in studies of ethnopoetics and the ethnography of speaking, the performance approach emphasizes the aesthetic mode of spoken communication. Using this approach, scholars seek to understand the culturally defined forms by which such communication takes place in the context of specific events.¹² In his programmatic essay, *Verbal Art as Performance*, Richard Bauman defines performance "as a mode of spoken verbal communication [that] consists in the assumption of responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative competence." The competence required of the performer is a matter of manner or style, not just grammatical correctness or referential accuracy. Bauman goes on to state,

From the point of view of the audience, the act of expression on the part of the performer is thus marked as subject to evaluation for the way it is done, for the relative skill and effectiveness of the performer's display of competence. Additionally, it is marked as available for the enhancement of experience, through the present enjoyment of the intrinsic qualities of the act of expression itself. Performance thus calls forth special attention to and heightened awareness of the act of expression and gives license to the audience to regard the act of expression and the performer with special intensity.¹³

The performance approach to verbal art is concerned on a rigorously analytical level with the emergent qualities of oral composition. According to Bauman, "the emergent quality of performance resides in the interplay between communicative resources, individual competence, and the goals of the participants, within the context of particular situations."¹⁴ We will see how examining the resources, competencies, goals, and situations intrinsic to the performance arena can clarify questions of structure in

¹² Bauman 1977; Bauman 1986; Fine 1984.

¹³ Bauman 1977, p. 11.

¹⁴ Bauman 1977, p. 38.

traditional epic narrative. The best-case subjects for study using the performance approach will naturally be emergent events—live performances where the observer can take full advantage of the theory's radical reorientation of perspective. But the approach also offers incremental rewards to "paper scholars," who can use it to calibrate their scrutiny of the imperfect, indeterminate documents of the past and to "filter" for signs of emergent phenomena. Taking the performance approach to the epic text presented in summary form above, our attention is immediately drawn to the abrupt ending of the poem, and to the issue of what may have happened during the performance to cause such an ending. Generally, the performance approach facilitates understanding of how and on what terms the poet wished his competence to be evaluated within the performance frame.

The linguistic anthropologist Dell Hymes, a pioneer in the ethnography of speaking, crowned two decades of research and field work on Chinookan oral literature with his discovery of interconnected levels of "measured verse" in tales. The Chinookan tales had previously been textualized and reproduced in prose format, but Hymes looked beneath the surface of the printed paragraphs and perceived a poetic system that the narrators used in performing the tales. Hymes shows that Chinookan heightened prose or measured verse is organized much like poetry, on the level of groups of words that are joined by lexical or grammatical features into lines, and of lines similarly joined into verses and stanzas. Above this level there is dramatic structure, with stanzas grouped into scenes and scenes into acts.¹⁵ Hymes's findings on measured verse, which were a groundbreaking advance in the theory of ethnopoetics,¹⁶ make explicit use of ideas

¹⁵ Hymes 1981.

¹⁶ For development of the concept see Hymes 1975, Hymes 1994, Hymes 1998.

elaborated by Kenneth Burke in his essays on literary criticism. Hymes often cites Burke in referring to an analytical perspective on "the organization of expectation."¹⁷ Hymes credits Burke's definition of form—the arousing and fulfilment of desires—with first opening up this analytical perspective,¹⁸ and uses it to characterize the rhetorical form of the Chinookan tales as "organization in terms of sequences of onset, ongoing action, and outcome."¹⁹ As an illustration of what is meant by the arousing and fulfilment of desires, we may quote from Burke's discussion of syllogistic progression:

We call it syllogistic because, given certain things, certain things must follow, the premises forcing the conclusion. In so far as the audience, from its acquaintance with the premises, feels the rightness of the conclusion, the work is formal. The arrows of our desires are turned in a certain direction, and the plot follows the direction of the arrows.²⁰

At certain points in the Kirghiz epic poem summarized above, the poet's organization of expectations is quite clear. After the paramount hero ignores his wife's warning, and again after he ignores his cousin's attempt on his life, we expect consequences. The compounding of warnings, offenses, and stomach-gurglings, and the delays before the hero finally takes retributive action set up a series of what Hymes calls arcs of expectation. As our exploration of narrative form progresses into the realm of oral heroic epic poetry, it will be useful to bear in mind those words of Burke's as well as this comment on them by Hymes: "[T]he recurrent arousal and satisfying of expectation [is

¹⁷ Hymes 1981, pp. 320f.

¹⁸ Hymes 2000, p. 192; cf. Hymes's paraphrase, 1994, p. 332: "'the recurrent arousal and satisfying of expectation'." Burke first said "*Form* in literature is an arousing and fulfillment of desires" (Burke, *Lexicon rhetoricae*, p. 157 [=1968, p. 124]); later he defined "form as the arousing and fulfilling of an audience's expectations" (Burke, *Curriculum criticum*, p. 217). See also Burke, *Psychology and form*.

¹⁹ Hymes 1981, p. 321.

²⁰ Burke, *Lexicon rhetoricae*, p. 157 (= 1968, p. 124).

not in] a straight line, but a series of arcs. What Burke writes of works accepted as literature is pervasively true of oral narrative [...]"²¹

John M. Foley has developed the oral theory in a direction that helps to focus attention on structure in the context of performance. One product of his comparative study of traditional epic forms is a detailed analysis of the structures of a constellation of Serbo-Croatian "return songs."²² In his book entitled *Immanent Art*, Foley then examines the varieties of return song structures from a new perspective. Sharing with critics of the oral theory an unwillingness to relegate traditional epic bards²³ to the status of formula-stringers, Foley advances the concept of "immanent art" to deemphasize the grinding determinism behind any given formulaic text. The theory of immanent art looks at the tradition as a whole and the sum total of its potentialities. Foley defines immanence as "the set of metonymic, associative meanings institutionally delivered and received through a dedicated idiom or register either during or on the authority of traditional oral performance."²⁴ He characterizes the traditional idiom as "liberating," "centrifugal," and "explosively connotative," and calls it the "unspoken context that dwarfs the textual artifact." Each text stands in metonymic relation to the entire tradition that gives it meaning.²⁵ In another study with the suggestive heading "Word-power," Foley frames an inquiry into how words engage contexts, proceeding from the perspective of performance as the enabling event and tradition as the enabling referent.²⁶ Foley's perspective on the traditional referentiality of oral epic poetry can help us clarify aspects of our sample epic

²¹ Hymes 1994, pp. 332f.

²² Foley 1990.

²³ The critics mostly have "Homer" particularly in mind.

²⁴ Foley 1995, p. 7.

²⁵ Foley 1991, p. 7.

²⁶ Foley 1992, p. 278.

plot. For instance, when we read the paramount hero's invocation of his Forty Companions by name, we may first sense that the narration has halted for the duration of this catalogue. Wider research, however, shows that the knowledgeable listener will have been momentarily drawn into the separate adventures and stories of the companions by means of the artfully constructed, cyclically allusive epithets of these heroes. We may or may not in fact possess these stories as texts, but we can be sure that their encapsulations in the form of epithets conserved a kind of connotative power, and that the epic's listeners derived pleasure from their crowded succession in an invocation of the Forty Companions.²⁷

The folklorist Lauri Honko has assumed a position of leadership in the field of collecting and analyzing long epic performances by combining exhaustive field recording work with detailed exploration of the theoretical basis of textualization. In his book, *Textualising the Siri Epic*,²⁸ Honko presents a paradigm for interpreting oral epic performances which he calls the "mental text." The power of the concept of the mental text derives from its firm grounding in his empirical research with a performer of the Tulu *Siri Epic* in South India. Honko writes:

To be able to understand the production of text in actual performance, it seems necessary to postulate a kind of "prenarrative", a pre-textual frame, i.e., an organised structure of relevant conscious and unconscious material present in the singer's mind. This pre-existent module seems to consist of 1) storylines, 2) textual elements, i.e., episodic patterns, images of epic situations, multiforms,²⁹ etc., and 3) their generic rules of reproduction as

²⁷ Radloff, *Predislovie*, p. xviii; see p. 34, below.

²⁸ Honko 1998a: the nearly 700-page book essentially constitutes an introduction to Honko 1998b, *The Siri Epic as performed by Gopala Naika*.

²⁹ On multiforms cf. Honko 1998a, chap. A.13 "Fixity and variation: Multiforms, phrases, formulas," pp. 100-116. Honko defines multiforms as "repeatable and artistic expressions of variable length which are constitutive for narration and function as generic markers" (p. 100), and

well as 4) contextual frames such as remembrances of earlier performances, yet not as a haphazard collection of traditional knowledge but, in the case of distinct epics of the active repertoire, a prearranged set of elements internalised by the individual singer. We may call this variable template a "mental text", an emergent entity, able to be cut to different sizes and adapted to various modes of performance yet preserving its textual identity.³⁰

The paradigm of the mental text will prove to be useful in the present project. Upon first acquaintance with our sample epic plot, we observe that it seems to contain a great deal of digression. We are on firm enough ground, in normal storytelling terms, in the first couple of movements: the paramount hero sets out on his expedition in contempt of his wives' clairvoyant warnings ("foreshadowing"); the hero's long-lost cousin attempts to murder him ("complicating action"). But after this, the plot turns in ways that seem strange to a modern reader. Why does the hero simply ignore his cousin's attempt on his life? Why does the hero's friend desire and get a maiden from the Enemy camp? Why does the hero turn and run away from a battle he is winning? The theory of mental text will help us answer these kinds of questions about narrative strategy in epic poetry in a new way.

The mental text is not merely an inventory of verbal material, as the classic compositional model of the oral theory would imagine. It includes images as well as words. Honko elaborates: "It is the power of mental images that translates into word power [...] The layers of images in the mind also have content and form; on surfacing in the singer's awareness, they are assigned a place in the plot scheme, they evoke one another, are transformed from images and moods into linguistic expressions".³¹ A clear

traces variations in usage of the term *multiform* through the writings of several scholars of the oral theory.

³⁰ Honko 1998a, p. 94.

³¹ Honko 1998a, pp. 96f.

example of the "surfacing" of such an image is the gurgling of the evil cousin's guts inside him when the hero calls on him for loyal service. In summarizing this epic narrative I was able to strip all the other key events of their sensuous associations. Quite inadvertently, the stomach-gurgling resisted abstraction, and so it remains, as concrete as it was in the Kirghiz bard's mind. As an image, it is a sort of integer of narration. "The cousin involuntarily gives a subtle sign betraying his perfidy" is needlessly and hopelessly imprecise. This image belongs to a special class of images in the narrative technique of heroic epic bards. By "evoking one another," these images take on the functions of arousing and fulfilling expectations or desires which Burke and Hymes saw as the basis of form. This correlation of image power and word power will have particular resonance in the discussion of structure and ethos below.

We begin to perceive the outlines of a framework for examining narrative structure which takes into account not only the verbal content of an oral epic but also the performer's efforts and the audience's (possible level of) satisfaction with the performance. Hymes provides for structural rigor with the concept of the organization of expectation. Honko offers a flexible and empirically suitable notion of a bard's mental text, thus accounting for numerous features of epic narrative, including copiousness. Foley highlights the diffuse, immanent space of traditional referentiality and connotation from which oral traditional narrative takes its meaning. With the performance approach, Bauman places everything—the values of rigor, copiousness, and immanence—in the context of face-to-face interaction and the requirements of performance competency. With rigor, copiousness, and immanence all seemingly pulling in different directions, attention is now productively focused on nodes of tension. We have less of an enigma in

Honko's concept of "the long epic"³² than in *the epic that is just the right length*. The performance economy which tempers immanence with rigor, and leavens rigor with copiousness, is the economy of ethos.

2. Ethos

It has been suggested that the cultural history of the Northern Kirghiz epic tradition from the mid nineteenth century to the early years of Soviet Kirghizia provides an unparalleled chronological cross-section of the transformation of an oral heroic epic genre.³³ This essay takes a new, structural approach to examining this poetic cross-section. We are concerned with problems of the structural specificity of the heroic ethos. Both "heroic," the attribute, and "ethos," the category, will be used in this essay in specific ways, which we will now formulate. These new specifications represent both local responses to the Kirghiz case and global perspectives on the metagenre of traditional heroic poetry. As befits a critical term as old as Aristotle, the concept of the heroic has accumulated a load of connotations which it will be useful first to examine and control.

Interestingly, the intellectual baggage carried by the concept of the heroic is made lighter by a great deal of informal consensus. When speaking of literary history, few would take issue with the notion that heroic narratives are about men endowed with natural superiority who live by deeds of great strength, courage, and skill. Their code of

³² Honko allows for mental text to adapt to different sizes (lengths) of performance. He calls the problem of explaining epic copiousness "the enigma of the long epic" (1998a, p. 54), and uses the concept of mental text to explain both the long and short extremes of epic performance (1998a, chap. A.3 "The epic format: long and short," pp. 30-43; chap. A.6 "Understanding oral composition," p. 52-61).

³³ Hatto, 1990; Prior 2000.

personal honor is direct and implicit in their every action and is unforgiving of shortcomings or defects. Immersed in such a life, heroes paradoxically exercise free will by facing fate head-on and unflinchingly to the death. The undying appeal of these human qualities in literature inspired Sir Maurice Bowra to write:

Heroes are the champions of men's ambition to pass beyond the oppressive limits of human frailty to a fuller and more vivid life, to win as far as possible a self-sufficient manhood, which refuses to admit that anything is too difficult for it, and is content even in failure, provided that it has made every effort of which it is capable.³⁴

It has long been held that heroic poetry, the literary form which is concerned with characters and deeds of this kind, is distinguished by its resemblance to certain facts of the social milieu in which it arose. Robert Wood (c. 1717-1771) visited both Syria and the Troad, and sought to apply his experiences with the desert Bedouins to an understanding of what he called patriarchal and heroic literature, the Hebrew Bible and Homer. Writing in *An Essay on the Original Genius and Writings of Homer ...*, he found in the Bedouin a living analog of "Homer's state of society," with "an uniformity of manners, previous to the distinction of rank and condition, which produced that noble simplicity of language unknown to polished ages."³⁵ His chapter on "Homer's Manners"³⁶ is illuminated with a capsule description of Bedouin life which is strikingly similar to reports about nomadic peoples of Inner Asia:

He [the Bedouin] is temperate, brave, friendly, hospitable, true to his engagements, nice in his point of honour, and in general, scrupulously observant of the duties of his religion: yet his ideas of plunder and rapine are perfectly conformable to those of the heroic and patriarchal times. Thus is his life strangely divided between deeds of cruelty, violence, and

³⁴ Bowra 1952, p. 4.

³⁵ Wood 1775, p. 246.

³⁶ Wood 1775, pp. 143-180.

injustice, on the one hand; and the most generous acts of humanity on the other.

Breeding cattle is his profession; hunting and hawking are his principal amusements; while robbery and devastation are not less the objects of his ambition, than of his avarice. He lives constantly in tents, is much on horseback, always armed; and almost constantly meditating enterprize, or consulting retreat. To this state of continual action or alarm his circumstances are peculiarly adapted; for his property, his family, his business, his pleasures, and I may add, his laws and religion (or more properly his courts of justice and places of worship) are as moveable as his person.³⁷

Western studies of heroic poetry continued to be closely connected with ideas about social history. One of the observations with which Wilhelm Radloff liberally stocked the pathbreaking Preface to his volume of Kirghiz epic poems was this aperçu: "These songs prove to us that the folk poetry of the Kirghiz exists in a peculiar period which is best to call the 'genuinely epic period'. This is the very same period the Greeks were in at the time when their epic songs of the Trojan War had not yet been written down but lived on the lips of the people in the form of actual folk poetry." Radloff then characterizes the essence of this "period" among the Kirghiz, based on his own observations of Kirghiz society and ways of speaking, with the explicit purpose of explaining the composition of the Homeric epics.³⁸

Many such observations of the social base of heroic poetry more or less consciously accepted a view of history that posited the existence of a past Heroic Age.³⁹ In the early part of the twentieth century, this idea was elaborated into a detailed thesis by

³⁷ Wood 1775, pp. 151f.

³⁸ Radloff, *Predislovie*, pp. iii-xxv. We have already remarked on the success which Parry found Radloff to have achieved in this purpose. Radloff's "ethnography of speaking" of the Kirghiz will be discussed in Chapter 1.

³⁹ E.g., by W.P. Ker (1957[1908], first published 1896), an influential study which viewed the origins of medieval European epic, romance, and ballad in terms of modulations over time of heroic and chivalric ideals.

H. Munro Chadwick and Nora K. Chadwick, which culminated in their three-volume comparative work, *The Growth of Literature*.⁴⁰ Echoing Hegel's *Aesthetics*, the Chadwicks conceived of the literatures of pre-literate peoples as expressions of the stages of social evolution through which they passed from primitivity toward civilization (however, the Heroic Age was not attained in every case). *The Growth of Literature* set a comparative standard with its global research stance. Volume 3 included a section on "The oral literature of the Tatars," which was the first large-scale Western study to address Kirghiz epic.⁴¹ With the publication of *The Growth of Literature*, it became common to discuss examples of heroic poetry collected ethnographically in the field in terms of a Heroic Age or heroic society. The heroic society formulation was generally seen as the more tenable.⁴² Milman Parry immediately rejected the "Heroic Age" concept in favor of the more empirically verifiable perspective on the social conditions that shape a people's literature. He wrote,

It is wrong [...] to [...] suppose that heroic poetry [...] is due to any law in the growth of literature. The poetry is heroic only because it is created by people who are living in a certain way and so have a certain outlook on life, and our understanding of the heroic will come only as we learn what that way of living is, and grasp that outlook.⁴³

C.M. Bowra followed the Chadwicks' project with his book, *Heroic Poetry*.⁴⁴ His model of the evolution of heroic poetry from panegyric and shamanistic strands is problematic,

⁴⁰ Chadwicks, *Growth*; Chadwick 1912.

⁴¹ Chadwicks, *Growth*, vol. 3, pp. 3-226. The Kirghiz material was reached via Radloff's German translations.

⁴² But cf. Bowra's affectionate view (1957). It should be remembered also that the Heroic Age remains, less controversially, as a technical term in the history of Greek civilization, now even with archaeological underpinnings; cf. Hainsworth 1991, pp. 11-24.

⁴³ Parry 1933(1971), p. 179 (1971, p. 376).

⁴⁴ Bowra 1952. Again the Kirghiz epics came in for prominent citation via Radloff, *Proben*, and *MGC*.

yet the book made a lasting intellectual contribution with its famous prose on heroics and with the plethora of comparative material that it adduces from traditions worldwide.

After the Chadwicks and Bowra, and undoubtedly drawing inspiration from Parry's field work as well, comparative and ethnographic research on oral epic literatures of non-Western peoples experienced an upswing.⁴⁵ Some of these studies explored the social base of heroic narrative.⁴⁶ The university from which this dissertation emanates may take pride in having sponsored the last large-scale general portrait of world narrative in the heroic mode to be published in America, a collaborative survey of fifteen heroic epics and sagas edited by Felix Oinas.⁴⁷

But the times were not favorable for continued progress in research on the heroic. Challenges raised by the Africanists Ruth Finnegan and John W. Johnson clearly reflected the sea change that had taken place in the intellectual and ideological climate of the humanities and social sciences during the middle decades of the twentieth century.⁴⁸ The two authors echo Parry's objection to the concept of the Heroic Age, and effectively deconstruct the circular definition of heroic poetry that then prevailed. Heroic poetry, they point out, was said to arise in societies displaying certain political and social traits, yet no ethnographic data were adduced to support the thesis. Instead, these societies were characterized on the basis of internal evidence extracted from the poetry itself. It is indeed most often the case now that "heroic" oral poetic traditions persist among peoples whose real social and political conditions bear little resemblance to the world depicted in

⁴⁵ Morris 1964; Kailasapathy 1968 (an attempt at "Homerizing" Tamil heroic poetry); Biebuyck & Mateene 1969; Johnson 1979; Okpewho 1979.

⁴⁶ E.g., Morris 1964.

⁴⁷ Oinas 1978. The contribution by Stephen Wailes, "The *Nibelungenlied* as heroic epic" (pp. 120-143) is particularly sensitive in manipulating the historical and mythological issues that surround the poem's individual heroic ethos.

⁴⁸ Finnegan 1977, pp. 246-250 (=1992a, ditto); Johnson 1982.

the narratives. Johnson draws particular attention to Yugoslav and African examples. He also stresses the need to vet the essentially imperialist notions of growth, development, and evolution in human affairs. He states, "The thesis of social evolution [...] relies on dubious internal evidence fostered by a belief that some modern peoples of the world are primitive. The influence of social and economic factors on creative folklore is overemphasized."⁴⁹ The humanities and social sciences have turned their attention to models that emphasize diversity rather than evolution or hierarchy. Study of the verbal arts has not been unaffected by this change, as symbolized by two influential titles published prior to and later on in this intellectual transition period: *The Growth of Literature* has given place to "Ways of Speaking."⁵⁰

In the American academy there is a deadness around the term "heroic."⁵¹ A closed set of poems and poetic traditions are so labeled, and hardly any scholars today are looking outward areally for examples of heroic epics in less-studied oral traditions, or inwardly for the areally-sifted poetics of heroic genres.⁵² "Heroic" today has an inherited

⁴⁹ Johnson 1982, p. 134.

⁵⁰ Hymes 1974(1989).

⁵¹ I am thinking of the literary and oral-literary concept, not current events.

⁵² With the exception of John W. Johnson, it has not been possible to identify a single member of the cohort of doctoral students who worked under the generation of American-based professors who contributed to the volume edited by Oinas, *Heroic Poetry and Saga* (1978), and who chose to specialize in any non-classical, non-medieval heroic and/or epic tradition observable in the field today. This is particularly striking since the professors in question include İlhan Başgöz (Turkic) and Daniel Biebuyck (African).

Dissertation Abstracts (<http://wwwlib.umi.com/dissertations/search>, consulted February 27, 2002) lists 204 dissertations with the keywords "heroic and epic or poetry" defended between 1990 and 2001; of these, only about one-tenth actually have anything to do with heroic epic poetry in our sense including medieval and classical, while nearly half of this one-tenth part deal with Homeric epic. A search for the keywords "heroic and oral" and "heroic and folklore" between 1980 and 2001 yielded a mere seven additional dissertations, only one of which could be said to deal with primary oral heroic epic tradition. I can neither think of nor locate in bibliographies or other sources any Ph.D.'s trained in a relevant specialty under the following American-based professors: İlhan Başgöz, Daniel Biebuyck, Ilse Laude-Cirtautas, John William Johnson, György Kara, or Felix Oinas. In another rough-and-ready Internet survey, a google.com

rather than asserted meaning.⁵³ These, then, are some connotations that must be borne in mind when discussing the nature of the "heroic" in America today.

In the Soviet Union, where mines upon mines of heroic narrative were in various stages of discovery and exploitation for political purposes, the nature of heroic poetry received very serious study. This highly important research naturally occupies a prominent place in the context of the study of the Kirghiz epic tradition. On the final balance, Soviet epic studies are to be acknowledged with gratitude for introducing into scholarly circulation a massive corpus of epic source materials the extent and variety of which had no rival in the twentieth century. The fact that on a corporate level Soviet scholarship did not address the issue of the heroic in terms comparable or even approximable to contemporary trends in the West is a matter of political rather than purely intellectual history. It is not altogether an oversimplification to say that the heroic ethos as we understand it was anathema to socialist conscience. Soviet thinking treated *geroičeskii epos* as a reflection of and survival from a past stage of social development, much as the Heroic Age concept does; but there was a difference. The *epos* and the outlook of its heroes were seen to epitomize the spirit of the *narod*, or people. The issue of *narodnost'* 'folk character, origin among the people' was of supreme importance. E.M. Meletinskii, in his book, *The Origin of Heroic Epos*, wrote, "Its history [that of heroic

search for "heroic cv" (October 14, 2001) yielded about 10 new and recent Ph.D.s who claim an interest in heroic literature as some part of their academic profiles. All of them specialized in classical or medieval studies; "asia heroic cv" and "africa heroic cv" yielded nothing relevant. Some of the medievalists also listed an interest in science fiction and fantasy literature, a detail which increases one's apprehension that the ethnographic inspirations of the past century can do little to halt the subsidence of Western literary studies into a parochial universe of illusions.

⁵³ One exception is John McDowell's study of a ballad tradition of Mexico, *Poetry and Violence* (McDowell 2000), which uses the social-milieu model of heroic ethos but comes to the original conclusion that the ballads of murder and revenge exist not only to celebrate violence, but also in part to regulate it and heal its effects.

epos] is closely connected with the formation of nationalities and early states [...] *Epos* comprises the people's poetic conception of the historic past; it is imbued with collective, and essentially patriotic, pathos"⁵⁴ Meletinskii affords a graphic view of the hermeneutic safety-harnesses that were needed to protect the infallible Folk from being besmirched by the tyrannical actions of "their" creation, the typical folk hero:

The image of the *bogatyr'* [hero] at first glance contains a paradox. His strength, courage, and powerful energy are exceptional; in him are emphasized in every way not only personal initiative, but also a certain self-confidence⁵⁵ and obstinacy, pride and even fractiousness. His deeds, at times having the character of whims, are the result of an autonomy that abides no limitations or "discipline."⁵⁶ But in the final analysis, this free autonomy of the hero is naturally, spontaneously, and immanently directed toward the achievement of common national epic goals, and for the most part toward defense of the nation from enemies.⁵⁷

In light of the many pages of interesting and erudite work that precede this summation, Meletinskii may be given the benefit of the doubt as to the political imperatives that shaped these comments. It would be unimaginable, however, for an epic scholar of any era in the Soviet Union to have written, or even agreed with in print, such words as those of the British Homerist J.B. Hainsworth: "The oral techniques of heroic poetry select what is appropriate to famous deeds and forget the rest; they confuse times and places; *they impose the heroic ethos on shabby deeds of treachery and vengeance.*"⁵⁸ Some times were better than others, and the intellectual periods and regionalisms of Soviet scholarship on epic are a fascinating topic reflecting a fair share of personal and political

⁵⁴ Meletinskii 1963, p. 423. On the term *epos*, see Hatto 1994, p. 124.

⁵⁵ *samouverennost'*, a negative trait.

⁵⁶ Meletinskii's footnote: "These traits were absolutized by the Chadwicks, Bowra, Levy, and other contemporary foreign scholars, who have elaborated an individualistic conception of the hero as a sort of 'superhuman' who undertook exploits connected with risk solely for the sake of personal glory."

⁵⁷ Meletinskii 1963, pp. 423f.; cf. Gatsak 1975.

⁵⁸ Hainsworth 1991, pp. 12f.; italics added.

struggles, some of them undertaken with the noblest intentions.⁵⁹ The best work was often banned, though many works that ran into trouble were later published in times of greater freedom. The linguist, Germanist, and literary historian Viktor Žirmunskii was a

⁵⁹ For an overview on epics of Soviet Muslim nationalities, see Bennigsen 1953; Bennigsen 1975; *Re-examination*; on Kirghiz epic, see Abdykarov, *Sud'ba*; Prior 2000. Maksim Gor'kii is widely credited with inaugurating the preoccupation with folklore in Soviet culture in speeches he delivered at the first all-union writers' congress in 1934: "the origin of the art of the word is in folklore. Collect your folklore, study it, adapt it" (Gor'kii 1953[1934], p. 342). He also stressed the qualities of Central Asian oral traditions, and coined or popularized an epithet for a certain oral poet, "the Homer of the twentieth century." (Such Homers were found and promoted all over the Soviet Union; in Kirghizia the honor settled on the epic bard Sayakbay Karalay uulu [1894-1971]). Despite the credentials that *geroičeskii epos* shared with other folklore genres, parts of its ideological content proved almost impossible to justify in Soviet terms. In 1951, a wave of anti-epic propaganda and book-banning rolled across the southern U.S.S.R., propelled by a series of editorials in national newspapers that denounced as "cultural nationalism" the epic world of feudal authority, aggressive war with neighboring peoples, national self-interest, and religious superstition. In 1952, Kirghiz intellectuals resisted the ideological onslaught and emerged from an agonizing all-union conference in possession of their *Manas* epic—though it was necessary to sacrifice the reputations of certain past bards individually to the charge of ideological impurity. The work of professionally editing a politically correct "composite" version of the *Manas* cycle deemed safe enough for popular consumption occupied Kirghiz scholars for almost a decade, until 1960 (*MSSYu*). The publication in Moscow of the collaborative volume of essays, *Manas* 1961, openly flouted the earlier charges and heralded the cultural rehabilitation of *Manas*. It also represented a step in the long-neglected (because "cosmopolitan") comparative mode of research (Žirmunskii 1961; Berkov 1961). But the harsh struggle proved to be formative. Characteristic of future epic scholarship in Kirghizia has been a preoccupation with elaborating the *narodnost'* of the epics along the lines of a national oral "encyclopedia." The creative agency of individual bards and historical events in the last 150 years, to say nothing of patrons and audiences, has been downplayed. The versions of the two major twentieth-century bards, Sagımbay and Sayakbay, have served as a sort of generalized epic of record upon which a vast amount of scholarship was and is still based. The nineteenth-century texts are largely ignored as being fragmentary and artistically inferior to Sagımbay's and Sayakbay's versions (see, e.g., Mamıtbekov & Abdıldayev 1966, p. 59). R.Z. Kydyrbaeva has summarized the results of a promising trend towards research on individual bards (Kydyrbaeva 1984), though she declines to integrate Radloff's and Valikhanov's bards into her textual investigations. While attempting with mixed success to define various regional schools of bards, Kydyrbaeva demonstrates the possibility of tracing lineages and creative influences among bards. S. Musayev has ensured that the two major scholarly publications of Sagımbay's *Manas* produced under his editorship or co-editorship (*MMSO*; *MBSO*) are furnished with detailed background on the bard's biography and the written recording sessions that produced the texts. Since Kirghizstan achieved independence, and especially since 1995 when *Manas* was fêted with a "millenium" celebration, the issue of the epics' folk character has been decisively updated by the state. *Manas* and its hero have been adopted as the official source of national ideology in Kirghizstan (see Prior 2000).

comparative epic scholar of global reach and world stature who made signal contributions to Kirghiz and Central Asian epic studies. His "Introduction to the Study of the 'Manas' Epic," published 40 years ago, remains for the most part authoritative.⁶⁰ A work by a Kirghiz scholar that lay outside scholarly circulation for many years contains a veritable counter-statement to Meletinskii's point quoted above, and approaches the "individualistic conception of the hero" characteristic of foreign scholars: Rakhmatullin asserts that the formation of national consciousness was first expressed in epic in the versions of the twentieth-century bards Sagımbay and Sayakbay, and that in the Radlovian epics and even in early Sayakbay episodes, the paramount hero Manas carried out his exploits not as a national uniter or leader but as an individual hero.⁶¹

In Europe, the situation has unfolded differently over the last 30 to 40 years, most notably in England. The London Seminar on Epic, an international group of advanced scholars working under the chairmanship of Arthur Hatto, undertook an extensive comparative investigation of theme, social and cultural context, poetics, myth, ritual, and history, to address fundamental questions of the nature of heroic and epic poetry. The Seminar heard over 30 papers from 1964 to 1972, and in the 1980s published two volumes of surveys and essays, *Traditions of Heroic and Epic Poetry*.⁶² A summation of

⁶⁰ Žirmunskii & Zarifov 1947; Žirmunskii 1960; Žirmunskii 1961; Žirmunskii 1962; Chadwick & Žirmunskii 1969; Žirmunskii 1974 (which contains reissues of Žirmunskii 1960 and 1961 [itself a first publication of a manuscript that had lain unpublished for 13 years for political reasons] as well as a Russian version of his contribution in Chadwick & Žirmunsky 1969). Notable local and topical studies by other Soviet authors include Poppe 1937(1979) and Lipets 1984.

⁶¹ Rakhmatullin 1968(c.1946), p. 101.

⁶² *Traditions*. Hatto supplied the general introduction (Hatto 1980a) and the chapter on the mid-nineteenth century Kirghiz tradition (Hatto 1980c). The London Seminar's broad mandate for itself ranged far beyond the definition of the heroic *per se* (*Traditions*, vol. 2, pp. 307-311); likewise, scholars in other centers have devoted attention to problems of the heroic in the context of wider projects. On the Continent, the Central Asian Seminar of the University of Bonn, headed by Walther Heissig, undertook a sustained program of international symposia in the 1970s and

these results is provided in Hatto's long essay, "Towards an Anatomy of Heroic and Epic Poetry." The group's varied and mostly prospective conclusions are too numerous and varied to be neatly encapsulated—a sign of the Seminar's preference for empirical rigor over synthetic elegance.⁶³ Certain points raised by the Seminar's members will be addressed in the discussions below.

On this side of the Atlantic, the concept of the heroic has received fresh and original probing by Richard Martin in his book, *The Language of Heroes*.⁶⁴ Martin examines the *Iliad* by means of a sort of textual "ethnography of speaking" to discover the poet's verbal milieu. He finds that the heroism valued and displayed by the characters was closely tied to their own successful performances of speeches. The regular term for these speeches is *muthos*, which Martin crucially redefines as "authoritative speech-act." When heroes utter *muthoi*, whether commands, *flytings* (contests in cutting words⁶⁵), or recollections, they are assuming responsibility to their hearers for a display of communicative competence. Martin shows that the heroic ethos of the *Iliad* is invested in these authoritative speech-acts, and that "the *Iliad* takes shape in precisely the same 'speaking culture' as we see foregrounded in the stylized words of the poem's heroic speakers [...] I suggest that the 'voice' of the poet is the product of the same traditional performance technique."⁶⁶ Martin's analyses are important to this study because they show that heroic narrative may express a heroic ethos by means besides the narration of heroic themes and content. These means are more subtle and more intimately tied to the

80s centering around the Mongolian epics, and also published their proceedings (*Mongolischen Epen; Fragen*; cf. also Heissig 1983; Heissig 1988).

⁶³ Hatto, *Anatomy*; cf. Hatto 1991.

⁶⁴ R. Martin 1989.

⁶⁵ Martin's comparative outlook is apparent in his adoption of the Old Norse term.

⁶⁶ R. Martin 1989, p. xiv.

act of performance. This level of expressive means will now be compared with the level of narrative structure we are seeking within the framework begun in section 1, above.

It is of particular relevance to our investigation of heroic ethos that Hatto and the London Seminar revisited an important reality which had been little remembered since Radloff published his observations on the Kirghiz. The known facts of Kirghiz life in the mid nineteenth century bear witness to what has been called in the past a "heroic society," that is, the coexistence of a tradition of heroic poetry with real systems of social identity and problem-solving (including systems of legal and physical force) which were comparable to those expressed in the poems themselves.⁶⁷ However, it is one thing to determine that the observed similarities between the society depicted in the poems and the society of the tradition-bearers are not accidental; it is another thing to be able to point to specific links between instances of poetic creation on the one hand and certain actual events on the other. This essay maintains a different view, that the social base of heroic epic poetry in fact exists within the frame of epic performance itself.

For the purposes of this study, it will be useful to regard ethos in a specialized way, not merely as a behavioral parameter in human societies or groups, as it were an ethnographic construct evoked by rules of conduct, but more as an expressive category of verbal art. As such it can be defined quite appropriately in terms we have already introduced. Ethos is a traditional context in which competency in the "performance" of rules may be displayed and appraised. Most important, ethos creates an immanent conduit through which human action and art may inform and inspire each other. When Aristotle wrote, "The poet must be more the poet of his stories or Plots than of his verses,

⁶⁷ Below we will abandon "heroic society" for a new concept, *heroic cosmos*, aligning it with the performance perspective.

inasmuch as he is a poet by virtue of the imitative element in his work, and it is actions that he imitates," his proscription was essentially a matter of ethos. We can see that such a view of ethos brings us close to the realm of structure. Indeed, it will be useless to consider the one without the other.

3. Structure and Ethos

The concept of certain structural specificities of ethos in epic poetry has found development in Roberte Hamayon's analyses of West Buryat (Mongol) epic. Hamayon, an anthropologist, adapts techniques from the structural analysis of myth "to bring out the conceptual structure which underlies West-Buryat epic narrative, and then to show how this structure determines the heroic ideology of these epics."⁶⁸ This ideology is in a way broader and in another way more particular than the heroics attributed to the Kirghiz in the last section. West Buryat epic plots fall into three main categories, dealing with the marriage of the hero, the revenge of the hero for the killing of his father and restoration of his lineage, and the hero's acts of mediation between earthly and supernatural realms. Hamayon has shown that these narrative models in turn cohere with the ritual-symbolic functions of marriage alliance, hunting, and shamanism, all of which are ultimately comprehended in an overarching cultural pattern of exchange, which she calls *la chasse à l'âme*.⁶⁹ In the present context, Hamayon's most suggestive findings have to do with the typical acts of "giving" and "taking" that balance one another to give the West Buryat epic plots their symbolic logic; for example, the hero-taker of a wife will certainly later

⁶⁸ Hamayon 1981/82, Continuation, p. 1.

⁶⁹ Hamayon 1987; Hamayon 1990.

give his sister away in marriage.⁷⁰ At the present state of research, our knowledge of Kirghiz epic plots does not allow for such a neat overall patterning of the "organization of expectation." Yet Hamayon's proposed ethical proposition, even definition, of the hero as "taker" opens up perspectives on heroic models other than the West Buryat while at the same time maintaining a useful focus on the culturally specific conditions and predicates of heroic action.

Kirghiz epic poetry of the mid nineteenth century featured a number of type-scenes, themes, and topoi by which a bard was able to build up an epic narrative. These elements include descriptions of heroes and animals, invocations,⁷¹ itineraries,⁷² epithets and other kinds of cyclic allusions,⁷³ and testaments. One epic even contains an embedded heroic lament.⁷⁴ Naturally, all of these traditional narrative elements were couched in formulaic diction. The principal assertion of this essay is that the heroic character—the heroic ethos—of Kirghiz heroic epic poetry may be identified and distinguished by the presence of a particular kind of narrative structure. In the terms introduced in section 1 above, this structure is immanent and coexists with an overall potential for epic copiousness, but it is more rigorous than copious. In Kirghiz epic, the heroic ethos tends to have a stringent effect on a bard's mental text.

The distinctively heroic integers of structure which we will examine are the high scenes and epic moments of the plot. Arthur Hatto introduces the term *epic moment* to

⁷⁰ Hamayon 1990, p. 132.

⁷¹ Hatto 1977, pp. 255-262.

⁷² Hatto 1992; Prior 1998a.

⁷³ Hatto 1980c; Hatto 1981.

⁷⁴ I,6) *The Birth of Semetey*. Only in rare instances have heroic epic traditions been found in co-occurrence with an allied genre of heroic poetry; mid-nineteenth century Kirghiz has the distinction of attesting independent texts of heroic laments (Radloff, *Obraztsy*, vol. 5, pp. 590-597; cf. Hatto 1983).

denote high points of plot which had been revealed by the comparative work of the London Seminar on Epic: "Epic poetry is apt to condense long-drawn tensions into brief scenes of dramatic power enhanced by visual magnificence, that is, 'epic moments'."⁷⁵ He gives examples of epic moments from the texts of the *Iliad*, the *Chanson de Roland*, the *Nibelungenlied*, the Ostyak "Song of Golden Hero-prince," the Mohave heroic epic, and the Kirghiz *Semetey*. It will be instructive to cite Hatto's own précis of the Kirghiz example in full:

[*Semetey*] has been treacherously slain, and his wife Ay-čürök, six months gone with child, has fallen to the slayer Er Kıyaz. After twelve months of heroic gestation Ay-čürök bears a son. Er Kıyaz now comes with drawn sword to take off the babe's 'apple-head': but the mother tells Er Kıyaz that although six months were *Semetey*'s, six months were his so that he might well spare the boy. Then, revealing herself as a battle-maiden, Ay-čürök threatens to don her swan-mask and fly off to fetch her father Akın-khan with his armies. This is the structural peak of *Semetey*, since Kıyaz is cowed, and the boy lives to avenge his true father. Ay-čürök's gesture is inspired by the pen's gesture of fierce threat when defending her brood.⁷⁶

Study of the structures of mid-nineteenth century Kirghiz epics has revealed a number of epic moments. What this means for understanding of the tradition is clearly stated by Hatto:

Epic moments are highly charged narrative ganglia, and it is suggested here as one of the fruits of comparative study that possession of them in memory confers power on the mature bard to build up an episode or even a string of episodes. In other words, it is suggested that epic moments, in addition to being great poetry are mnemonic elements of epic of an order altogether superior to that of 'themes' or 'formulae', now so well discussed: and that they will therefore mark or help to mark the structures of epics.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Hatto 1980a, p. 4.

⁷⁶ Hatto 1980a, p. 5.

⁷⁷ Hatto 1980a, p. 6. Cf. Hatto 1991, p. 19.

The "superior" order of mnemonic structure is the level toward which we have been proceeding in the foregoing discussions: the level of ethos. John D. Smith places his appropriately sharp definition of epic moments firmly in the sphere of ethos: "[A]n epic moment is not simply any specially 'dramatic' scene; it is a scene in which Fate's demands upon the hero press in upon him with a particular immediacy, exposing the narrative's central concerns with stark directness."⁷⁸

Smith initiated methodological study of epic moments with his analysis of a recording of the Rajasthani epic of *Pābūjī* which he personally collected.⁷⁹ Smith found that the episodes of the epic, though widely varying in length,⁸⁰ each shared the characteristic of strong end-marking with visual or gestural "'high scenes' in which the underlying conflicts informing the narrative manifest themselves with a particular directness and force."⁸¹ The high scenes or epic moments mark the enactment and fulfilment of commitments. "[B]roadly speaking, the first part of the epic sees [Pābūjī] taking on commitments, the second part being compelled to fulfil them."⁸² Smith calls these commitments "contracts," and his method of interpreting the text "contract analysis." The "visual magnificence" pointed out earlier by Hatto finds concrete expression in the Rajasthani epic tradition, where the bard performs in front of a backdrop or *par* upon which are painted stereotypical representations of key moments: the enactments of the contracts (early episodes) and their fulfilments (later episodes). The

⁷⁸ Smith 1989, p. 32. The notion of the "emotional core" of the ballad (McDowell 2000, pp. 41, 45, quoting Tristram Coffin) is undoubtedly allied.

⁷⁹ Smith 1986; cf. Smith 1991, p. 19.

⁸⁰ The 35 ½ hours of the full performance of *Pābūjī* which Smith elicited from Parbū Bhopo, in ten episodes, consists of approximately 4,040 verse lines and a number of long non-verse insertions.

⁸¹ Smith 1986, p. 62.

⁸² Smith 1986, p. 59.

sections of the epic are even called *parvāros*, a derivative of the word for the backdrop. The bard points to each picture as he begins to sing the related scene. He consciously and explicitly divides the long epic into a sequence of *parvāros*. The epic in its entirety is a mental text only; a night's entertainment may consist of one or more episodes, but never the whole epic. "When Parbū performs he is able to find his way through the complexities of the narrative because at every point he knows what crux he is heading for."⁸³

High scenes, epic moments, and narrative contracts organize expectation. Contract analysis is the discovery of the "storyline" with which Honko invests the mental text, and more particularly, the discovery of the arcs of "arousal and satisfying of expectation" that Hymes identifies with narrative form. Epic moments are the mental images that "evoke one another" on the plane of ethos to move the heroic narrative. Themes, formulae, and even set-pieces akin to epic moments will exist in any mental text of an epic poem, and may participate in the complex expression of heroic ethos; but only in heroic epic, as we here formulate the term, does a bard employ high scenes and epic moments in their fully integrated function.⁸⁴

⁸³ Smith 1986, p. 63; cf. Smith 1989.

⁸⁴ The still sufficiently small literature on epic moments is here presented to the fullest knowledge of the present writer: (in addition to the other references in this section) Hatto 1979, p. 96 (elliptically, and still formatively: "Such exciting epic-dramatic plots knitted into veritable ganglia of wills convey high points in the lives of a multiplicity of heroes with shared fates [...]"); Hatto, *Anatomy*, pp. 172, 178-180 ['iii) Epic Moments', under 'Structures', adducing further examples from Fang, Fula, Rajasthani, Yakut, and Tamil]; Hatto 1990, *passim*, e.g., p. 13, 597; Hatto 1992, pp. 334f. [discussing I,2) 1533-1548]; Hatto 1994, p. 125 (elliptically: "A tense ethos, however well heroes may disguise it with nonchalance and courtesy, surely breeds laconism and pregnant 'moments' in which visual gestures condense much action?"); Hatto 1999, pp. 14, 31, 33; Hymes 2000 (a review of Hatto 1999, receptive to epic moments and proffering the information: "[Native American] Transformer-Trickster sequences [...] have moments akin to 'epic moments'"). Hatto (personal communication) credits the Germanist Hugo Kuhn for originating the kernel of the epic moment idea; see Hatto 1980a, pp. 4f. (with reference to Kuhn); Kuhn 1959.

To demonstrate the appropriateness of this distinction it will be necessary to examine instances of both heroic and other than heroic epics. In the best case we should be able to find examples of heroic and other than heroic treatment of "one and the same" epic. An ideal research ground for this idea happens to be the history of the Kirghiz epic tradition over time.

4. Structure and Ethos in Time: The Twilight Age of the Kirghiz Epic Tradition

(*A poet sings*: The hero ascended a mountain pass and trained his telescope on the land ahead. He saw a group of people in the hazy distance but could not make them out. He ordered his companion to ride out to reconnoiter, and gave him arms and his best horse to ride. The companion came to the edge of a fearsome river that churned violently and carried whole trees and even boulders along in its current. Without a thought for his life or a glance to the right or left, the companion plunged into the river astride his horse and emerged safe on the other side. The scene then shifts to the khan's daughter [the hero's destined bride]. She came out with her ladies and maids to wait for the hero by the banks of the river, and there at night she had a dream. She told the signs of the dream to her ladies and maids, and one of the girls interpreted them: the Hero is on his way to her and will kill her rival suitors and marry her, and will rule as khan.)⁸⁵

On the basis of comparative research, Hatto has characterized the Kirghiz *Manas*-epics recorded by Čokan Valikhanov and Wilhelm Radloff as tensely structured products of a highly developed epic tradition that reflected the heroic ethos and existential anxieties of the Kirghiz in the mid nineteenth century. With these models may be

⁸⁵ The Kirghiz epic plot briefly summarized here is the *Semetey* of Kenje Kara, discussed in Chapter 2, below; see Prior 1998b.

contrasted the vastly longer but structurally weaker epic productions beginning in 1922, which seem largely to reflect the willingness of the bards to oblige Soviet folklore-collecting patrons with the abundant narrative material they sought. Very little is known about what happened in the Kirghiz epic tradition during the half century that intervened between the end of Radloff's field work and the opening of the Soviet era of collecting. It must have been a time of significant transition—this much may be inferred from the differences between the earlier and later epics. But it is difficult to tell exactly what brought about the textual differences we can see, for the simple reason that sources on the period are scanty or obscure. Being a time of transition and one witnessed by so few sources, this period can rightly be called the Twilight Age of Kirghiz epic poetry.

The Kirghiz heroic epic tradition centers around the three-generation epic cycle of the hero Manas, his son Semetey, and his grandson Seytek. Radloff collected full-scale epics dealing with all three heroes in 1862, and Valikhanov recorded a Manas-epic in 1856. These epics for the most part display the structural characteristics of high scenes, epic moments, and contract structure described above, and range between about 1,000 and 3,200 lines. Reckoning by a necessarily approximate measure of recitation speed in earlier times,⁸⁶ we may imagine actual performances of the epics our texts represent to have lasted between about 70 minutes and four hours. If we allow for artificial cramping and curtailment of narrative content in our examples⁸⁷ as well as for variations in the bards' delivery rate, we may estimate that an evening and night's entertainment for a mid-nineteenth century Kirghiz audience would have been made up of the performance of one or two epics of the sort we possess as texts. Yet against these numbers must be placed the

⁸⁶ The 240-line *Semetey* of Kenje Kara, recorded on phonograph in 1904, lasts 17 ½ minutes.

⁸⁷ Radloff (*Predislovie*, pp. xv, xviii f.) remarks on the ways in which his texts suffered by the very fact of written recording to dictation.

observation, indeed the insistence throughout the recorded history of the tradition, that many Kirghiz bards could (and can) recite epics for days and even weeks on end.⁸⁸

This brings us to the important but sensitive matter of quantity versus quality. It would certainly give any researcher in this field keen satisfaction to be able to quote native Kirghiz bards or other authorities, were these to couple quantitative with qualitative facts about epic performances in the context of remarks that did not clearly derive from legend or hyperbole. In the event, it is no disappointment to be able to examine the considered words of two outside observers, each uniquely qualified to report on the matter. Čokan Valikhanov wrote, "The Kirghiz say that three nights are not sufficient for hearing all of 'Manas', and that just as many nights are needed for 'Semetey', but this is probably an exaggeration."⁸⁹ Contrary to the views of Soviet scholars,⁹⁰ what the Kirghiz said to Valikhanov in 1856 is of intrinsic interest. As a shrewd observer and an experienced collector of oral epics in his native Kazakh language, and with an apparently good command of Kirghiz, Valikhanov does not fit the usual description of the gullible foreign ethnographer who attracts careless or deliberately misleading remarks from his informants. Nor does Wilhelm Radloff, who contributed this datum:

A competent bard can sing without stopping for a day, a week, or a month, just as [easily as] he can speak for this duration. But with bards the same thing happens as with eloquent talkers, who, rattling on too long, finally begin to repeat things they have already said and so become tedious and

⁸⁸ Such claims, both about bards in general and of and by specific bards, have been universal in Kirghizia, although besides what must be inferred about the sessions that resulted in the enormous *Manas*-versions of Sagimbay and Sayakbay in the early to mid twentieth century, no performances lasting weeks have been verified.

⁸⁹ Valikhanov, *Očerki Džungarii*, p. 420.

⁹⁰ The above comment and others by the eminently qualified first observer of the Kirghiz epic tradition (See Chapter 1, below) have been vigorously criticized by Soviet scholars, who assume that the enormously long texts collected in their own era embody traditional elements that were simply missed by Valikhanov and Radloff in their collecting; cf. *Manas* 1968, p. 39, n. 1.

tire their listeners. This is shown, e.g., by the episode *Töštük* [recorded in 1869—D.P.], which was dictated to me by the same bard who had just sung to me the song *Joloy*. When this bard then started to sing the song *Jügörü*, I had to stop the singing because here were only repeated tedious descriptions that had already been met with in his earlier songs.⁹¹

Radloff's purpose was to collect linguistic samples,⁹² so his bards, whom he says he paid well, would have been eager to assure him that great masses of words could be his in any quantity he desired. Radloff's standard of how tedious a bard's narration would have to be to warrant cutting him off will have differed from that of a knowledgeable Kirghiz audience. Moreover, it may have differed on the side of brevity. Let us suppose that the approximately 7,500 total lines in *Joloy* and *Töštük* were augmented with around 2,000 lines of a *Jügörü*, which, since it is lost, we must simply imagine in a form suitable for an appreciative Kirghiz audience who were "in for the duration." This gives us almost 10,000 lines of epic poetry, lasting perhaps close to twelve hours of recitation. Thus we are already in the realm of a multi-day performance as envisaged by Valikhanov—perhaps two to three days. This, it must be emphasized, is the longest hypothetically reconstructible performance known in the early Kirghiz epic tradition.⁹³

The fuzzy edges of these calculations will trouble one less in light of the crucial point: that neither *Joloy* nor *Töštük* is a heroic epic either by the criteria laid out in the previous section or by common opinion. *Joloy* is a satirical, Rabelaisian mock-heroic epic, and *Töštük* relates the underworld adventures of an originally shamanic figure as filtered through fairy-tale epic (*Jügörü* may also have been a shamanistic epic⁹⁴). These

⁹¹ Radloff, *Predislovie*, p. xvii.

⁹² Remembering this, one is all the more amazed by the many services Radloff performed, consciously and unconsciously, for epic scholarship and Kirghiz studies, and which he considered incidental to his mission.

⁹³ Cf. pp. 63f., below. Also, in Chapter 2 on the Twilight Age below, information will be presented which pushes the envelope of *Manas*-performance out to five or six days.

⁹⁴ See n. 652 in Appendix 2, below.

texts lack the heroic structures with which our analysis deals and therefore do not represent the kind of plot with which we will typify Kirghiz heroic epic poetry.

We are positing the existence of discoverable variations in the aesthetic makeup of a body of text material representing the early Kirghiz epic tradition. Radloff sensed some of these variations, but made no pretense about his own reaction to them:

It is very interesting to observe that the Kirghiz audience above all likes the parts—and this happened often—which did not make the slightest impression on me, and which seemed to me to be empty words, albeit an artful play of rhymes. Thus, for example, the bard's most difficult challenge consists in the delivery of Manas's invocation of his forty comrades, which listeners also afford their highest regard.⁹⁵

Beside invocations of the 40 companions we may place epithets and cyclic allusions, descriptions of heroes and animals, itineraries, testaments, laments, and the other narrative elements in the "pantry" of verbal-sensuous delicacies with which an able bard could regale his audience. And here above all, for heroic poetry, we place high scenes and epic moments as well as their complexes, such as contract structures. We are seeking recipes by which all these variable ingredients were combined in performance to constitute heroic, and other than heroic, epic poems. The project of this dissertation is to show how Kirghiz epic poetry of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries reflected a transition away from the heroic ethos found in the mid-nineteenth century epics. This Twilight Age was signaled by changes in the use of distinctive narrative structures in relation to the other ingredients of epic narration. The result was an epic tradition in which performances tended to be either longer or shorter than before, with fragmented and rearranged themes. The potential, and even the receptive audience, for very long epic performances evidently existed in the mid nineteenth century, and

⁹⁵ Radloff, *Predislovie*, p. xviii.

probably existed long before. It was the attenuation of the narrative stringency of the heroic ethos, however, which allowed these kinds of performances to prevail.

In order to discover these variations we will be called on to develop the theory of epic moments and the methodology of contract analysis, and to apply them to the Kirghiz epic tradition. To do this we will have to wield these tools in a new, diagnostic and diachronic research stance.⁹⁶ Finally, it will be necessary to assemble and process, mostly from scratch, the sources on the Twilight Age—the epic records, supporting documentation, and ethnographic and historical material, which in certain cases have never been studied at all and in general have never been examined as sources on the development of the Kirghiz epic tradition.⁹⁷

The question has lingered from the last section, How is it possible to equate or correlate the heroic ethos with epic moments and their associated narrative structures? It

⁹⁶ The present writer has already produced preliminary results in the diagnostic mode; see Prior 2001.

⁹⁷ On the bibliography of the Kirghiz epic tradition (additional items are noted in the bibliography at the end of this dissertation):

Good bibliographies may be found in Berkov & Sagidova 1961; Hatto 1965; and the bibliographical survey and references in Žirmunskii's contribution in Chadwick & Žirmunsky 1969 (pp. 271-290, 340-348). The bibliography in *Manas entsiklopediya* (vol. 2, pp. 385-431) is gravely marred by typographical errors but fills in the years since 1961.

Main texts (excluding the Twilight Age, for which see Chapter 2): *KO*; *MWR* (plus Radloff, *Obraztsy/Proben* for the non-*Manas* epics *Er Töštük* and *Joloy Kan*, not re-edited in *MWR*); *MMSO*, *MBSO*. *Obzor zapisei* is a detailed disclosure of the high points of the *Manas* holdings (N.B.: excluding *Semetey* and *Seytek*) of the MS Archives of the Institute of Language of Literature (now the MS Archives of the National Center of Manasology and Artistic Culture) of the Kirghiz Academy of Sciences. Dor (1982) presents the brief text of a tape-recorded *Manas*-performance from the Kirghiz of the Afghan Pamir.

Discussion: Valikhanov, *Očerki Džungarii*; Radloff, *Predislovie*; Žirmunskii 1961 (authoritative for its time); Auezov 1961a/b (for the pre-revolutionary phase of the tradition); Margulan 1971 (ditto); Hatto 1980c (ditto); Musaev 1979; Kydyrbaeva 1980; Kydyrbaeva 1984; Reichl 1992. *Manas entsiklopediya* contains much pertinent information uncritically presented.

is because of the occurrence and variation of these structures in time.⁹⁸ Lauri Honko's concept of mental text supposes a diachronic dimension, as when he writes:

Mental texts are not stable (although some may be more stable than others) and they alter and develop during the performance career of the singer. It is appropriate to speak of the editing of mental texts because empirical evidence shows that singers take their time in preparing their performances and that they also outline conscious changes in storylines and episodic patterns. The very idea of mental text presupposes the development and growth of the epic material, changes in the customary narrative models and the integration of new elements into the epic outline.⁹⁹

We shall see how changes in customary narrative models will affect the general shape of oral epics not just over the career of one singer, but over periods of several generations.

The plot summary presented at the beginning of this section is of the bard Kenje Kara's performance of a part of *Semetey*, recorded on six wax phonograph cylinders in 1904.¹⁰⁰ In his 240-line poem, Kenje Kara sang three distinct narrative high points which he marked with ecstatic musico-poetic effects, deploying them at the beginning, middle, and end of the recording: the hero Semetey's reconnaissance by (quasi-magical) telescope,¹⁰¹ his companion Kül-čoro's daring crossing of the fearsome river Ürgönč, and the interpretation of his intended bride Ay-čürök's clairvoyant dream of his approach. Anticipating here the full analysis of this epic performance,¹⁰² we surmise that the three narrative high points could have been used on another occasion, in a full epic narration, in the manner of epic moments as formulated by Hatto and Smith. Yet the state in which

⁹⁸ Hatto 1991, p. 19. Prior 2000 takes up the problem of the history of the bard–audience–patron "ecosystem" among the Kirghiz.

⁹⁹ Honko 1998a, p. 94. A concise summary of the theory of mental text in relation to other categories of epic structure can be found in Honko 1996, pp. 4-10.

¹⁰⁰ SKK.

¹⁰¹ The quasi-magical characteristics of the telescope are fully narrated only in other versions.

¹⁰² In Chapter 2, below.

we find these nodes in this performance record is instructive. To judge from widely-gleaned standards of plot construction that a certain passage is an epic moment is not the same thing as measuring an audience's or a bard's perception of the passage. We recall that this problem has been obviated in the case of the Rajasthani epic, where the *parvāros* or illustrations on the ritual backdrop have normalized the "canon" of epic moments. But in the Kirghiz tradition we must for now make our way on a purely internal, formal footing. This fact raises questions: How generalizable are the features of epic moments within the Kirghiz tradition? To what extent are they "traditional," and an element of immanent art? Are there perhaps great and small epic moments, or functionally differentiated epic moments? If so, are form and function related? It will be useful in our discussion to distinguish between *high scenes*, which function as boundary-marking scenes in the enactment and fulfilment of contracts as described by Smith, and *epic moments*, a special class of high scenes that display the visual and aural magnificence noticed by Hatto.¹⁰³ Epic moments in Kirghiz epics do not necessarily mark every episode or structural unit; several, however, usually occur over the course of an epic of the mid nineteenth century. Hatto differentiates two classes of epic moments in another epic, the "scenic" and "gestural" epic moments of the medieval German *Nibelungenlied*.¹⁰⁴ As will be discussed below, both the nature of this distinction and what has been deduced about the development of these two types over time in the German epic tradition shed light on the development and decline of epic moments in the Kirghiz tradition.

¹⁰³ Smith (1986) calls all the high scenes in *Pābūjī* epic moments, a judgment which stands up even with the narrower definition given here.

¹⁰⁴ Hatto 1980a, pp. 4f.; cf. Kuhn 1959.

As has already been mentioned, Kirghiz epic poetry is rich in different themes and narrative elements. One element that underwent significant development in the Twilight Age is really a meta-thematic category, the cyclic allusion.¹⁰⁵ From the time of the earliest known records up to the most recent performances, Kirghiz bards have displayed a flair for inserting bits of traditional information from outside the plot into the narrative thread. The effect, in short, is a marvelous deepening and varying of texture in the main narrative. A non-native can only guess at the pleasurable emotions that these familiar, often crowded references impart to a knowledgeable audience. Cyclic allusions have traditional forms. Catalogs, which can introduce the barest reference to a hero from another epic, generally make use of a standardized format such as “When you ride on thence, keeping your two reins even, you will come to *x* grandee: invite him! His steed shall come to my feast, himself shall come to my side!”¹⁰⁶ Perhaps the most ornate cyclic allusions in Kirghiz epic are those which take the form of epithets. In the nineteenth century texts, cyclically allusive epithets can reach great length (up to 12 lines) with intricate rhythmico-syntactic and semantic parallelisms, a development which Hatto has termed the “king-epithet” (*Hauptepitheta*).¹⁰⁷ In the Kirghiz epic performance that I recorded from Šaabay Aziz uulu in 1996, one cyclically allusive epithet reached a length of 26 lines, including within it an embedded, highly circumstantial, cyclically allusive epithet of the named hero’s father. Cyclic allusions have even preserved evidence of Kirghiz epics and heroes (or possibly heroes known in traditional epics by neighboring peoples) for which we have no texts. The cyclic allusion is an instance of the metonymic effects highlighted by the theory of immanent art. Since the meaning of “cyclic allusion”

¹⁰⁵ Hatto 1981; Hatto 1989a.

¹⁰⁶ *KO*.

¹⁰⁷ Hatto 1981, p. 226.

can be logically reduced with little difficulty to “metonymic reference to tradition,” the essential element of immanent art, it is questionable whether this theory would even confer a special status to the cyclic allusion over any bit of traditional material, down to a two-word description of a horse’s ears. The question for the ethnographer is whether by making the logical reduction we leave behind a distinction that is or was valid for the native participants in the Kirghiz epic tradition. For the purposes of this study, cyclic allusions (that is, references, often formally marked, to events or characters outside the main story) are assumed to have a special status within the spectrum of Kirghiz traditional referentiality. Under the right conditions, a cyclic allusion may occur in an epic moment, as in certain cases in the mid-nineteenth century epics when Manas summons his Forty Companions.

While cyclic allusions flourished in epic narration during the Twilight Age, another type of narrative element receded from currency. The distinctively Kirghiz epic itineraries of the mid-nineteenth century tradition were uniquely realistic from a geographical standpoint. In its most highly integrated instances, the itinerary constituted an epic moment in which a hero displayed his economic abilities in the timely disposition and proper care of a large pastoral unit on the move—skills which were comparable to war prowess for the nomadic Kirghiz.¹⁰⁸ The twentieth-century bards Sagimbay, Sayakbay, and others also narrated epic itineraries, but no doubt owing to the social and cultural shift of the Kirghiz away from nomadic stock-raising, the realism and existential-economic character of these later itineraries was weaker. This study will show that the Twilight Age texts in the late nineteenth century already reflect the decadence of the itinerary theme in Kirghiz epic. The existential linkage between epic itineraries and

¹⁰⁸ Hatto 1969a; Hatto 1992; Prior 1998a.

nomadic livelihood strengthens the proposed correlation between heroic narrative structures and the social base of the epic tradition.

Before our study can rightly commence, three issues remain to be explained and controlled. First, I acknowledge and wish to neutralize as far as possible the perils I have called forth by invoking the word *performance*, with the exciting new precision and power that scholars have given it, to describe the meager, nth-hand remains that are all we have to call "records of performance" of Kirghiz epic. In the strict construction of the performance approach, Radloff's candid confession of his collecting practices, and Valikhanov's silence about his, already disqualify our entire early sample.¹⁰⁹ To size up later records, even up to and including my own of 1996,¹¹⁰ would be an exercise in more or less total rejection. The remarkable miscellany of information surrounding the Twilight Age *Semetey* performance of Kenje Kara—including a wax-cylinder phonogram and a description and drawing of the bard in action—while serendipitously distinguishing it head and shoulders above most other documents of Kirghiz epic performance *per se* until 1996,¹¹¹ only barely justifies the epithet "performance edition" which I advanced in my work on it,¹¹² and lies hopelessly on the thin side of the "thick corpus" Honko calls for in such studies.¹¹³ While we cannot assume in the following analyses of epic plots that the texts are records of authentic performances, we can examine specific features of the texts and inquire in what way they may reflect the performance-centered habits of the poets who created them. We assume that a bard concentrating on the difficult task of dictation will not try to make challenging innovations or improvements in his practiced

¹⁰⁹ Bauman 1977; Hymes 1975; Fine 1984; Honko 1998a.

¹¹⁰ See Chapter 3.

¹¹¹ An exception: Dor 1982.

¹¹² Prior 1998a.

¹¹³ Honko 2000.

methods of composition. At the same time we envision that some illiterate bards, in the presence of graphic technology, will have risen to an occasion and strived to give a text with at least some claim to the honor of personal best. As the Twilight Age advanced, writing and literacy became more and more important in Kirghiz life, to the point where we face the novel and not altogether unwelcome dilemma, in airing the MS *Semetey* of Maldıbay Borzu uulu,¹¹⁴ of resolving whether it originated from an oral bard or a literate poet, or both.

Second, we advance the term *heroic cosmos* at a theoretical remove from the outdated *heroic society*, *heroic age*, and *heroic milieu*. Heroic poetry is not necessarily, not demonstrably the product of a whole society; nor is it distinctively the product of a "milieu."¹¹⁵ Nor is it the monument of an age of human development. It is the occupation of a group of people within a society who are distinguished not so much by their outward social, political, or military characteristics—though these will matter very much in a primary tradition like Kirghiz—as by their ethical (as pertains to ethos) orientation to the poetry. These people's activities in the real world from time to time verge near enough to heroism to fire the imagination, but in the nature of things they fall far enough short to instill longing for an ideal. Heroism only truly lives when the bard sings.

The heroic cosmos consists of both the group of people within a society who are attuned to heroic poetry and the larger context in which the poetry is manipulated and interpreted. There is a core of connoisseurs—bards, patrons, and audiences—whose tastes will be addressed in performance, but there is also a fluctuating outer ring of social context which is uniquely vital for the sustenance of the heroic cosmos. This outer ring

¹¹⁴ See Chapter 2 and Appendix 2, below.

¹¹⁵ Cf. "The Heroic Milieu," in Chadwicks, *Growth*.

comprises not only the people and groups who use epic poetry for their own ends, but also their intellectual capital: legendary and other narrative material which may be inserted into the epics, other co-occurring heroic genres such as laments and testaments, the social structures and cultural memory that condition the "heroic" content (war, tribes, patriarchy, and so on), and the patterns of social mediation whereby the epics become attributes and even symbols of the society in the eyes of natives and outsiders alike. The context in which these people and ideas interact is that of performance, in and through which the bards, patrons, and audiences all strive for kudos.

The heroic cosmos is a performance cosmos. It encompasses the hearth-fire of performance, everything that gives it fuel, and everything it illuminates and warms. Here we must note Hatto's apposite conception of cosmos as the very poetry itself: "[T]rue epic poetry is an existential genre carried by a closed society wholly attuned to it—the epic audience to whom it gave a cosmos".¹¹⁶ This reverse formulation is highly suggestive of the reflexivity at the outer reaches of this "hearthside": the poems help to situate real people in the real world. Our stated definition of heroic cosmos is intentionally broad, in order to allow for creative discrepancies between the real and the ideal. For example, while the mid-nineteenth century Kirghiz epic tradition centered around the paramount hero Manas, obviously Manas's predominance reflected wishful thinking on the part of the hard-pressed Kirghiz tribes of the day. One expects to find in Manas and other Kirghiz heroes that the tensions and shortfalls between the ideal and the real are what gave vitality and soul to the oral heroic epic tradition.

Third and finally, it is time to sketch the new periodization upon which this analysis of the Kirghiz epic tradition rests; part of the justification for this periodization

¹¹⁶ Hatto 1990, p. xi.

awaits closer argument in the following chapters. The Older Period lasted up until 1862, which not coincidentally was the year that submission of the Northern Kirghiz tribes to the Czar was, if not 100 percent complete, then a virtual *fait accompli*. The Older Period texts include those collected by Valikhanov in 1856 and Radloff in 1862. The anterior portion of the Older Period, which may be termed prehistoric, yields certain relevant ethnographic data as well as the Ferghanese pseudo-history *Majmūʿ at-Tavārīkh*, in Persian, with its references to the Qıpchāq *ghāzī* Manās and other like names. This stage is prehistoric in the sense that it precedes the earliest authentic documents of Kirghiz epic poetry. It is considered part of the Older Period because the information it harbors can be utilized profitably to illuminate aspects of the Older Period heroic cosmos. The Twilight Age began in the year 1863, a somewhat automatic choice as the year following Radloff's last Older Period document. The Twilight Age lasted an even 60 years, until the time Sagimbay Orozbekov began to recite his *Manas*-version to trained folklore collectors more or less under Soviet state auspices, in 1922. This spread of dates for the Twilight Age differs from that first proposed by me,¹¹⁷ where the start of the Twilight Age was set to follow the last recordings made by Radloff in 1869, I,1) *The Birth of Manas* and II. *Joloy Kan* [and III. *Er Töštük*, not considered in this study]. It became clear in the course of this analysis that although I,1) and II. together shine a light of close to 5,500 poetic lines onto the "obscurity" of the Twilight Age, they nevertheless can be placed quite germanely beside the other poems of this period for reasons having to do with their structures. The Later Period began in 1923 and has lasted throughout the entire Soviet era and after, until the present day. The starting and ending dates of the periods posited here are not firm in all instances or from all perspectives, and discussion over their strengths

¹¹⁷ Prior 2000, p. 9.

and weaknesses in the chapters that follow will yield useful nuances toward an understanding of our main subject, the creative intersections between structure and ethos in oral epic tradition.

Three Chapters, a Conclusion, and Appendices follow. Chapter 1, focusing on the Older Period (1856 to 1862), begins by examining a wide range of historical and ethnographic sources to portray the Kirghiz heroic cosmos. Analysis of the plots of all seven Older Period epic texts reveals that most of them were built on progressions of high scenes and epic moments which rhythmically punctuate the heroes' moral and cosmic obligations in culturally apposite ways.

Chapter 2 concerns the Twilight Age (1863-1922). We examine the changes in the Kirghiz social milieu under Russian rule, survey the known bards and their repertoires, and use the same procedures as in Chapter 1 to analyze the structures of the seven available Twilight Age epics. This analysis shows that poets of the Twilight Age tended to build performances around such devices as cyclic allusions and scenic set-pieces rather than epic moments and narrative contracts. The occurrence of short texts in this period bears witness to a process of fragmentation and rearrangement of epic themes.

Chapter 3, focusing on the Later Period (1923 to the present), shows that Sagimbay Orozbekov's enormously long "classic" version (recited 1922-26) echoed prototypes from the Older Period and Twilight Age but took final shape under the influence of Soviet folklore collectors. Finally, analysis of my own field recording of an epic bard in performance (1996) suggests that the tradition is today going through another twilight age characterized by a post-classical consolidation of themes.

In the Conclusion I evaluate the use of epic moments as a critical factor in the study of a heroic epic tradition. Considering the different varieties of epic structure

observable in a single tradition, I will propose a new genre-term and concept that foreground the active choices made by all participants in the performance of oral epic. The Appendices present editions and/or English renderings of four Twilight Age texts: *Joloy Khan*, the *Semetey* of Maldıbay Borzu uulu, the *Semetey* of Tınıbek Japıy uulu, and the *Semetey* of Kenje Kara.

The question of the social base of heroic poetry has remained controversial as long as explanations rested upon supposed thematic parallels between poetic texts and problematic ethnographic constructs. However, by placing new emphasis on structural rather than thematic features of the poems themselves, it is possible to steer discussion of heroic poetry away from imponderable matters of ethnographic record and toward potentially fruitful engagement with contemporary discussions of folklore performance in social and cultural context.

Figure 1. Čokan Valikhanov's campsite at San-taš pass, May 1856.

Chapter 1. The Older Period

1. The Heroic Cosmos

Kirghiz Political and Ethnic History

To the modern-day Kirghiz of Kirghizstan (Kyrgyzstan), East Turkistan (Sinkiang, Xinjiang), and surrounding areas belongs the oldest name of any modern nation in Central Asia. Traced in Chinese historical sources back to two centuries before Christ, the name of the Kirghiz later figured frequently in the Orkhon inscriptions of the Second Türk Empire in the seventh and eighth centuries of our era. It was the Kirghiz who overturned the Uygur Empire in a great military victory in 840, and Kirghiz formations later figured in the consolidation of the Mongol Empire. Up to the fourteenth century, the Kirghiz were found east of Central Asia in present-day Mongolia and South Siberia; their homeland appears to have been the Yenisei River basin. The movements that brought them or their name to the present-day stronghold in the Tian Shan Mountains are obscure. The most that can be said with certainty is that by the sixteenth century, groups with the name Kirghiz had appeared in the Tian Shan (what was then Moghulistan of the Chaghatayid Dynasty), and this region has continued until now to be home to Kirghiz—whether descended from these same groups or later arrivals—with only brief interruptions. These were caused by the flights and relocations of the Tian Shan Kirghiz before the menace of the Jungharian (Oirat Mongol) state. After being thrown together for common defense with the Kazakhs, their neighbors and relatives from the steppes to the north, the Kirghiz (called *Burut* by the Mongols) finally fell under Jungharian domination at the close of the seventeenth century. The extreme hardships under Jungharian rule and struggles with their Oirat overlords (known by the Kirghiz as

Kalmak) crystallized in the memory of both the Kirghiz and the Kazakhs as a defining moment, and this era of conflict seems to be the oldest historical datum in Kirghiz epic poetry, though little more than an atmosphere survives in the *Manas*-poems.¹¹⁸ Driven from their nomadizing grounds by the Kalmaks who shared their pastoralist way of life, some Kirghiz took refuge in Kashgharia and the Ferghana Valley. By the time the Jungharian power was shattered and the Oirat population massacred by the Ch'ing in 1757-58 (which enabled the Kirghiz to return to their home territories), certain Kirghiz groupings had come into close and active contact with the powerful khoja families of East Turkistan and Ferghana. In the latter place the Kirghiz and the closely related Kipchaks became players in the politics of the nascent khanate of Kokand. These relations more than any others shaped the post-Jungharian history of the Kirghiz until the Russian Empire completed its approach. The Kirghiz had long been considered by their Muslim neighbors to be unbelievers. It was in cooperation with the khojas (Kirk. *kojo*), in the struggles of the Aqtaghliq and Qarataghliq dynasties for control of Kashgharia—battles which the irritations of infidel Jungharian overlordship had mutated into Islamic *ghazāt* against the Kalmaks and each other—that individual Kirghiz groupings were first recognized as Islamized on the model of the times. The model was that of the pious frontier warrior of the faith, or *ghāzī*. The Kirghiz word for a military campaign or raid—*kazat*—enshrines this chapter of their history. To this era may also be referred the Kirghiz epic conception of the infidel Kalmak and Kıtay (Chinese) as the secular foe divided from the Muslims across a religious border, where war could be elevated from the existential plane to the cosmic. Kashghari khojas had a hand in Kokandian affairs since

¹¹⁸ Other Kirghiz epics such as *Kurmanbek* and *Er Tabildi* deal more directly with the Kalmak era, but not much more concretely from a historical standpoint.

first seeking refuge in Ferghana in the aftermath of the Manchu reconquest of East Turkistan, and they were the main catalysts in the Kokandian khans' policy of economic and political influence in Kashgharia. The khojas' comings and goings wore pathways through the high mountain refuges of the Kirghiz, who were increasingly drawn into their affairs. Jahāngīr Khoja planned and manned his spectacular but ill-fated Muslim revolt in Kashghar (1826-27) while living in the Central Tian Shan among the Kirghiz.¹¹⁹ The epic *The Memorial Feast for Kōkötöy Khan (KO)*, recorded not far away from there about 30 years later, features the son of "Jaŋgır kojo" in the adventures of Er Koşoy, a hero whom the Kirghiz were fond of portraying as a *ghāzī*.

As an ethnic group the Kirghiz were alien to the traditional structure of supreme political power in Central Asia, the line of sultans or putative descendants of Chingis Khan from whom the Özbeks and Kazakhs raised their khans. The Kazakhs with their sultans of the "white bone" called the exclusively plebeian Kirghiz *kara* 'black', an epithet which lodged in the older Russian ethnonym *Kara-Kirgiz*. Most Kirghiz tribes were allocated genealogically into right and left "wings," reflecting the quasi-military formation of post-Chingisid ethnoi, but there was no practical significance to the system since the Kirghiz had never in memory been engaged in universal military action. The right wing, which included such tribes as the Sarıbağış, Bugu, Solto, and Sayak, was located in the north and east of the Kirghiz territory, in the basin of lake Issyk-Kul, the Central Tian Shan and adjacent slopes in East Turkistan, and the valleys of the upper Naryn, Chu, and Tekes rivers. From the right wing, or broadly the Northern Kirghiz, come most of the information on record about Kirghiz epic poetry. The left wing

¹¹⁹ Aristov 2001; Barthold, *History of the Semirechye*; Barthold, *Kirgizy*; Beisembiev 1987; Duman 1966; Golden 1992; *Khronika*; Kraft 1953; *MIKK*; Saguchi 1965; Saguchi 1968; Salakhmetdinova 1959; Salakhmetdinova 1961; *Tarikh-i Rashidi*; Valikhanov, *O sostoianii Altyšara*.

occupied the south and west of the region, including the Talas, Čatkal, and lower Naryn rivers and the Ferghana Valley. A third grouping, the Ičkilik (Interior), also lived in the south and included a tribe, the Kıpčak, whose name preserves one of the strands of the Kirghiz ethnic stock through which they are related to the Kazakhs and Özbeks. The absence of the Chingisid dispensation and hereditary nobility meant that the widespread Central Asian system of tribal governance was, for the Kirghiz, the top level of rule: each tribe was led by its own *biys* or clan elders, who also acted as judges. Yet on top of this layer a system of hereditary chieftains gradually took form. These *manaps*, according to legend, derived from the model of an eponymous Sarıbağıš chief of the eighteenth century who managed to amass great wealth and power and pass it on to his heirs. (The last Sarıbağıš *manap*, Šabdan Jantayev [d. 1912] was said to be the eighth generation in the direct line from this chief Manap.) Other Northern Kirghiz chiefs of the Bugu, Sayak, Čerik, and other tribes adopted the practice. There is no doubt that the institution of *manaps* was brought on in part by the fragmented Kirghiz tribes' craving for security, yet the tyrannical power of these chieftains amounted to despotism and became an extra burden on the population. There was much to bear in their lot: while attempting to live as they were being squeezed politically, militarily, and economically by Kokand, China, the Kazakhs, and later Russia, most tribes existed in a state of constant movement and readiness for battle, whether defensive or offensive. In the latter instance the object was often to raid others' cattle, an activity with legalistic overtones of mutual score-settling which became virtually codified in the institution of *barımta*. The word for man, *er*, was synonymous with warrior, and the best fighters were styled *batır*. For a time, chiefs who sought peace were essentially forced to live as tribute-paying subjects of the Ch'ing or of

Kokand, a situation that led to tensions with their own *batırs*, and to cycles of submission to and removal beyond the reach of the greater powers.¹²⁰

The early nineteenth century was a decisive period for the Kirghiz. In the 1820s, following two decades of military conquests over the Kirghiz by the Kokandian khans ʿAlim and ʿUmar, Madali Khan managed an astonishingly rapid extension of the khanate's territory by building lines of fortified posts deep into the Kirghiz heartland. These functioned as bases for tax collections, which rose unbearably high as the khanate sank into internal troubles. Revolts were frequent. A situation arose by the 1840s in which Kokandian and Russian commanders and Kirghiz and Kazakh chiefs and sultans were freely playing one another off against still others, with dangerous possibilities which only Russia had the strength to surmount in the end. The Kazakh sultan Kenesari Kasımov, raised as khan in 1841 amid mass disturbances with the Russian command at Orenburg and the Kokand Khanate, was killed in 1847 by Kirghiz formations at Tokmak under Ormon and Jantay (father of Šabdan), Sarıbagış *manaps* nominally under Kokandian rule who promised assistance to Russia to put down Kenesari's revolt. Another *manap* who participated in this action, Borombay of the Bugu, was the first to submit to the Czar and become a Russian subject, as distinguished from a tributary, in 1855. As leader of the generally un-warlike Bugu, Borombay keenly grasped the meaning of Russian security. His tribe had been fighting a war with the Sarıbagış under Ormon, whose rising power had led him to take the unheard-of step of having himself proclaimed khan. Ormon freely added to this charisma with invited Kokandian forces, but was captured in battle with the Bugu and killed in 1855 (according to some sources, in

¹²⁰ (In addition to works cited in the previous note:) Abramzon 1959; Abramzon 1960; Abramzon, *Kirgizy*; Krader 1963; Radloff, *Iz Sibiri*; Valikhanov, *Očerki Džungarii*.

1854¹²¹). Čokan Valikhanov was dispatched with the first Russian military expedition to make contact with the new Bugu subjects and evaluate the Sarıbağış threat, and it was in a camp within Borombay's orbit in 1856 that he first met a Kirghiz epic bard and probably recorded *The Memorial Feast for Kōkötöy Khan*. Not even Russian vassalage could protect the Bugu from the Sarıbağış under Ümötalı, Ormon's powerful son, who pressed the blood-feud mercilessly. In 1857, the Sarıbağış massacred a large section of the Bugu at Juuku pass south of Issyk Kul, which led to the Sarıbağış capture of all Bugu territories on the lake. Russia, however, by liquidating Kokand's fortresses one by one and by pressuring the Sarıbağış, Solto, and Sayak, was able to obtain the allegiance of the Northern Kirghiz tribes and gradually to secure peace in the Tian Shan. Jantay became a Russian subject in 1862, although this momentous action was not deemed worth including into the great Sarıbağış warrior's heroic funeral lament, which was recorded later by Radloff.¹²²

Prehistory of the Epic Tradition

"[I]t is not possible on internal evidence to take the Kirgiz epic tradition back for more than two generations, though intrinsically it is likely to ascend much further."¹²³

The widespread traditions of epic poetry in Inner Asia display similarities that attest to movements of peoples and ideas in the past. The Kirghiz epics of the Manas-cycle have spatially and temporally distant correlates that serve to suggest possible origins and transmission routes, though the scarce data allow reconstruction of only

¹²¹ Soltonoyev, *Kirgiz tarikhi*, vol. 2, pp. 16ff.

¹²² (In addition to works cited in the previous two notes:) Bekmakhanov 1992(1947); Džamgerčinov 1959; Hatto 1983; Khasanov 1961; Levšin, *Opisanie*; Ploskikh 1977; Semenov-Tian-Šanskii, *Putešestvie*; E. Smirnov 1889; Soltonoyev, *Kirgiz tarikhi*; Usenbaev 1969.

¹²³ Hatto 1977, p. 90.

possible outlines of development.¹²⁴ Names have echoes, most notably this array of phonologically related Turkic hero-names, which stretches from the Altay mountains to Asia Minor and across several centuries: Altay *Alıp-manaš*—Kirghiz *Manas* (by subtracting Turkic *alp* 'hero')—Chaghatay *Mamış*—Uzbek *Alpamiš*—Kazakh, Karakalpak *Alpamiš*—Oghuz *Bamsi*.¹²⁵ The Altay, Uzbek, Kazakh, Karakalpak, and Oghuz epics with these heroes as their subjects overlap around a dual plot kernel, the marriage of the hero and his return from captivity or exile to reclaim his bride.¹²⁶ While the Kirghiz *Manas*-epics do not fit well with this plot group on thematic grounds,¹²⁷ other parallels in name and theme reinforce the location of the Kirghiz epics within the common Inner Asian epic milieu. A few examples will suffice here: *Almambet*, the name

¹²⁴ Efforts to date and give a plausibly coherent history of the *Manas* epic tradition are hampered by poverty of evidence. Auezov (1961b, pp. 51-64) reflects the tendency, popularized in the 1940s, to assume an equation between the modern Tian Shan Kirghiz and the Kirghiz Kaghhanate of the ninth and tenth centuries, and repeats the discredited idea that the prototype of the *Manas* figure was a Kirghiz leader who defeated the Uyghurs in 840 and died in 847 (for the reasoned rejection of the idea, which originated with A.N. Bernštam, see Malov 1947; Žirmunskii 1961, pp. 138-142; on the Soviet political scenario see Prior 2000, pp. 29-33). Žirmunskii's balanced and well-founded assessment (1961, pp. 138-167) perceives at most a background theme of struggles with the Uyghurs, Chinese, and other peoples back to the ninth century, while emphasizing the definitive role of (1) the wars with the Kalmyks (fifteenth to seventeenth centuries) in the formation of the *Manas* narrative as it is now known; he refers other significant strata of material to (2) the Noghay epic cycle based on historical figures of the Dasht-i Qipchaq from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, imparted to the Kirghiz by way of the Kazakhs; and (3) later themes associated with the Islamization of the Kirghiz starting from the same time, such as the conversion of Almambet to Islam, the wars for the faith (*kazat*) against the Sino-Kalmak enemy, and spiritual helpers such as the forty *čilten*, Ay-kojo, and Kıdır. Kydyrbaeva (1980) gives a detailed review of the literature on origins (pp. 5-16), and augments a basic model of development similar to Žirmunskii's with examinations of historical poetics back to the early Turkic monuments; she deemphasizes the formative role of Islamic themes in the later tradition, favoring the notion of a "native Turkic" basis upon which Islamic elements were weakly overlaid (pp. 207f.).

¹²⁵ Žirmunskii & Zarifov 1947, pp. 68, 72-78 ("*oirotskii*" = Altay); Žirmunskii 1960; Žirmunskii 1961, pp. 151f.; Berkov 1961; cf. Reichl 2001; *Korkut* (for Bamsi [Beyrek]).

¹²⁶ In his analysis comparing this *nostos* plot with that of the *Odyssey*, Žirmunskii (1960, pp. 283-292) concludes that the similarity is due to common origin.

¹²⁷ The epic *Joloy Khan*, however, lines up rather well; see below.

of Manas's foreign friend, jingles with the Kazakh hero-names *Armambet* and *Jalmambet* in the epic *Kambar-batır*;¹²⁸ also, the biography of the Almambet figure resembles that of Alpamiš's Kalmak friend Karajan in the Uzbek epic. The Uzbek hero Alpamiš has a sister named *Kaldırğač*; cf. Manas's sister (and Joloy's, in a different epic) *Kardığač*.¹²⁹ The names of the enemy heroes *Konjur-bay* and *Joloy* reflect the names of heroes in Kalmyk epic tradition: *Khongor*, companion of the hero Jangar, and *Zula*, great-grandfather of Jangar.¹³⁰

The most important source of names in the Kirghiz epics is the Noghay epic cycle. The historical Noghay Horde of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries¹³¹ gave rise to a lasting tradition of tales and epics as the power and then the fame of its *mirzas* spread across the Dasht-i Qipchaq among the Kazakhs, Karakalpaks, Siberian Tatars, and Kirghiz.¹³² The Kazakhs were almost certainly the source of the legends of Noghay heroes that lodged in the Kirghiz epic tradition, although little more than names survive in the Kirghiz epics to link them with narrative antecedents in the Noghay cycle. The Noghay-derived hero names include *Kökčö*, *Jamgırçı*, *Edige*, *Agiš*, *Ša-Temir*, and *Kanıkey*.¹³³ The ethnonym *Nogoy* survived as well, and, significantly, the prestige of the

¹²⁸ *Kambar*, p. 259.

¹²⁹ *Alpomiš*; I,3); *J*.

¹³⁰ (Khongor) Žirmunskii 1961, pp. 149f.; *Džangar*, pp. 201ff., etc.; (Zula) *Džangar*, p. 196. I express gratitude to Prof. György Kara on behalf of *Manas* studies for pointing out a connection that has apparently not been noticed before, the phonological regularities between Kalm. *Zula* and Kirg. *Joloy*.

¹³¹ Tizengauzen, *Sbornik*; Spuler 1965; Trepavlov 2001.

¹³² Valikhanov, *Zapiski o kirgizakh*, p. 357; Valikhanov, *Očerki Džungarii*, pp. 419f.; Žirmunskii 1962, pp. 195-240; Žirmunskii 1974a; DeWeese 1994; Schmitz 1996.

¹³³ Žirmunskii 1961, pp. 144-148. Žirmunskii cites (p. 145) the occurrence in the Kazakh epic *Er Kökše* of the hero Manaša and his horse Ak-kula (cf. Kirg. Manas and Ak-kula) as evidence of later "back-influence" from Kirghiz onto Kazakh epic, but in the absence of other facts, it appears equally likely that this Manaša could represent a source of the Manas figure, or a survival from a common source. Cf. Radloff, *Obraztsy/Proben*, vol. 3, pp. 89f.

Noghay/Nogoy remained so high that up until the Soviet era the Kirghiz epic tradition identified Manas and other main heroes exclusively as Nogoy; *none were Kirghiz*.

The earliest records that may be said to echo facts from a distinctly Kirghiz epic tradition come from the realm of legends about these Noghay/Nogoy. A Russian report about the Kirghiz published in 1851 cites a legend that "Kirgyzbai, the progenitor of the Kirghiz, along with his two sons Atygen and Togai and many of his dependent tribes, moved away from the encroachments of the Nogai chieftains Manas and his son Sametei, from the shores of the Ili river into the mountains that lie to the south."¹³⁴ This bare notice coheres in three crucial respects with the data from Kirghiz epic poetry of slightly later date. First, the leading hero, Manas, was a Nogoy. Second, the name of Manas's son in the legend matches the Semetei of Kirghiz tradition. Third, this legend clearly echoes the penchant of the mid-nineteenth century epic bards for portraying the Kirghiz as weaklings.¹³⁵ It thus appears that the latter aspect of the epic tradition was grounded in the Kirghiz' own concrete ideas about their ethnogenesis. "Kirgyzbai" is found in oral genealogies as the progenitor of the Kirghiz,¹³⁶ and "Atygen" (Adigine) and "Togai" (Tagay), his descendants, are the eponyms of major branches of the Kirghiz *oy kanat* (right wing),¹³⁷ which included the tribes from whom all of the Older Period epics were collected. The legendary notice of 1851 is thus significant for our understanding of the Older Period tradition, because it shows that the Kirghiz of that time considered the Manas stories to be at least true enough to pass on to an outsider as an unflattering chapter in their own history.

¹³⁴ "Svedeniia" 1851; cf. Berkov & Sagidova 1961, pp. 301f. nos. 1, 2.

¹³⁵ E.g., KO 3223-3232.

¹³⁶ Valikhanov, *Zapiski o kirgizakh*, p. 336.

¹³⁷ Abramzon 1960.

An undoubtedly earlier and important, though puzzling source on the prehistoric period of the Kirghiz epic tradition is the Persian (Tajik) pseudo-history *Majmūʿ at-Tavārīkh* ('Amalgam of Histories') written by Sayf ad-Dīn b. Dāmulla Shāh ʿAbbās Akhsīkandī and his son Nūr (or Nawrūz) Muhammad.¹³⁸ The work concerns the ancestors of the author's spiritual tutor, Maulānā Aʿzam Sayyid Mīr Jalīl, a Sufi shaykh whose line was active in the towns of Shīrkent, Kāsān, and Akhsīkand in the Ferghana valley. It weaves a plethora of disparate historical and legendary allusions together with the common thread of the ancestors' alleged presence and agency in the events described. The work has piqued the interest of students of Kirghiz epic poetry because Manās and his father Yaʿqūb Bek (cf. Kirg. Jakıp) are depicted as Muslim *ghāzīs* fighting a protracted and eventually successful frontier war against the infidel Qalmāqs under Jūlāy Khān (cf. Kirg. Joloy). Manās and Yaʿqūb are shown residing at the heads of the Talās and Chadghāl (Čatkal) rivers, their traditional haunts in epics since the mid nineteenth century. Numerous scenes take place around (Issyk) Kūl and other well-known Kirghiz localities. Yaʿqūb's father¹³⁹ has a comitatus of forty companions whom Manās leads into battle. Certain narrative situations in the *Majmūʿ at-Tavārīkh* suggest epic parallels as well. Like the Manas of mid-nineteenth century epics, Manās in the *Majmūʿ at-Tavārīkh* more than once becomes wounded to the point of death (in the epics, he dies) and is

¹³⁸ There are three known MSS: (A) St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, No. B 667 (*Kratkii katalog*, 3851; microfilm in the Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, Indiana University); (B) St. Petersburg State University Library, No. 963 (partial facsimile in Tagirdžanov 1960); (C) Manuscript Archives of the National Center of Manasology and Artistic Culture (Manastanuu jana Kōrkōm madaniyattın Uluttuk borboru), Kirghiz National Academy of Sciences, No. 167/277 (Kirghiz translation in *Tarıkhtardın jıynagı*; facsimile of p. 1 in Musaev 1974). See also: Barthold 1900(1966), p. 308; Romodin 1960; Mamitbekov & Abdildaev 1966, pp. 7-25; *MIKK*, pp. 200-214 and esp. nn. 3 and 5; Hatto 1977, pp. 90f.; *Istočnikovedenie Kyrgyzstana*, pp. 347-355.

¹³⁹ Named Qarqarā; cf. the place name Karkara in epics.

revived by the ministrations of a *khoja* or other spiritual figure.¹⁴⁰ When Manās kills Jūlāy in battle, he burns his corpse, just as the Muslims do to Joloy in *The Memorial Feast for Kōkötöy Khan*.¹⁴¹ Striking indeed is the general similarity between the episode of the poisoning of Manās by a Muslim-born, Qalmāqized traitor sent by Jūlāy, and Manas's poisoning by his own Kalmakized cousin in *Köz-kaman*.¹⁴² But it is still premature to use the *Majmūʿ at-Tavārīkh* for investigation of Kirghiz epic poetry in the strict sense. For one thing, these passages are not in Kirghiz verse, but in Persian prose. The small number of *bayts* (verses) sprinkled into the text show greater poetic affinity to the Persian epic *Shahnama* than to *Manas*. This is not merely on the level of stylistics, as one might expect if we were to posit a translation. There is in fact almost nothing on the level of imagery, drama, or characterization to suggest that Kirghiz oral *Manas* epics, or the oral epics of any authentic Inner Asian tradition, were the direct basis for the Manās narratives in the *Majmūʿ at-Tavārīkh*.

Handling of the contents of the *Majmūʿ at-Tavārīkh* is made extremely difficult by the discrepancies of time, place, and incident with which the narrative is rife. Despite the sources Sayf ad-Dīn names and purports to follow,¹⁴³ the *Majmūʿ at-Tavārīkh* is, quite simply, an imaginative work with few if any analogs in Central Asian historiography or hagiography. It has been characterized as the sole example of Sufi literature in which shaykhs are portrayed as "heroes of epic narratives."¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁰ Cf. I,3), I,5).

¹⁴¹ KO 3051-3059.

¹⁴² I,5) 2402f.

¹⁴³ Tagirdžanov 1960, Persian f. 1a: *Tavārīkh-i Jahān-Gushāhī* [sic] (cf. Storey-Bregel, pp. 760-765); *Qisas al-Anbiyāʾ* (cf. Storey-Bregel, p. 1693); *Tavārīkh-i Mughūliya* [sic] (cf. Storey-Bregel, pp. 767, 1463); *Tavārīkh-i Zubdat al-Bashrā* [sic].

¹⁴⁴ Tagirdžanov 1960, p. 54.

There are difficulties in establishing even certain salient facts about the work. While parts of it seem to have been composed in the sixteenth century, the two earliest manuscripts are dated to 1792-93 and the early nineteenth century respectively;¹⁴⁵ a third was produced after 1924.¹⁴⁶ An item of vocabulary found in the Manās-passages suggests that they were composed much later than the sixteenth century. Jūlāy is several times shown commanding the "Sūlūn Shīva."¹⁴⁷ Garrisons of the Solon and Sibe (Manchu tribes) became fixtures in Chinese Turkistan, but only after they were dispatched there from Manchuria in the aftermath of the overthrow of the Jungharian state by the Ch'ing in 1757. This fact imposes a *terminus post quem*. Whether the "Sūlūn Shīva" alone were interpolated in the late eighteenth century, or whether they entered the text then as part of the Manās passages, is a question that has yet to be answered.

Other evidence strongly suggests that the Manās passages as a whole should be dated to the end of the eighteenth century. Significant attention is given in the work to the origin of the Qırghız, yet Manās and company are identified neither as Qırghız or Nūghāy (Nogoy)—but as Qıpchāq.¹⁴⁸ In sources from and about Kokand from the late eighteenth century onward, one frequently meets the tribal name Kirghiz-Kipchak; and the Kipchak element in the Kirghiz ethnic makeup was especially prominent in the vicinity of Kokand, the Ili river, and Kashgharia, where groups under both ethnic names were a considerable force in politics.¹⁴⁹ If Manas was a hero of oral epic tradition among the

¹⁴⁵ Tagirdžanov 1960, pp. 53f.

¹⁴⁶ On the back of the paper cover that encloses the ruled pages on which MS C is written (see n. 138, above) are printed the words "Tipografiia No. 11, Leningrad"; cf. *Tarikhtardın jıynagı*, p. 7.

¹⁴⁷ E.g., MS A (see n. 138, above), f. 68b.

¹⁴⁸ Indeed, the *Majmūʿ at-Tavārīkh* mentions an Āq Nūghāy and Qarā Nūghāy (Tagirdžanov 1960, Pers. f. 35b, 41a), but as persons unrelated to Manās's line; Nūghāy is nowhere found as an ethnonym in the part of the work that contains the Manās-narrative.

¹⁴⁹ E.g., Barthold, *Kirgizy*, p. 528; Salakhedinova 1959, p. 103. No doubt due to their similarities and the Kirghiz tribal name, confusion of the Kipchak and Kirghiz in Kokandian sources is not

Kirghiz or Kipchak in the late eighteenth century—and it is almost certain that he was—then a line of Sufi shaykhs in Ferghana who used the glamour of writing to cast this figure as an agent of holy war and a servant under their ancestors could have advanced their position in the eyes of politically potent Kirghiz/Kipchaks. There were no few of them in the neighborhood. Moreover, the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century East Turkistani *ghazavāt-nāma* literature in Chaghatay Turkic¹⁵⁰ displays style, diction, and narrative treatments of holy wars similar to those in the *Majmūʿ at-Tavārīkh*, so contemporary literary models may be said to have existed upon which Ferghanese khojas could anchor some of the quasi-historical thrust of the *Majmūʿ at-Tavārīkh*, as well as its concern with eminent *ghāzīs*.

The nature of the text itself implies that there was a considerable readership or audience in Persian among the Kipchak/Kirghiz population, and there is no reason to doubt that the markedly multiethnic political élite of the Kokand Khanate was a preeminent part of this milieu.¹⁵¹ Thus, since these stories of holy war and Manas took form in Persian writing, the Kipchak/Kirghiz portion of their reading public would have had some distinctive attainments not shared by the common people. It is necessary to bear this fact in mind when attempting to assess the significance of the *Majmūʿ at-Tavārīkh* with respect to the Kirghiz oral epic tradition.

The *Majmūʿ at-Tavārīkh* and the legendary notice from 1851 illustrate how "hard at work" this notionally epic material was, already as far back as records go, doing

uncommon. "The Kipchaks of Ferghana were politically the closest ethnic component to the Kirghiz" (Ploskikh 1977, p. 157, n. 147).

¹⁵⁰ Derivatives and expansions upon the Persian hagiography *Tadhkira-i Bughrā Khān*, written in Turkic and dealing with the expansion of Islam in East Turkistan by *ghāzī* saints; see DeWeese 1996; Grénard 1900; Jarring 1980; for a recent oral version, cf. Jarring 1938, pp. 142-160.

¹⁵¹ The forerunner of MS (C) definitely originated from a Kirghiz scribe in the administration of Khudayar Khan (*Tarīkhtardīn jīynagī*, p. 6); cf. Ploskikh 1977, pp. 156-174.

intellectual jobs for which the ideologically privileged yet voluble genre of epic poetry is well known. We see that there was no "pristine" starting point for this tradition.

Ideological arrangements come not only later but also earlier in the trajectory of a national epic. Indeed, it will be well to consider the potential for ideological refocusing, genre-play, and shifts between oral and written formats as endemic and ceaselessly recreated characteristics of the epic tradition.

Early History of the Epic Tradition

[May 21] "SSE of the Kušmurun [mountains] lies the single mound or kurgan called Manastın Boz-töbö. A legend of the natives says that their hero Manas (hero of an epic tale which is famous among the people) had his camp upon it during his war with the [...] Kalmaks."¹⁵²

[May 28] "On the 26th I had with me a singer, a Kirghiz (*rči*). He knows the poem *Manas*. The language of the poem is much more understandable than the colloquial. Manas, the hero of the poem, is a Noghay, and what an intrepid hunter for collecting wives. His whole life consists of fights and the search for beauties. Only his mores are not quite Oriental—he often scolds his father, lifts his cattle, and treats him very, very indelicately. This is strange. Generally all nomadic peoples respect old age, and *aksakals* (white-beards) enjoy great esteem.

"In this poem, three peoples are found on the Chu, in Tashkent, and on the Ili and lake Issyk Kul: Nogays, Kazakhs, and Kirghiz. It appears that they could not have come close together, nor even come to the lake, as they themselves said, more than 70 years ago. Noghay legends are not unknown to the Kirghiz ..."¹⁵³

In the space of the week separating these two diary entries, the Kirghiz epic tradition was brought from its prehistoric or legendary into its historic phase through the attention of 21-year-old Lieutenant Sultan Čokan Čingisovič Valikhanov. The second entry notes his meeting with a Kirghiz epic bard on May 26, 1856, at San-taš pass to the east of lake Issyk Kul. This was the first time that the Kirghiz epic tradition had come to

¹⁵² Valikhanov, *Dnevnik*, p. 246. The locality is in the Karkara valley northeast of Issyk Kul.

¹⁵³ Valikhanov, *Dnevnik*, p. 251.

the notice of an outsider, and it is a matter of good fortune for posterity that the "discoverer" was Valikhanov. An experienced collector of Kazakh oral epic poetry, Valikhanov spent two days listening to the bard at San-taš, sessions which in all probability produced a manuscript, the fair copy of which is edited and translated by Hatto, *The Memorial Feast for Kökötöy Khan (KO)*.¹⁵⁴ Valikhanov also may have drawn a picture of the bard in performance at San-taš.¹⁵⁵ The opinion was voiced by a few Kirghiz bards of the Soviet era, including Sayakbay, that the *KO* bard was named Nazar Bolot uulu.¹⁵⁶ Hatto made a considered and valid argument for caution in this identification,¹⁵⁷ but folkloric information recently brought to light now raises Nazar's authorship of *KO* to a high degree of certainty. In 1949, Omor Erketanov interviewed an Issyk Kul Kirghiz teller of prose *Manas*-tales and *sanjira* (genealogy and oral history) named Kayduu, who told this story about his paternal uncle, the bard Nazar:

[Kayduu said,] "Our father Nazar passed away in the nineteen-teens (the exact date differs in some accounts).¹⁵⁸ I was 26 to 28 years old then, when Nazar died. When he was alive I was often with him—I used to

¹⁵⁴ Margulan 1971; Hatto 1977. On my field expedition in 1994, I followed the written and pictorial evidence in Valikhanov's published diary to locate the exact spot at San-taš pass where the meeting took place: see Prior 1996; Prior 1998a. In both works I urged caution over linking the *KO* MS, which bears no date, with the San-taš sessions; this attitude is revised below. Prior 1996 is the proceedings of a conference I organized for the 140th anniversary of the San-taš *Manas*-sessions, held in conjunction with the dedication of a stone monument at San-taš. The monument is shown low center in the distance in the photograph on p. 279 of Prior 1998a. The dedication ceremony was the occasion at which Šaabay Aziz uulu sang the *Kanıkey's Tale* which is discussed in Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

¹⁵⁵ Prior 1998a, pp. 276, 278.

¹⁵⁶ Mamıtbekov & Abdılđaev 1966, p. 28; Margulan 1971, pp. 16-19; cf. Abdirakhmanov 1941; *Manas entsiklopediya*, vol. 2, pp. 120f.

¹⁵⁷ Hatto 1977, pp. 94f.

¹⁵⁸ The parenthetical remark appears to be Erketanov's. Margulan 1971 and Mamıtbekov & Abdıldayev 1966 (p. 28) give Nazar Bolot uulu's dates as 1828-1893; TS KF (313)110.a, dated 1940, gives his dates as 1835-1893, and does not mention the *KO* session, but gives exactly the same genealogy for the bard as Kayduu, adding that Bolot came from the Karakız branch of the Seyitkızı clan.

follow him, take and saddle his horse, and hear [him perform] *Manas*. I heard this from the lips of my father Nazar himself: 'In 1856 our *el* [sub-tribe] the Arik¹⁵⁹ were in summer-pastures at Karkara. Our Seyitkazi *el* [clan]¹⁶⁰ formed a separate encampment. When Toksaba was chief, cossacks and a learned young Kazakh fellow came to the camp and stayed at Oljobay's [son] Toksaba's place, and they pitched a separate yurt for them and treated them respectfully. One day they summoned me. I was close to 30 years old; it was the time when I was coming into my own reciting *Manas*, and I recited for two or three days. That fellow had epaulets, and he was a tall, narrow-faced, rather handsome fellow; they called him Čokan, and they sat making written recordings, and it seems he drew a picture [of me] in pencil. We later lost the picture he had drawn in our moving about and camping.'¹⁶¹

In view of all of the evidence linking Nazar with San-taš, Nazar with *KO*, and San-taš with *KO*, henceforward it will be considered settled for the sake of discussion that Valikhanov recorded *KO* from Nazar Bolot uulu in performance sometime between May 26 and 28, 1856, at San-taš pass. Thus only *KO* among the mid-nineteenth century Kirghiz epics has a named author, and the siglum assigned by Hatto is henceforward revised to *MKNB*, the *Memorial Feast for Kōkötöy Khan* of Nazar Bolot uulu. It will be noted that Nazar said "*they* sat making written recordings,"¹⁶² confirming Hatto's apprehension that the field record was the work of another hand than Valikhanov's.

¹⁵⁹ One of the three main sub-tribes of the Bugu: "[Their] *manap* Toksaba Oljabaev, independent from Buranbay, possesses the Chinese red-button rank ; his brother Khakimbek was at Tobol'sk in 1824 and received a gold medal" (Valikhanov, *Priloženie II*, p. 546). N.B.: These two men were singled out by Valikhanov as *absent* from the important Bugu-Dulat-Russian counsel in the Karkara Valley, in which Valikhanov took part (Valikhanov, *Dnevnik*, p. 257), yet further on in the present quotation, Nazar says that Valikhanov camped with Toksaba. The meeting took place one week before Valikhanov, having gone a day's journey further to camp at San-taš pass, noted in his diary that he met and heard a *Manas*-bard. Discrepancies of this kind are of course not restricted to oral sources, and in principle are not difficult to reconcile.

¹⁶⁰ Seyitkazi is not recorded as a grouping of the Bugu in Valikhanov, *Priloženie II*. The division is shown under the Arik branch of the Bugu in Chart 2, facing p. 16, of Abramzon 1960.

¹⁶¹ Erketanov 1996, pp. 99f.

¹⁶² *jazıp alıp jatıştı* (Erketanov 1996, p. 100).

Valikhanov happened to be at the right place at the right time, but he was not on a folklore collecting trip. The military expedition led by Colonel Khomentovskii, on which Valikhanov acted in many roles including intelligence officer, was sent to make contact with Russia's newest subjects, the Bugu, and survey their territory. The Russian detachment arrived among the Bugu in company with representatives of the friendly Dulat tribe of the Kazakh Senior Horde. The urgent issue from the Bugu standpoint was pacification of the Sarıbagıš. In spite of the fact that their *manap* Borombay had submitted to the Czar in the previous year, Valikhanov noted that apparently some Bugu *biys* still preferred alliance with Kokand as the means to achieve security. The Russians were met with rumors of a large Kokandian force in the area, possibly circulated to scare the Russians off and prolong the Bugus' freedom.¹⁶³ These facts are sufficient to show that Nazar moved and sang in patronage circles where political anxieties were a main ingredient of the heroic cosmos. This anxiety is clearly visible in *MKNB*.¹⁶⁴

In light of the pressing circumstances and the schedule of meetings with Bugu chiefs, it is surprising that Valikhanov found the time to listen to Nazar sing *Manas*, but he did so for at least parts of two or three days. It is interesting to recall that Valikhanov later alluded to just such a multi-day *Manas*-performance in his first published report on the epic, in "Sketches of Jungharia": "The Kirghiz say that three nights are not sufficient for hearing all of 'Manas', and that just as many nights are needed for 'Semetey', but this is probably an exaggeration."¹⁶⁵ One cannot help wondering if this statement originated from Nazar, who said that he sang for the officer "for two or three days": one hears Valikhanov, at the end of the final session before the detachment moved on, somewhat

¹⁶³ Valikhanov, *Dnevnik*, p. 247.

¹⁶⁴ See the discussion of *MKNB*, below.

¹⁶⁵ Valikhanov, *Očerki Džungarii*, p. 420.

disappointedly asking Nazar for an estimate of how much of the "whole" epic he had missed. The brief résumé of the contents of *Manas* which Valikhanov published in "Sketches of Jungharia" clearly shows that he heard more than he took down. It also suggests the parameters of Nazar's entire performance, if the above considerations about length are valid. The unrecorded marriage-episode in Valikhanov's résumé closely resembles the version taken down by Radloff.¹⁶⁶ After summarizing the plot of *KO*, with its climactic slaughter of the two main infidel heroes, Valikhanov said, "As a consequence, Manas died at the hands of the Mongol khan Nez-Kara. The vengeance of Manas's son Semetey for his father is the subject of the second Kirghiz epic." No text of these epics survives, but the death of Manas by an infidel khan resembles the culmination of the later-attested Great Campaign episode.¹⁶⁷ Nazar was also renowned as a singer of *Semetey*.¹⁶⁸

There is no doubt that the Kirghiz epic tradition was at this time a "primary oral" tradition. M. Veniukov made these observations about literacy when visiting the Northern Kirghiz in 1860:

Before the coming of the Russians to Issyk Kul, the sources of wisdom were wandering Tashkentis who once in a while would teach children to read, though they were only capable of reading one chapter of the Koran, and poorly understood it. Since the arrival of our Tatars,¹⁶⁹ the literacy rate

¹⁶⁶ Valikhanov, *Očerki Džungarii*, p. 421.

¹⁶⁷ When Valikhanov says that in other episodes Manas "leaves traces of his exploits deep in Jungharia", it is unclear whether he means "the city Manas, near Urumch'i, and the locality of the same name on the upper reaches of the Irtysh", which he names in the next sentence, or whether, perhaps, he is alluding to an epic in which Manas makes a campaign within infidel territory. *KO* is, in fact, such an epic; the Great Campaign (*Čoŋ kazat*) is inferred from the later Twilight Age and known from Later Period texts, but its existence in Older Period bardic repertoires is a matter of hearsay only. Nazar was said to have known a version of the Great Campaign episode (Abdirakhmanov 1941; Margulan 1971), though its date (Older Period/Twilight Age?) is unclear.

¹⁶⁸ TS KF (313)110.a.

¹⁶⁹ As Russian subjects who settled among the nomads primarily for trade.

began to grow somewhat, and the demand for education has even developed so that some Kirghiz, unable to find teachers among their own people, have sent their children away to friends in the [Kazakh] Senior Horde, where they almost always have literate Tatars in their *auls* [encampments] who teach. However, even now there is scarcely one literate Kirghiz per thousand people; many *manaps*, even the majority, can neither read nor write. I was witness to the amusing surprise of one of them, when he was shown a document over his own *tamga* [seal] in which he admitted having made a *barımta* raid. Placing the seal on this scrap of paper, he had not thought that his enemy was tricking him into incriminating himself.¹⁷⁰

The following facts which Veniukov recorded about epic performances clearly reflect the pre-literate state of the Kirghiz, as well as the material imperatives that motivated a performing bard in the oral heroic cosmos:

In 1860 we had with our detachment a Sarıbagış poet, or more precisely a rhapsode. Every evening he gathered a crowd of listeners around, and they would be open-mouthed with astonishment at his stories and songs. His imagination, which was indefatigable in recounting the exploits of his hero, some stepson or foster child of a khan,¹⁷¹ from time to time took the boldest flights into the realm of the fantastic. The greater part of the poem, however, was improvised, and only its content was taken from folk legends. The integral attainments of the rhapsode, who, by the way, was considered one of the best, consisted in a wonderfully precise intonation, which even someone who did not understand the words of the poem could appreciate, and an ability to alternate rapid speech, recitative, and a drawling, sorrowful singing style. When a feast was put on for the Kirghiz at Kutemaldı, their poet loudly praised the host of the festivities [...] especially, perhaps, in order to obtain a 25-kopeck coin.¹⁷²

In close agreement with this description is Radloff's detailed picture of the workings of bard–patron–audience relations as he observed them in performances in 1862:

The inner disposition of the bard [*pevets*] depends on the number of formulas [*častits kartin*] that dwell within him, but this supply is not

¹⁷⁰ Veniukov 1861, p. 113f.

¹⁷¹ Possibly Bok-murun?—cf. the discussion of *MK*, below.

¹⁷² Veniukov 1861, pp. 115f.

enough for him to sing. For this he needs an external incentive, which always comes, understandably, from the crowd of listeners around him. The bard always strives to gain the approval of his audience, since he is anxious not only for his own glory but also for personal gains, and in everything he strives to conform to the attitudes of his listeners. When they do not invite him to sing any certain episode, he begins his singing with a prelude meant to prepare the listeners for the song itself. By artfully interweaving verses and alluding to influential personages among those surrounding him, he draws the listeners' attention before beginning the song itself. When he concludes from the enthusiastic shouts of the audience that he has achieved his aim, he either proceeds directly to the action itself or sketches in quick strokes what is needed to understand the episode. The singing does not always move at the same speed. Every approval from the audience incites the bard to new effort, and what is more, he conforms totally to his circle of listeners. If rich or notable persons are present, then he interweaves his song with praise for their clans or other circumstances which notables always like. If the circle of listeners consists of poor people, then he is not above adding various cutting allusions to the haughtiness of the rich and distinguished. From the third episode of *Manas* it is clear how the bard strove for a fabrication in the direction of my tastes.¹⁷³ The bard knows very well when he should stop singing; as soon as he notes the signs of fatigue in his listeners, he employs all his powers to raise the excitement, then immediately cuts off the song. One can only be amazed at how well the bard knows his audience. I saw with my own eyes how one sultan¹⁷⁴ leapt to his feet in the middle of a song, tore off his silk robe, and with an exalted shout threw it to the bard as a gift.¹⁷⁵

The necessity to "conform to the attitudes of his listeners" is an element of the bard's performance ethos. It is apparent here, as in many descriptions of oral bards in performance, that the bards' own obvious cunning and *savoir-faire* at manipulating their

¹⁷³ Radloff refers to the theme of *Manas*'s submission to the Czar in I,3); see the discussion of I,3), below. Radloff was aware of his influence over the bard; Valikhanov apparently was not. In *KO*, a particular quasi-antique geographical allusion has been shown by Hatto to be an invention (or an importation from non-epic sources) by the bard for the purpose of gratifying a specific antiquarian interest of his patron (Hatto 1977, pp. 91f. and 130f.).

¹⁷⁴ The mention of a (Kazakh) sultan enjoying a Kirghiz epic performance coheres very well with the location in which Radloff conducted his collecting work as well as the nature of the epic dialect of most of the texts—with transitional features between Kazakh and Kirghiz. Cf. Laude-Cirtautas 1984.

¹⁷⁵ Radloff, *Predislovie*, pp. xvii f.

performances are at odds with any conception of competence based on the "length" of the "whole" epic they could sing. The public will praise how long the bard can sing and even how loud his voice is,¹⁷⁶ but in the heroic cosmos the bard can reap valuable rewards by performing to the heroic ethos.

Radloff was convinced that he was witnessing a profound linkage between life and art: "Like [Greek epic], Kirghiz epic quite faithfully depicts the political life of the Kirghiz."¹⁷⁷ This depiction was topical and contemporary: "In his songs a Kirghiz values not any sort of wonderful and terrible, fabulous world; on the contrary, he sings about his own life, his own feelings and aspirations, and those ideals that live in each individual member of society."¹⁷⁸ These ideals were shaped by the exigencies of history:

The old method of waging war among the inhabitants of the steppe was preserved longest of all among the Kirghiz. Before, they were always in a state of open war with all their neighbors. All men of the tribe who were able to fight had to take up arms at the first call of the *manap*, in order to repel an attack or to make one.¹⁷⁹ [See Frontispiece.]

¹⁷⁶ The biography of Nazar in TS KF (313)110.a consists mainly of anecdotes about the loudness of his voice.

¹⁷⁷ Radloff, *Predislovie*, p. x. The "Homerism" of Radloff's viewpoint has already been noted. It was a popular conceit of the times. Valikhanov called *Manas* "the *Iliad* of the steppes" (*Očerki Džungarii*, p. 420), and Petr Semenov-Tian-Šanskii, the first civilian Russian explorer to visit the Kirghiz, a year after Valikhanov, made these observations passing through Kazakh territory on the way: "[T]he local Kazakh customary law and world-view [...] persisted in its pure form [...] in the Senior Horde, which in the mid-nineteenth century, that is until the [Russian] occupation of the trans-Ili province, still enjoyed great independence and fought with its neighbors and enemies without the aid of the Russian administration. Because of this, during my journey among the Senior Horde I was able to meet many old heroic, one may even say Homeric, types"; (and on his participation in judgment on a legal dispute involving an intertribal marriage:) "[T]he 'Agamemnon' of the Senior Horde [did] not wish to allow the forcible abduction of his [Dulat] tribe's 'fair Helen'." (Semenov-Tian-Šanskii, *Putešestvie*, pp. 147, 149).

¹⁷⁸ Radloff, *Predislovie*, p. viii.

¹⁷⁹ Radloff, *Iz Sibiri*, pp. 353-354. Older Kazakh weapons are described and illustrated in Valikhanov, *Vooruženie*; those of the Kirghiz were similar. The epics provide a fairly accurate depiction of Kirghiz arms in the mid nineteenth century, including firearms.

Archaeological and historical materials relating to fortifications help to gauge the scale of Kirghiz militarism in the nineteenth century. The khans of Kokand erected and maintained an

However, the heroic ethos and its cosmos were not a monolithic ideal. Their existential aspects had a rhetorical quality that mirrored not only the performance ethos of the bards, but also the wishful thinking of the hard-pressed Kirghiz tribes of the day. For example, in real life many if not most of the Bugus' enemies were fellow Muslims and even fellow Kirghiz; the Kalmak presence in and competition for Bugu lands had dropped off sharply in the two or three decades prior to 1856.¹⁸⁰ In the face of increasing disturbances among themselves and vis-à-vis Kokand, only in epic could the Kirghiz imagine a life of war with proper enemies, the infidels. It is true that Manas and his Nogoy companions are often found subjugating and "gobbling" the Tajiks, Sarts, ʔzbeks and Kirghiz—fellow Muslims all—but none of these actions is depicted as a fair fight

extensive network of fortresses in the Tian Shan starting in the 1820s. The ruins of these structures have remained well enough preserved to offer an indirect picture of the armed threat that the Kokand government expected to face from the side of the Kirghiz. Ploskikh and Galitskii maintain that all but the three largest forts were at best able "to withstand temporary siege by small detachments of unorganized nomads." Most of the smallest defensive structures, garrisoned by up to 50 soldiers, were abandoned already by the middle of the nineteenth century, while medium-sized forts held up to Kirghiz "national liberation movements" (*sic*, in Soviet parlance) until the Russian conquest, when Russian artillery altogether superior to that previously known in Central Asia made short work of their walls. Kokand was not alone in building forts in the region; the Kirghiz built one at Ketmen-tübe, which was conquered by Kokand, however, in 1821. Borombay's crop fields, garden, and mill near Issyk Kul were guarded by his own fort at Kızıl-ünküür (Ploskikh & Galitskii 1974). Yet it should also be noted that in the approximately two decades prior to the Russian conquest, during which Kokandian power over the Tian Shan was unstable and shrinking, there is no evidence that the Kirghiz made serious efforts at matching Kokand with a fortified presence of their own. The Kirghiz military arts would probably have been frustrated indefinitely by the larger Kokandian forts such as Pishpek, had the Russian army not used artillery to reduce them.

Barımta (*baranta* in *EF*²) is not well studied in the Kirghiz environment but more so among the Kazakhs. Virginia Martin demonstrates that the custom which was seen as a threat to law and order by the Russian government had been to the Kazakhs a lawful and sophisticated system of redress. The Russian attitude and legal response eventually had its effect on the Kazakh custom, and *barımta* slipped into anarchy. It is both surprising and relevant to the study of heroic poetry that the decadence of *barımta* was accompanied by increased activity by Kazakh *batırs* and their bands, with attendant glorification of them in song, almost to the turn of the 20th century (V. Martin 1997).

¹⁸⁰ Valikhanov, *Dnevnik*, p. 246.

between heroes, as with the Kalmak. Manas's cruel sway over the neighboring Muslim peoples is seen rather as a matter of course, and is probably a reflection of how the burdensome rule of the Khanate of Kokand felt to the Kirghiz.

Ringling testimony as to the "assertive," rhetorical quality of the heroic cosmos is heard in a legendary story about one of the Kazakh *batırs* who joined Kenesari's campaign, named Bayseit, youngest of the fighters of the Dulat tribe of the Senior Horde:

Learning that Kenesari had arrived among the Dulats, Bayseit made it known that he wanted to join Kenesari's forces, but he also wanted to have an audience with the sultan. One day Bayseit, ignoring everybody, was about to burst into Kenesari's yurt; then his father Toyşibek said, "Impudent child! As if you can go in to the khan without permission." Bayseit answered his father: "I have come to him as a *batır*, not as a khan. *Batırs* do not fear one another." He went into the yurt of Kenesari, who welcomed him warmly"¹⁸¹

In this brief anecdote we hear intimations of the perpetual inertia of patriarchy that tended to grind *batırs* down. In practice, the heroic pose appears to have been for the young. Among the mature it held interest only for those who maintained the strength and suppleness of spirit to abide it. In epic poetry, the paramount hero Manas was a rash upstart. His genealogy is unstable at best, and in the mid-nineteenth century epics we are told or given to understand that Manas is plebeian, not of the "white bone."¹⁸² The ascendancy of the Manas-figure over the older order of Noghay heroes, such as Kōkčō and Tōštük, reached a climax in Manas's abrupt eclipse of the khan-to-be Bok-murun, attested in two epics from the mid nineteenth century.¹⁸³ The three-generation structure of the *Manas–Semetey–Seytek* cycle, which Hatto has characterized as founder–endangerer–restorer of the fragile hereditary line of only sons, may partly reflect the successional

¹⁸¹ Bekmakhanov 1992(1947), pp. 323-329.

¹⁸² E.g., I,5) 1406-1412.

¹⁸³ *KO* and *BM*.

concerns of such *manaps* as Ormon as Borombay. It is interesting that these epics were recorded at a time when the *manap* phenomenon was reaching its peak.

Nor was the social and political landscape a fixed entity. Just as *batırs* tended to challenge the established order of things with persons in authority, they also lent a certain entropy to social and political life by augmenting and altering the genealogical integrity of the tribes. An observer in 1873 noted:

The membership of a Kirghiz to one tribe or another is not permanent and unchanged. One of them has merely to move from the Sarıbağış lands to the Solto, and he will not be called a Sarıbağış, he becomes a Solto. Moving to the Sayaks, he becomes a Sayak [...], but this may only be said of the common people, the *bukara* [...] *Manaps* preserve the division into tribes, and strictly maintain them. The emergence of a new division depends on the emergence of a new *batır*: an armed force of *jigits*¹⁸⁴ [*družina udal'tsev*] gathers around him; a few poor people find shelter in his fame, and call themselves his children. Thus arise the names: children of Kanay, children of Karabek, children of Kabus, Sarıbağış, etc. The father passes on to his son his people, whom he has managed to attach to himself by the habit of robbery and mutual score-settling in *baranta*, and there you have a new tribe: Kanay, Kabuz, etc. The emergence of many tribes has been very recent—one or two generations. Even today new tribes are forming.¹⁸⁵

The patrons of song in the Kirghiz heroic cosmos did not consist solely of warlike men. Among the peace-loving Bugu in 1857, Semenov-Tian-Šanskii observed something like a salon in which the arts, including epic poetry, were cultivated. Baldısan was a Bugu chief of Borombay's clan:

Baldısan, who welcomed me quite hospitably on Borombay's recommendation, represented a type of Kirghiz sybarite. Peaceful by nature, he loved his tranquility most of all. He did not take part in the bloody conflict between the Bugu and the Sarıbağış or go raiding, but

¹⁸⁴ *jigit* is best translated as 'brave', though because of the North American connotation it is preferable to use the original Kirghiz word.

¹⁸⁵ G. Zagriažskii ("Očerki Tokmakskogo uezda," in: *Turkestanskije vedomosti*, 1873, no. 10), quoted in Šakhmatov 1964, pp. 48f.

loved to nomadize in those localities in the Tian Shan that were least accessible to the incursions of the Sarıbağış. His inclinations were artistic. He loved music passionately, and was considered by the Kirghiz to be their best *dombra*-player (a stringed instrument like a balalaika). He took great delight in listening to the songs of folk bards and improvisators, sometimes spending whole nights in this occupation.

With particular pleasure, and on my suggestion, Baldisan played the *dombra* for me, and also invited tellers of epics [*skazitelei bylin*], who sang quite as monotonously as the sound of the *dombra*. They also improvised some songs for me which, according to my Cossack interpreters, praised my trips to the shores of Issyk Kul and the source of the Narın which had forced the Sarıbağış to flee from the lands of the Bugu.¹⁸⁶

It is impossible to know whether Manas or some other hero was the subject of the epics that were performed, yet the bard's extempore performance of a praise-poem (*maktoo*) about Semenov-Tian-Šanskii's own "heroic" feats undoubtedly called upon the skills which were required on other occasions to flatter and elicit a reward from a Bugu chief. A praise-poem dealing with a hero's, albeit a Russian one's, "reconquest" of lost lands is redolent of the existential character of the Kirghiz heroic cosmos in the mid nineteenth century. Semenov's observation also records an important counterpoint to a prevailing conception: the heroic cosmos had room for those who would enjoy the epics purely as entertainment. Past formulations of "heroic society" faltered inasmuch as they ignored this fact and concentrated on imagining a uniformly warlike class of patrons.

¹⁸⁶ Semenov-Tian-Šanskii, *Putešestvie*, pp. 194f. Earlier (p. 163), Semenov had explained: Rumor flew like lightning all around the Issyk Kul basin about the appearance on the slopes of the Tian Shan of a strong Russian detachment that had come to the defense of the Bugu territories. About me they said that I had with me a small gun (a pistol) from which I could shoot as many times as I liked. The rumors spreading about us, with the usual exaggerations of our numbers and arms, had a magical effect. The Sarıbağış rapidly decamped from the nomadizing grounds they had captured from the Bugu on both shores of Issyk Kul (the Terskey and Kungey), and some of them fled to the western end of the lake, and even farther to the Chu and Talas rivers, and some even over the Tian Shan to the headwaters of the Narın.

The Older Period bard was called *ırçı* 'singer' or *akın* 'oral poet' and, more specifically of the epic bard, *jomokču*, although *jomok* meant 'prose tale' as well as 'heroic epic poem'.¹⁸⁷ Certainly many professional bards existed, but it is difficult to tell on the available evidence whether the singing of epics constituted a profession. Many bards had mixed repertoires including epic, lyric, and other genres. Hatto has deduced a partly shamanistic origin of *Manas*-recitation.¹⁸⁸ The names and short legendary biographies of some of the Older Period bards, all of them men, are known. *Keldibek* Barıboz uulu, of the Esenkul clan of the Sarıbagış, was born in the Chu valley. Like most *Manas*-bards, he attributed the origin of his *Manas*-singing to a dream in which he was visited and commanded to sing *Manas*. Keldibek's dream featured *Manas* and his companions. His performances were known for their ecstatic moments that were said to conjure up visions of galloping horsemen that made the yurt tremble; he was also observed gradually moving forward from his spot as he sat opposite the door of the yurt, and sometimes even exiting the door—a phenomenon observable today in energetic performances.¹⁸⁹ One of Keldibek's performances of *Köz-kaman* lasted a whole day. He also recited episodes of *Manas* for curative purposes to women after childbirth, and the *manap* Ormon was said to have begotten a son after Keldibek performed *Manas* at his invitation. Keldibek died (ca. 1880, aged apparently about 80) near Atbaşı in the Tian Shan. *Balık* (Bekmurat) Kumar uulu, of the Čoňčarık Sarıbagış, was born in the Talas valley, lived for a time after Keldibek's death, and died, aged about 80, in the Chu valley. He was said to have been

¹⁸⁷ Another term, *manasçı* 'singer of *Manas*', as well as the analogous *semeteyçi* and *seytekçi*, are applied retrospectively to pre-revolutionary bards, but the earliest confirmed usage of these terms is post-revolutionary; cf. p. 190 and n. 456, below.

¹⁸⁸ Hatto 1980c, pp. 305f.

¹⁸⁹ Šaabay Aziz uulu, whom I videotaped in 1996, moved several feet forward during his sixteen-minute performance while sitting cross-legged on level grass, evidently in a series of minute increments caused by his upper-body movements.

called to sing *Manas* by the hero and his companions in a dream as he slept near the legendary tomb of Manas near Talas. His singing received accolades from a Kokandian *qoşbegi* (governor), upon whose recommendation the low-born Balık became part of the inner circle of the *manaps* of Talas. He even managed affairs in the region. He was later invited to the Chu valley by the powerful Solto *manap* Baytik, in whose circle he also enjoyed prestige (it is remembered that his yurt stood higher than Baytik's). He is buried in a cemetery near Bishkek where the tomb-tower of Baytik still stands. *Nazar Bolot uulu* (1828 or '35-1893), the author of *KO*, came from the Arık Bugu and lived around the eastern end of lake Issyk Kul. He used to sing epics in a loud voice as he rode, from which we have the legend that as he ascended Kızıl-kıya pass some people heard him coming, slaughtered a lamb, and had it fully cooked by the time he arrived in their camp. He spent some time in the company of the *manap* Čınıbay, and his authorship of *KO* places him in the orbit of the Bugu *manap* Borombay and the sub-chief Toksaba. The courtly style of *KO* points to a bard accustomed to making a living in a chief's inner circle. Čoodon (1835-1900) came from the Southern Kirghiz, and according to legend was the *Manas*-bard of Khudayar Khan of Kokand. It seems more probable that this memory is a reflection of his having been a fixture in the local entourage of some Kirghiz or Kipchak resident *qoşbegi*, although judging by the supra-dialectal, Kazakhizing features of the mid-nineteenth century Northern bardic diction, it is entirely possible that Kirghiz bards in the south could have approximated their speech more to Özbek and found an appreciative audience at an Özbek court. Although bards often referred to dream-inspiration, there is no doubt that these dreams occurred in conjunction with and within the context of long, exacting, face-to-face training with master bards.¹⁹⁰

¹⁹⁰ The information in the paragraph above was taken from Rakhmatullin 1942; Auezov

The performance tradition in which these bards participated, as witnessed by the surviving texts, favored a forceful, at times impetuous narration style. Recitation was in verse with no instrumental accompaniment. The verses of normally seven to eight syllables displayed a wealth of traditional Turkic alliterative and rhyming effects which were developed to a high level under the conditions of Kirghiz vowel harmony and morphosyntactics. The epics presumably were sung in stichic or non-stanzaic melodies, as they still are today. Audiences also prized musical alternations in the speed and rhythm of the bard's delivery, as when narration shifted between description, dialogue, and narrative high points.¹⁹¹

As will be seen in the plot analyses below, realism and objectivity (within the loose bounds of epic exaggeration) were normal, as was third-person narration, though the bards occasionally dropped apostrophes and other ecstatic effects into their songs. The most prominent of these effects were Manas's invocations of his Forty Companions (never as many as forty in practice, and the personnel of the comitatus was a matter of variation among individual bards and must have been part of the treasury of formulas and themes passed down from master to pupil). Other heroes, their steeds, and even named weapons and equipment were the subjects of catalogs and runs as well. Anything with a proper name was subject to the accretion of long, "cyclically allusive" epithets which referred, for example, to the deeds of the hero in another story, the raid that brought the steed to its owner's herd, or the forging of the sword. Traditional verbal genres were

1961a&b; Rakhmatullin 1968(c.1946); Kydyrbaeva 1984; *Manas entsiklopediya*. Kydyrbaeva's claim that bards fell into regional "schools" such as Chu, Tian Shan, Issyk Kul, and so on, outsteps the facts. Kydyrbaeva herself adduces numerous counterexamples of bards with mixed regional influences, e.g. p. 49.

¹⁹¹ Beliaev 1975, pp. 16ff.; Prior 1998b, pp. 69f.; Radloff, *Predislovie*, p. xv; Reichl 1992, pp. 101-103; Veniukov 1861, p. 116; Vinogradov 1958, pp. 129-132; Žirmunskii 1964.

absorbed into the epic plots. Heroes uttered boasts and last testaments; heroines lamented their husbands' deaths and prophesied through dreams. To a degree perhaps unique in Kirghiz epic, the people's intricate landscape was present in the characters' movements, often surfacing as itineraries consisting of poetically styled yet realistic strings of place names. The divide between Muslim and infidel was geographical, more implicit than rhetorical, and not insurmountable, as the Oyrot prince Almambet could join the fold and Manas's own Nogoy kin could "go bad" under Kalmak upbringing. Filling out the three-generation cycle of Manas, his son Semetey and grandson Seytek, stood a range of heroes and heroines inherited from the Noghay cycle and presumably transmitted from the Kazakhs.¹⁹² In general, the traditional processes of epic tended strongly to discard and attenuate direct and consistent references to "facts" of the past. All these materials and ellipses combined to form a flexible superstructure for epic narrative in which complex, robust subjects appear to have been the norm. The hot-tempered super-hero Manas was not immune to being defeated, wounded, and even killed (to be brought back to life again), nor would a bard spare him the seeming character smudge of running away from battle, if the plot required it. Everything hung on the resolution. Manas, his Oyrot-born milk-brother Almambet, and Manas's comitatus of Forty Companions existed in constant readiness for battle or for raiding, with the infidel khans Joloy, Koñurbay, and Nez-kara ranged against them as the choicest and most formidable villains. But, essential to the pathos of this tradition, the gravest threat comes from within the family. Manas has an unlucky star in that he is an only son, as is his own son Semetey. Not even Manas's father

¹⁹² Žirmunskii 1961, pp. 144-148. (Žirmunskii follows a number of scholars in referring the origin of the name of the Noghay Horde to the Jochid amir Noghay [d. 1300], but on the chronological and other problems associated with this popular identification, see I. Vásáry's article "Noghay," in *ET*², vol. 8, pp. 85f.; and Trepavlov 2001, p. 2.)

Jakıp can be relied upon to protect the orphan Semetey after Manas is gone; that work falls to Manas's mother, Čakan/Bagdı-döölöt/Čıyırđı, and his wife, Kanıkey. The resolution of Semetey's own predicament boils down in the end to the opposed works of his two companions, the faithful Kül-čoro and the treacherous Kan-čoro, with Semetey's wife Ay-čürök and the other women having their part in revenge in the end.¹⁹³

The mid-nineteenth century Kirghiz epic tradition existed alongside such oral genres as laments and testaments, which like epics also had their heroic realizations. Radloff recorded a heroic lament for the *manap* Jantay two years after he had died, as well as another lament for an unknown warrior Čokčoloy, by his daughter. In an evocative reach across the the boundary of Muslim identity, the girl compares her father to Manas, Ürbü, and *Joloy*.¹⁹⁴ Testaments of such Older Period figures as Borombay and the Bugu *batır* Balbay (d. 1860s) are preserved, but in written texts no older than the 1920s.¹⁹⁵ It is clear that in the mid nineteenth century the testament form (*kereez*, *kereez söz*) was a living oral genre that was performed, if the records are to be believed, by dying chiefs and warriors themselves. The coefficient of "existentiality" is undoubtedly quite high in these compositions, expressing as they do the desires and designs of the leader for the continued well-being of his people, his lands, his companions-at-arms, and his wealth: in Kirghiz terms, his *jurt*.¹⁹⁶ A record of Borombay's testament (he died in

¹⁹³ Hatto 1969a; Hatto 1969b; Hatto 1969c; Hatto 1971/72; Hatto 1973/74; Hatto 1976; Hatto 1977; Hatto 1978; Hatto 1979; Hatto 1980c; Hatto 1980/82; Hatto 1981; Hatto 1983; Hatto 1989a; Hatto 1990; Hatto 1992; Prior 1998a.

¹⁹⁴ Radloff, *Obraztsy*, pp. 590-597; Hatto 1983.

¹⁹⁵ References to some unpublished texts of the Kirghiz laments and testaments may be found in Sadykov 1992 (laments: pp. 12-15; testaments: pp. 41-43.) A few excerpts may also be found in Auezov 1961a, pp. 498-502 (and in almost identical form, but without the Kirghiz originals of the Russian-translated excerpts, as Auezov 1961b). The present writer found a large number of Soviet-era texts stored in the MS Archives of the Kirghiz Academy of Sciences.

¹⁹⁶ The genre of politicized testaments is observed as far back as the Second Türk Kaghanate, as attested, with striking verbal similarity to Kōkötōy's behest in *KO*, in the Kül Tegin inscription

1858) survives¹⁹⁷ along with some information about the direct consequences of its utterance. The latter is in a manuscript of oral history concerning the *akin* Arstanbek (1824?-1878?), a fellow Bugu (though of a division not governed by Borombay¹⁹⁸) who apparently sang a poetic rejoinder to the dying chieftain's wishes. It was a signally existential controversy:

Before he died, Borombay uttered his testament to the people: "*At čaptırba aşıma, korgon kurba başıma, katınım kara kiyip, betine belgi salbasın* 'Do not let them race horses at my memorial feast; do not raise a tomb over my head; do not let my wives put on widows' weeds and scar their faces'." His words were seen as a crass departure from the customs and mores of his times, and the people in his inner court (*örgöö içindegiler*) were upset. Then Arstanbek picked up his *komuz* [three-stringed lute], and repeated a few times a sad melody as if singing a lament, and strumming the strings of the *komuz*, he began to sing in a sorrowful voice:

Oo, Borombay abake,
jurt başçısı sen eleŋ,
jomogun aytkan men elem.
Kaygısın jegen sen eleŋ,
kazalın aytkan men elem.
At čaptırbas aşıŋa,
korgon urbas başıŋa,
betine turmak salbastan,
beline arkan čalbastan,
katını aza kütpögön,
khanzaadaga küybögön,
Sarbağış, Solto, Sayaktın
kimisinin kem eleŋ?

(Malov 1951, pp. 28-35; cf. Sadykov 1992, pp. 25f.; cf. Hatto 1969a throughout for essential discussions of problems of Old Turkic connections in *KO*).

The testaments may not always have been sung by the departing person. Iudakhin, *Slovar'*, s.v. *kereez*, def. 2: *osobii vid stikhotvornoj zaplački, kogda reč' vedetsia ot litsa pokoinika*, a phrasing that clearly leans away from denoting self-performance, and indicates that professional singers (the probate lawyers of their day?) repeated testaments for audiences after the death.

¹⁹⁷MS KF no. 412 (1446).

¹⁹⁸Kebekova 1994, p. 4

'O Borombay, Father! You are the chief of the people; I am the teller of the tales. You are the afflicted one; I am the singer of *kazals* [lyrics]. Unless they race horses at your memorial feast, unless they plant a tomb over your head—unless they take their fingernails to their faces, and strike their bodies with cords, your wives shall not have made their lamentations, your sons shall not have had their grief! Than whom among the Sarıbagış, Solto, and Sayak, are you less?'

In saying this, Arstanbek protected Borombay's position as chief of the people, persuading him to let them pay their respects in the traditional manner.¹⁹⁹

The last sentence makes it quite clear that Borombay could not be allowed to "upset" the members of his inner circle. Thus the fulfilment of a heroic testament was not a foregone conclusion. Survivors switched on the existential charge of the testament's words, which could be positive or negative depending on their own needs. We will see below in the analysis of *MK* how the young hero manipulates the fulfilment of his father's testament in an epic moment.

Epic itineraries cannot claim the same status as the lament and testament genres to independent status outside of epic narration, but their reality as narrative elements in mid-nineteenth century bardic repertoire, and occasionally as high scenes and epic moments, is assured. They are found in almost all of the surviving poems, and they have verbal similarities that clearly come from their long use as narrative figures. Investigations by Hatto and the present writer have shown that most of the itineraries are realistic. Fantastic elements, when they appear, are extrapolated into the remote distance, usually deep inside infidel territory. In their existential linkage with the themes of raiding and nomadic survival on the move, itineraries are cardinal examples of poetry informed with the heroic

¹⁹⁹ Kebekova 1994, pp. 9f.

ethos.²⁰⁰ This being the case, it will not be surprising that the following plot analyses identify certain itineraries as epic moments.

Like a hero making his way through an epic itinerary, the bard narrating an epic poem faces the task of negotiating a series of landmarks. The landmarks make up the story. Some of these will be scenic, plotted purely for the pleasure of the knowing audience who expect them. Other landmarks, under conditions of the heroic cosmos, develop naturally into the "highly charged narrative ganglia" that mark structure—the high scenes and epic moments, looming like mountain passes that restrict and define travel within a broad vicinity. Let us examine the texts of the Older Period epics to discover how a bard uses high scenes and epic moments as a factor in his narrative art.

2. The Epics

The corpus of Older Period epic texts consists of: I,2) *Almambet, Ak-erkeč, and Er Kökčö; How Almambet Came to Manas* (AK); I,3) *Manas's Duel with Er Kökčö; The Marriage, Death, and Return to Life of Manas; The Memorial Feast for Kökötöy Khan* (MK), existing in two different versions, *MKNB* (KO) and I,4) *Bok-murun* (BM); I,5) *Köz-kaman* (KK); I,6) *The Birth of Semetey* (BS); and I,7) *Semetey* (S). All of the texts except *MKNB* were recorded in 1862 in Bugu territory by Wilhelm Radloff. *MKNB* was recorded at San-taš pass in May 1856 from the Bugu bard Nazar Bolot uulu by Čokan Valikhanov. The numbers I,2), etc., correspond to the headings under section I. of Radloff,

²⁰⁰ Hatto 1969a; Hatto, 1992; Prior 1998a.

Obraztsy/Proben, but line references are to the re-edition, *MWR*.²⁰¹ The system of letter sigla used builds on that begun by Hatto.²⁰²

We will begin by analyzing in detail the plot of Radloff's I,5) *Köz-kaman*, the epic which displays most vividly a structure based on narrative contracts that are in turn punctuated by high scenes and epic moments. After this we will make a detailed analysis of I,2), which also has a highly developed structure of high scenes and epic moments, but without narrative contracts. The remaining epics display mixed structures, with high scenes, epic moments and contracts balanced or almost totally displaced by different structural elements. These will be examined for the most part in the numerical order in which they are presented in Radloff's original edition, with I,4) considered in turn with its co-variant, *KO (MKNB)*. Translations cited below are Hatto's except where noted.

I,5) *Köz-kaman*

I,5) *Köz-kaman* (*KK*,²⁰³ recorded in 1862 in Bugu territory²⁰⁴) incidentally reveals one outcome of a widespread heroic situation, the return of an exiled hero after many years and his coming to terms with the younger generation in his homeland. One of the most famous realizations of the dramatic potential of this situation, and one sharply divergent from *Köz-kaman*, is the medieval German *Hildebrandslied*, an incomplete lay relating the single combat of a returning father with his own son who does not know his

²⁰¹ For further information on the mid-nineteenth century texts, see the basic studies published by Hatto in a series of articles in the 1960s and 70s; Auezov 1961a&b; Žirmunskii 1961; Mamitbekov & Abdildayev 1966, pp. 26-123; Margulan 1971, pp. 3-55.

²⁰² See "A Note on Sigla," p. 343, below.

²⁰³ *MWR*, pp. 227-303 and Commentary, pp. 529-561; Hatto 1971/72.

²⁰⁴ *MWR*, p. 602.

identity.²⁰⁵ The brief, powerful plot of the *Hildebrandslied* traps father and son within a highly-wrought network of tragic circumstances anchored in the constraints of the heroic ethos. Crucially missing from the *Hildebrandslied*, but present in *Köz-kaman*, is that fixture of the heroic retinue, the herald who names and announces the arrival of the stranger.²⁰⁶ With the device of the herald and the further convenience of corroboration from Manas's father Jakıp, the bard of *Köz-kaman* treats the issue of the strangers' identity at episode length and goes on to fashion his extensive epic plot in several dimensions.

In *Köz-kaman*, Manas has just launched a raiding campaign against the infidel Kalmak when he hears that he has a long-lost uncle, his father Jakıp's younger brother Köz-kaman, and that this uncle is at the moment coming to meet him across the frontier of the Kalmak realm, where he grew up after being captured as a boy. And Köz-kaman is not alone: his five Kalmak sons, with the eldest Kökčö-köz, are coming with him ...

Köz-kaman is one of the longest Kirghiz heroic epics Radloff collected and takes place on "perhaps the most extended [geographical] axis in epic poetry," as Hatto has observed.²⁰⁷ Its plot, however, reveals disciplined attention to a single underlying existential concern. In *Köz-kaman*, the anonymous Kirghiz bard has further explored the theme opened up in I,2) (entitled *Almambet, Er Kökčö, and Ak-erkeč; How Almambet*

²⁰⁵ Hatto 1980b, pp. 165-169.

²⁰⁶ Heroes unknown to one another and meeting for the first time were loath to utter their names first, since this would imply inferiority vis-à-vis the other hero. Heralds were thus requisite aids to communication. Without a herald, the senior Köz-kaman would have been correct in waiting for his nephew Manas to name himself; conversely, the super-hero Manas is always in his rights to require others to name themselves first. Cf. the calibrations of status between Almambet and Manas which the bard employed structurally in I,2). Heralds could be almost as touchy as their lords, as the herald Sly-boy in *Köz-kaman* shows in his dogged intention to deliver his message in person to Manas, because "I come from a people with lords—I shall speak a word with your lord [...] I come from a people with a khan—I shall speak a word with your lord Khan." (KK 566-571).

²⁰⁷ MWR, p. 227.

Came to Manas), the relation between *ethos* and *genos*. I,2) examines the relative status of the heroes Manas and his converted Oyrot friend Almambet, and advances the heroic ideal as a higher moral alternative than birth, breeding, or religion. In *Köz-kaman*, Manas is understood to have already attained super-hero status and thus is beyond cross-examination in the face of other heroes.²⁰⁸ With this epic we begin to feel surrounding the Only Son Manas the tightening cords of fate, which eventually draw the cycle into the narrow and dangerous passageway which the defenders of the *Manas-stirps* must negotiate in the epics I,6) *The Birth of Semetey* and I,7) *Semetey*. In *Köz-kaman*, Manas's intense longing for kinsmen blinds him repeatedly to the dangers of *these* kinsmen, and causes him to lapse into seemingly inexplicable behavior. In no other mid-nineteenth century epic may we encounter Manas paying no attention whatsoever to a hero who has treacherously drawn a weapon and dealt him a blow. Nor is there precedent in Manas's character for his lone retreat from the Kalmak in battle leaving his Forty Companions to lump it—nor his alacrity to return to battle as soon as Almambet has had a word with him. Only thanks to Kanikey does Manas survive his seemingly obtuse errors and emerge expecting an heir. Near the end of this section we will take up the matter of the bard's creative hand and the meaning of the strange turns and truncations of this imposing and consequential epic plot. Following is a summary of the plot divided into episodes. The line numbers at the beginning and end of each episode are given in parentheses; the number of lines in each episode is shown in square brackets.

²⁰⁸ It is significant that *Köz-kaman* himself has no warrior-presence whatsoever; his function is to bring the perfidious *Kökçö-köz* into the story along with the necessary assurance that the latter is indeed Manas's close relative.

0. (1-152) Prologue: Manas's wife Kanikey is praised above all his other wives²⁰⁹ by his father Jakıp. Manas tests the praise, as he would a boast, by inviting his Forty Companions to descend with him upon Kanikey unannounced, and see the welcome they get. Kanikey's hospitality is generous and flawless, and the warriors are satisfied.

1. (153-273 [120]) (153-235) Manas exhorts his companions to join him on a raid on the distant Kalmak. As Manas mounts to depart, Kanikey stops him and urges him to turn back because the time is inauspicious for a raid. He beats her off, but she laughs at the beating and blesses him and the raid. Another wife of Manas's, Akılay, then takes hold of him and also tries to keep him from going because the time is inauspicious. Manas beats Akılay off with a curse, and she in turn utters the curse that he should die on the raid. (236-273) Manas and his warriors march off on a long and circumstantial itinerary. Kanikey sends a man after Manas to urge him to perform a sacrifice (to undo Akılay's curse), but Manas, not wanting to be seen doing a woman's bidding, refuses and presses on.

2. (274-776 [502]) A Kalmak herald, identified only as *Kuu-bala* 'Sly-boy', approaches with the news that Manas's uncle Kōz-kaman and cousins, Kōkčö-köz and others, are heading toward them in peace across the Kalmak frontier. Manas, an only son

²⁰⁹ There are two or three other wives; the bard's recitation of the wives' names is uncertain. What can be interpreted as the epithet of one wife in some passages must be interpreted as the name of a distinct wife in other passages. The situation is all the more baffling in that the presumed name of the doubtful wife (nowhere else attested) is *atalık*, the same as the title of a high-ranking office at Central Asian rulers' courts. The epithet-like line is *atalıktın ak döölöt* '(lit. as if) the *atalık*'s bright treasure' (8; 146; 481). Hatto's analysis (see *MWR*, p. 529, n. to *KK* line 3) is silent on the title, but there is virtually no doubt that in lines 2096, 2098, and 2112 the term is the name of a female person, hence apparently "Paternity," as the auspicious name of a hero's consort. The problem remains unsolved, and may come to us from a slip in narration by the bard. Whatever the precise makeup of the list of wives, it is explicit that Kanikey is the only one Manas wooed and married; the others were seized or "summoned" (*KK* 1-14).

of a father (Jakıp) who he thought was an only son as well, is wary of the news, but Sly-boy is insistent. Manas sends Almambet back to Jakıp's camp to find out if the herald is telling the truth about lost kin. Jakıp receives the news joyfully and corroborates. Manas's mother Bagdı-döölöt senses danger from the newcomers and flies into a rage, striking Jakıp and warning him not to trust the Kalmak. Jakıp crudely insults her, firmly asserting that Manas's luck has changed for the better. Almambet departs. (The great length of this episode consists in back-and-forth movements and relaying of messages and reports as the status of the newcomer Sly-boy is gauged by his access to Manas: Manas—Almambet—Sly-boy—Almambet—Manas—Almambet—Sly-boy—Manas; and then by the mission Manas—Almambet—Jakıp).

3. (777-952 [175]) Kanikey waylays Almambet and asks him the news. Almambet tells her about Manas's new-found uncle and cousins, but Kanikey senses danger and begs Almambet not to let Manas be harmed, and to advise him not to befriend the newcomers. Almambet drinks a cup of her *arak* (liquor; i.e., pledges to do as she says) and departs. Directly upon coming to Manas, Almambet betrays his promise to Kanikey by suppressing her entreaties and giving only the news that Jakıp has vouched for the newcomers. Manas, overjoyed at learning that he indeed has close kin, commands his whole campaigning party to go back home and prepare a warm welcome for them.

4. (953-1288 [335]) The warriors retrace their steps, arrive home, and have a feast. It is related incidentally that Kanikey becomes pregnant. Then Kőz-kaman and his sons arrive. There is a grand welcoming feast with gifts. Manas invites the newcomers to convert to Islam, and they convert in a picturesque and amusing set of vignettes, including a sacrifice by Bakay, styled "Friend and Gossip of God." The Kőz-kamans live as good Muslims, and the Forty Companions shower them with more gifts. Then Kőz-

kaman commands his sons to prepare and invite Manas to a feast in return. The invitation is relayed through Almambet, who arrives at Manas's tent while he is asleep. Kanikey receives the invitation for him, and predicts (with second sight) a bloody outcome and harm to Manas at the hands of the Kōz-kamans. She utters a pious blessing to protect Manas (from death) when he is wounded.

5. (1289-1453 [182]) (1289-1321) Almambet comes to the Forty Companions. He tells them a lie, that Manas is drunk, and advises them all to go to the feast without Manas. Serek objects, accusing Almambet of taking sides with Kanikey in shielding Manas from harm, and slanderously asserting that Almambet's friendship with Kanikey is impure. Enraged, Almambet cuts Serek's cheek open with his whip. (1322-1418) Serek curses Almambet and rushes in upon Manas before Kanikey can intercept him, *rouses Manas from sleep*, and delivers Kōz-kaman's invitation. Manas immediately rises and gets ready, then notices the blood on Serek's cheek. Serek tells him that the blow was from Almambet, and demands that Manas side either with him or with Almambet, for he will not stand Almambet's arrogance. Manas soothes Serek by pointing out ruefully that since Almambet is of the noble White Bone, he could whip even him, Manas, with impunity. Manas goes to the feast, and (1419-1453) they all get drunk and (Kōkčö-kōz) takes a hatchet and strikes Manas on the temple. Then there is a brief apostrophe in which the bard laments to God that Manas is alone in the world. Kōz-kaman breaks up the ensuing fight (which is not narrated in any detail) and Manas goes home to sleep with Kanikey.

6. (1454-1745 [291]) (1454-1570) The original campaign against the Kalmak gets back under way when Manas rises the next morning and utters a full invocation of his Forty Companions. He commands them to make all the preparations, and they set out

on a long and circumstantially described itinerary, crossing the Kalmak frontier after passing a string of apparently legendary places. (1571-1745) After three days Kökçö-köz hears that they have gone, and taking 300 men he marches day and night for six days to catch up. Manas commands Kökçö-köz to go in among the Kalmak and reconnoiter. Kökçö-köz's guts quail inside him (a sign of his treachery), and he goes and warns the Kalmak of Manas's approach, urging them to fight and make an end of Manas and staking a personal claim on his four wives.²¹⁰ The Kalmak Ay Khan mounts an army of six myriads, while Kökçököz goes and slips back into his tent without reporting on his doings. On Manas's orders, Almambet rides out to take Kökçö-köz's report. Kökçö-köz lies that the Kalmak army are passed out from drinking, and again his guts gurgle and quail. Köz-kaman comes separately to Almambet and casts doubt on the truthfulness of Kökçö-köz's report.

7. (1746-2064b [318]) On Köz-kaman's advice, Manas and Almambet themselves ride out to reconnoiter the Kalmak. Almambet, with his native knowledge of the language, enters the camp. He gains intelligence from an old man, including the news that a tent full of young ladies and maids stands nearby. Eager to get in among the girls, Almambet kills the man, puts on his clothes, and enters the tent, pretending to be in search of lost cattle, which he lists and describes. The lovely and clairvoyant maid Altınay is in the tent; Almambet maneuvers in among bystanders, kisses her, and bites her cheek, drawing blood.²¹¹ Guards rush him, but Almambet escapes by creating a thick screen of smoke with his pipe. As he leaves the Kalmaks in utter confusion in the smoke-

²¹⁰ As Manas's eldest near-brother, Kökçököz could claim Manas's wives after his death by the levirate.

²¹¹ Cf. Bamsi Beyrek claiming Banu Chickek in *The Book of Dede Korkut*: "Beyrek kissed the girl three times and bit her once" (*Korkut*, p. 46); and cf. Hatto's n. to *KK* ll. 1899ff. (*MWR*, pp. 554f.).

filled yurt, Altınay calls out interpreting Almambet's words about lost cattle as a sign that Manas's Companions are on the way. Almambet threatens to seize Altınay as booty.

8. (2065-2391 [321]) (2065-2277) Almambet hurries to Manas and describes the loveliness and intelligence of Altınay as exceeding even Manas's wives, and demands her for booty. Manas says if she is really superior to Kanikey, then he, Manas, should take her. Almambet angrily scolds Manas for his meanness and seems on the point of breaking their friendship when Manas tells him he was teasing and to take Altınay for booty. In the morning the great battle with the Kalmak begins. The fighting gets hot, and Manas's men have the upper hand, but towards evening Manas turns around and gallops away in flight. Almambet races after Manas, driving and whipping the blood and hair off of his horse, Sar'ala. Overtaking Manas, he dismounts, assumes an attitude of submission, and tells Manas that the Kalmaks have the upper hand. Manas then turns back around and leads a massed counter-attack, routing the Kalmaks. In the plundering, Almambet first gets Altınay. (From near the end of this episode, the narration becomes sketchier, dwindling to an apparent cut-off in mid-speech at the end.²¹²) (2278-2391) In the confused plundering, Manas indulgently sends Sly-boy's younger brother Kargalday to seize booty for himself. Kargalday clashes with Kökçö-köz over shares. Kökçö-köz, feeling slighted for booty, accosts Manas (trying to get some of his). Almambet angrily fights off Kökçö-köz, but Manas appeases Almambet and persuades him to let the booty be divided in shares so as not to offend his new-found uncle Köz-kaman. The booty is shared out, and the warriors head home, hunting game along the way.

²¹² Radloff noted this shortcoming of the bard's delivery, and Hatto astutely judged it to be the effect of haste to conclude. See *Proben*, v. 5, p. 280, n. 2484; cf. *MWR*, nn. to *KK* ll.2484 ff., 2529 ff.

9. (2392-2420 [28]) Manas, the Forty Companions, and the Kalmak (i.e., Kökčö-köz and his brothers) alight at a wayside house and get into a drunken brawl. Kökčö-köz poisons the *arak* of Manas and the Forty Companions. The Forty Companions fall senseless; Manas, racked by poison but alive, tries to escape on his horse. Kökčö-köz shoots Manas with his handgun, and Manas falls dead.

10. (2421-2461 [40]) Kanikey, at home, knows what has happened by second sight. She brings her father's drugs to Manas's body and begins to heal him; the khoja Kan Kojo of Mecca also arrives, and after twelve days Manas is revived. Seeing the Forty Companions dead, Manas goes to Mecca, and after he completes many reverences, (the supernatural protector) Er Nazar looks on him with favor, and the Companions are also resurrected. They ride to Mecca to join Manas.

11. (2462-2540 [78; end]) Kanikey, at home, has a dream, which Altınay interprets: Manas and the Forty Companions are coming; Manas will kill the sons of Köz-kaman, and Kanikey will give birth to a son (Semetey²¹³), a better hero than his father. Manas comes back from Mecca and slays the sons of Köz-kaman (including Kökčö-köz), and is on the point of killing (the Kalmak princess and Almambet's wife, or intended wife) Altınay, when Kanikey holds him back, pleading for Altınay's life.²¹⁴

The plot of *KK* illustrates better than any other Kirghiz heroic epic how a bard can build narrative structure out of the enactment and fulfilment of narrative contracts. Underlying the entire plot, commencing in the prologue (which alone lacks a high scene

²¹³ Semetey is appropriately given well-worn hero-epithets usually used for Manas and Almambet.

²¹⁴ Thus the epic abruptly ends: "Alas, my lord, what has come over you? When you routed the Kalmak that fill the Altai, the poor woman was taken as booty—so let her have a chance! Hold, my lord, Sunshine! Since you went away it has been a long while, a space of twelve months has passed, my lord! From pining I have turned yellow, my life has been torment! When your eyes left me, not seeing I went blind, my lord!"

or epic moment) and continuing to the end of the last episode, runs the axiom that Kanikey is the optimal wife for Manas. By the end of the poem, this status has led naturally to her becoming the expectant mother of Manas's son and heir. Manas is an only son with no sons of his own, so as the poem draws to a close, it is fitting that the imbroglio with his new-found kin should recede before the crucial matter of Manas's own posterity. The corollary to the "Kanikey axiom" is that only *a son* will befit the Only Son, Manas; any more distant male relative of the Only Son is dangerous. Thus Kanikey's optimality consists not only in her qualities as a partner, but also in her being the means of continuing the precious, vulnerable lineage.

The following paragraphs constitute a contract analysis of the plot of *Köz-kaman*. The presentation is modeled formally after John D. Smith's ground-breaking contract analysis of the *Pābūjī* epic.²¹⁵ High scenes and epic moments are marked with asterisks. A row of three stars signals contractual business: enactment, enforcement, fulfilment, etc.

Episode 0/Prologue (Kanikey shows herself to be the optimal wife for Manas)

(0) Kanikey's optimality is given as an axiom (not a contract; cf. special relationship vi' and the discussion following).

Episode 1 (Manas announces the raid on the Kalmak; *Kanikey blesses the raid and him; *Akılay curses the raid and wishes him dead; *Manas refuses to counteract the curse with a sacrifice)

(i) Manas enters into a contract to raid the Kalmak.

(ii) By her blessing, Kanikey places supernatural persons and forces (partially identified in episodes 4 and 10) under contract to protect Manas's life and his endeavor.

But:

²¹⁵ Smith 1986.

(iii) By her curse, Akılay places opposing forces under contract to take away Manas's happiness and cause his death.

★★★ Manas enforces contract (i).

Contracts current at the end of episode 1:

(i); (ii) **but** (iii).

Episode 2 (Manas receives the news that his kinsmen are coming; precautions are taken with the Kalmak herald, but the herald gets around them; *Manas's father Jakıp rudely negates the sharp warnings of his wife, Bagdı-döölöt)

★★★ Jakıp enforces contract (iii).

Contracts current at the end of episode 2:

(i); (ii) **but** (iii).

Episode 3 (Almambet makes and *breaks his pledge to Kanikey to protect Manas from the strangers)

★★★ Almambet enforces contract (iii).

Contracts current at the end of episode 3:

(i); (ii) **but** (iii).

Episode 4 (The Köz-kamans are welcomed and converted to Islam; they invite Manas and his Companions to a feast in return; *Kanikey predicts harm for Manas, blesses him a second time, and urges Almambet to keep him away from the gathering)

(iv) Manas enters into a contract to respect his close kinship with Köz-kaman's sons.

(iv') Manas is thus automatically placed under contract to accept the invitation to appear at his cousins' feast.

★★★ By second sight, Kanikey reveals the continued effect of contract (iii).

★ ★ ★ With her blessing, Kanıkey enforces contract (ii).

Contracts current at the end of episode 4:

(i); (ii) **but** (iii); (iv); (iv').

Episode 5 (Almambet lies to protect Manas; *Serek rouses Manas to deliver the fateful invitation; *at the feast [Kökçö-köz] wounds Manas; *apostrophe lamenting Manas's solitude)

★ ★ ★ Serek enforces contract (iv').

★ ★ ★ Manas fulfils contract (iv').

[★ ★ ★ contract (ii) is implicitly enforced as Manas survives the assault]

(v) Manas is automatically placed under contract to avenge the attack by Kökçö-köz.

Contracts current at the end of episode 5:

(i); (ii) **but** (iii); (iv) **but** (v).

Episode 6 (*With an invocation Manas re-commences the raid on the Kalmak; Kökçö-köz prepares, *with gastric repercussions, to betray Manas to the Kalmak khan and his superior army; Köz-kaman warns Manas of possible trickery)

★ ★ ★ Manas enforces contract (i).

★ ★ ★ Manas enforces contract (iv).

★ ★ ★ Kökçö-köz's instrumentality in the enforcement of contract (iii) is affirmed.

Contracts current at the end of episode 6:

(i); (ii) **but** (iii); (iv) **but** (v).

Episode 7 (Manas and Almambet go on reconnaissance; Almambet takes the measure of Altınay and *lays claim to her by bite-marking her cheek; Almambet and

Altınay "emerge" together above the fray by *[Almambet] smoking up the yurt and *[Altınay] interpreting Almambet's story about lost cattle)

(vi) Almambet enters into a contract to take Altınay to wife.

(vi') (Almambet and Altınay are bound in a special relationship, termed "contract" for convenience; see Episode 11 and the discussion below).

Contracts current at the end of episode 7:

(i); (ii) **but** (iii); (iv) **but** (v); (vi); (vi').

Episode 8 (Almambet goes and *extracts assurances from Manas that Altınay will go to him in the booty. The two sides enter battle; *Manas flees the battle; *Almambet prevails upon him to return; *they sack the Kalmak and Almambet takes Akılay; Manas subdues the contentions between his Companions and the Kōz-kamans over booty and makes an apportionment)

★ ★ ★ Almambet enforces contract (vi).

★ ★ ★ As Manas flees from harm in battle, contract (ii) is enforced.

★ ★ ★ Almambet puts Manas back on course, thus enforcing contract (vi) and contract (iii) again.

★ ★ ★ Manas and the Forty Companions fulfil contract (i).

★ ★ ★ Almambet fulfils contract (vi).

★ ★ ★ Manas enforces contract (iv).

Contracts current at the end of episode 8:

(ii) **but** (iii); (iv) **but** (v); (vi').

Episode 9 (They head home; Kōkčö-kōz poisons the Forty Companions and tries to poison Manas; *Manas flees; *Kōkčö-kōz kills him with a gunshot)

★ ★ ★ At the cost of his life, Manas vainly attempts to enforce contract (iv)

★★★ Kökčö-köz abolishes contract (iv) by murdering Manas.

★★★ Contract (iii) is fulfilled.

★★★ With the inhibiting contract (iv) removed, contract (v) is reactivated.

Contracts current at the end of episode 9:

(ii); (v); (vi').

Episode 10 (Manas is revived by Kanikey in cooperation with Kan Kojo of Mecca; *Manas laments that he is alone without the Forty Companions; he goes to Mecca and intercedes for them, and they are revived by Er Nazar)

★★★ Contract (ii) is fulfilled.

Contracts current at the end of episode 10:

(v); (vi').

Episode 11 (Altınay interprets Kanikey's dream; *Manas comes and kills the sons of Köz-kaman; *Kanikey begins to beg Manas not to kill Altınay; the poem ends)

★★★ Manas fulfils contract (v).

★★★ By interceding on behalf of Altınay's life, Kanikey protects the import of special relationship (vi').

Axiom (see Prologue) and special relationship current at the end of episode 11:
(0); (vi').

Despite the abrupt ending, which Radloff suggested was due to a rushed performance, the contract analysis above seems to indicate that the bard was nearing the end of the plot of his *Köz-kaman*. All contracts, as perceived here, have been fulfilled. Of the two lingering conditions, we have already discussed the significance of (0), the "Kanikey axiom"; it is an appropriate summation of the plot that Kanikey should reassert

herself as the epic closes. The cause for which she asserts herself, Almambet's marriage to Altınay, is of ambiguous significance in the tradition and will be examined below.

The high scenes and epic moments that punctuate the episodes of *Köz-kaman* have different functions. Some of them reveal the basic moral valences of characters, such as Kanikey's blessings of Manas in episodes 1 and 4, or Kökçö-köz's treacherous stomach-rumblings and his murder of Manas in episodes 6 and 9. Other high scenes show characters in conflicting or inconsistent positions. Those belonging to Manas's part afford a spectacle of wilful ignorance and error with striking technical affinities to tragedy. Almambet's portrayal is shaded: in one epic moment he lies and breaks a pledge to Kanikey, thus endangering Manas (episode 3); later he plays the foil to Serek's epic moment by lying and taking Kanikey's part in order to protect Manas (episode 5).

On the surface one resists interpreting Almambet's betrayal of his *arak*-pledge to Kanikey as a high scene. How could the best friend, chief companion and milk-brother to Manas betray him? But indeed the aberrancy of Almambet's action signals that the moment is intentional. Almambet's lie is the last of three successive abrogations of Manas's safety in a line of decreasing intimacy: first Manas himself turns down Kanikey's direct advice to make a sacrifice (end of episode 1); then his father Jakıp callously derides Bağdı-döölöt's premonition of danger (end of episode 2); then his friend Almambet commits his lapse (end of episode 3). Finishing thus with a friend's betrayal, the bard has neatly evinced Manas's total aloneness: Manas will not help himself, and no one else in his male circle can or will.

Something more than non-help is required to undo a super-hero. Adding Akılay's curse in episode 1, the bard has left Manas in the good graces of not a single living soul except Kanikey. By episode 5, the high scenes and epic moments have become errors of

commission: Serek's stubborn sense of honor propels Manas finally into harm's way, and Kökčö-köz, as foreseen by Kanikey, sets the great feud in motion with a wounding blow. The first half of the epic closes appropriately with an apostrophe—the bard, signaling distress at the solitude and vulnerability surrounding Manas, addresses God directly on the hero's behalf: "My God, Allah Most High, Almighty, why didst Thou make him an Only One?"²¹⁶

In the second half of the epic, the bard continues to expound skilfully on the theme of Manas's aloneness. Yet with the relevant contracts pending fulfilment, the plot seems to digress to a new and disconnected narrative peak concerning Almambet and Altınay. We recall that Altınay is the person on whose behalf Kanikey stays Manas's final weapon-stroke. If Kanikey, at the moral apex of the *dramatis personae*, vouches for Altınay, then one is assured that the special relationship (*vi'*) between Almambet and Altınay is one which will prove to be of great importance. Moreover, Almambet tackles the most bizarre crisis in the plot in order to obtain her, in episode 8, when Manas turns and flees the successful engagement with the Kalmak.²¹⁷ Almambet's crowning epic moment is both hyperbolic and laconic: the force of his desire to obtain Altınay as booty is so great that he is capable of reversing the imponderably strong force that has set the paramount hero Manas to flight! Altınay's life is thus "worth saving" according to the logic of the plot. It is less clear what traditional function Altınay fulfilled which made her indispensable. There is evidence, but of a strongly conflicting nature. In the later *Semetey* versions of the Twilight Age, Almambet is the father of Semetey's companion Kül-čoro,

²¹⁶ I,5) 1438f.

²¹⁷ We are safe to assume that our bard felt it impermissible for Manas to flee an *unsuccessful* encounter: such is the definition of cowardice. Cf. Hatto's interpretation of a similar, heroically perverse withdrawal in the *Mohave Heroic Epic* (Hatto 1999, p. 23).

whose pathetic loyalty at the climax of the Semetey story (still also in the Older Period) helps to preserve the fragile line of succession. If Almambet was Kül-čoro's father, it is possible that Altınay was his mother, although there is no independent evidence of this. In any event, Kül-čoro's pedigree and Almambet's issue had shifted in the Twilight Age: in I,6), Kül-čoro is the son of Manas's smooth-tongued companion Ajıbay, while Almambet is the father of—Kan-čoro, Semetey's evil, treacherous companion. Since Almambet was the father of this hero, was Altınay the mother?²¹⁸ It is easy to see that the implications for these resolutions are drastically different. Indeed, if Altınay was understood by the bard and his audience to be the future mother of Kan-čoro, then Kanikey's existential optimality as a devoted and clairvoyant wife/lineage-preserver appears, as nowhere else in the Older Period, to be relative. In view of her supreme quality down through the terrible climax of the cycle—when she drinks the blood of the last enemy to the line²¹⁹—it is difficult to imagine a bard subsuming her nature to a tragic plot trick such as, "Kanikey saves the life of the future mother of Semetey's murderer." It is not quite impossible, however; as we have seen in the very same subplot, the bard was not above making Manas appear to act in a cowardly manner when Almambet's determination needed a foil. One way or the other, the bard leaves his audience in the midst of obscure motions which they know will settle significantly on the union of Almambet and Altınay.

²¹⁸ Almambet had other wives in the tradition; the mid-nineteenth century I,3) *The Marriage, Death and Return to Life of Manas* even records a wife named Altınay, this one the daughter of the Muslim Ayıp Khan and elder cousin of Kanikey [I,3), 1487ff.], who has qualities of a sorceress.

²¹⁹ I,7), 1904-1912.

I,2) *Almambet, Er Kökčö, and Ak-erkeč; How Almambet Came to Manas*

I,2) (*AK*,²²⁰ recorded in Bugu territory²²¹) and its 1862 companion I,5) *KK* may be called the "Kalmak epics," because they make up a set on the common theme of relations with members of the enemy side. In I,2), Almambet is not merely a convert to Islam from among the Oyrot,²²² he is also a better man than his Muslim preceptor, Er Kökčö. The fundamental concern of I,2) is the status and relations of heroes and heroines as viewed on several planes. At the top and bottom of the scale, on the planes of ethno-religious geography and symbolic kinship, the characters' relations tend toward the mythic; between these extremes, the bard achieves a realistic and nuanced narrative portrayal of ordinary relationships between heroes and heroines. High scenes and epic moments play a crucial role in the structure of the plot, but unlike I,5) these moments do not fall into groups of contracts. They delineate statements of ethos indicatively, like algebraic expressions, rather than in the imperative mode of contracts.

As Radloff seemed to imply in the ungainly title, the text of I,2) may be viewed as two serial and potentially separable epic plots.²²³ The first part narrates the conversion of the infidel Oyrot prince Almambet by the Muslim hero Er Kökčö, followed by the jealousy-motivated scandal involving Almambet and Kökčö's wife Ak-Erkeč, which,

²²⁰ *MWR*, pp. 13-71 and Commentary, pp. 406-428; Hatto 1969c; Hatto 1987; Radloff, *Iz Sibiri*, pp. 350ff.; Žirmunskii 1961, pp. 161-166; cf. DeWeese 1994, pp. 59-66.

²²¹ *MWR*, p. 602.

²²² Aside from scant allusions, I,2) is the only mid-nineteenth century Kirghiz epic to distinguish a Mongolian-speaking Oyrot (Kirghiz for "Oirat") people. It is ethnologically sound that the Kirghiz epic context for an Oyrot people was, as here, the royal clan of the infidel prince Almambet; cf. the Oirat Mongol dynasty that ruled the Jungharian state. The favored epic Kirghiz word for "(infidel) Mongol" was *Kalmak*; Almambet is referred to pejoratively as a Kalmak by Kökčö and his companions, and the heroes Joloy, Koŋur-bay, and Nez-kara were Kalmak. Cf. *KO* 655, 2362, I,4) 1452; on semantic overlap with Kirg. *oyrot* "mass of the people," "peoples other than the Kirghiz," see Iudakhin, *Slovar'* s.v. *oyrot* and Hatto 1977 n. 655.

²²³ *MWR*, p. 49; on the effects of cyclization visible in I,2) see Hatto 1969c, pp. 161ff., 187-198.

thanks to K    's poor leadership and in spite of Ak-Erke 's wise interventions, propels the better man Almambet away from K    's circle. The second part concerns Almambet's approach to Manas through a series of foreshadowings and scenes in successive layers of proximity, culminating with Manas and Almambet becoming milk-brothers at the rejuvenated breasts of Manas's mother,   akan. Analysis of the text as a whole indicates that the bard's construction of the two-part plot was underlain by a unified purpose. High scenes and epic moments which open matters in the first part are complemented with balancing or summing-up moments in the second. Thus the poem truly has a single plot.

In the following summary the high scenes and epic moments are marked with asterisks. Line numbers refer to an orientation point in the text at or near the beginning of the relevant episode; the open-endedness of certain narrative situations makes precise line references impractical.

1. (1-54 [54]) Almambet's birth among the Infidels, attended by miraculous Islamic representations, *causes disturbed movements by the Muslim "sons of Three Fathers": the heroes Jamg    of the Kara Nogoy, Manas of the Sar   Nogoy, and Er K    .

2. (55-178 [123]) As a result of the rearrangements of the Muslims, Er K     meets Almambet near the eastern end of lake Issyk-Kul, and at K    's behest Almambet becomes a Muslim, taking K    's thrice-offered tea *only the third time, after formally becoming his friend.

3. (179-306 [127]) As a result of Almambet's conversion to Islam, he goes and proffers the new faith to his father, Kara Khan, and his people, the Oyrot, then withdraws and waits for an answer. Before Almambet returns, Kara Khan curses him and

vows to his frightened people that he will never demean himself by showing fear before Almambet; however, *as soon as Almambet returns, Kara Khan descends the throne and hurries after his army.

4. (307-444 [137]) Almambet proffers Islam to his mother, who also refuses. Then Almambet fights the massed armies of his Kara Khan's realm, and *after his thrice-uttered battle-cries invoking Muslim heroes' names find ultimate success in "Manas!", he crushes them.

5. (445-619 [174]) Almambet goes and pledges himself to Kökčö, thus formally becoming his companion. When Kökčö arrives with Almambet in his camp, his wife Ak-erkeč honors Almambet by holding his horse's lead-rope while he dismounts. Kökčö upbraids her for the slight he thus perceives to himself, but *Ak-erkeč retorts that Kökčö's own doings of late have been of little merit, and that his displeasure shows meanness of heart toward his friend.

6. (620-1006 [386]) Almambet lives happily in Kökčö's camp, wanting for nothing, and enriching the people with his forays and other exertions. Kökčö's other companions (chiefly Meṇḍibay) become jealous, and present Kökčö with the slanderous rumor that Ak-erkeč and Almambet are having an adulterous affair. Kökčö, resolving to punish Almambet, summons him and attempts to demean him by telling him to name gifts he desires and then refusing to give them. Almambet remains dignified, *ordering *arak* (liquor) and drinking ten cupfuls in his lord's presence. After being repeatedly taunted and refused a steed and mail-coat, Almambet quits Kökčö with a heroic curse and threat.

7. (1007-1131 [124]) Ak-erkeč intercepts Almambet as he is leaving and persuades him to wait until she can convince Kökčö to mend the friendship by bestowing

the gifts Almambet had requested. But although Ak-erkeč *cows Kōkčö into changing his mind,²²⁴ her arguments take too long; Almambet has given up waiting and departs, heading for Manas.

8. (1132-1371 [239]) Meanwhile, Manas has seen a dream. He summons his Forty Companions and goes to his father Jakıp Bay's camp. *Manas approaches the camp with such vehemence that the people wonder whether he is planning to kill Jakıp and his mother, Čakan. Manas commands those present to interpret the dream, with promises of rewards for a correct interpretation and death-threats for an incorrect one. *Manas's companion, smooth-tongued Ajıbay, correctly interprets the dream as meaning that Almambet is on his way to Manas. Ajıbay receives his reward.

9. (1372-1551 [179]) Manas and his companions go out and mount a pass in the direction of Almambet's approach. Manas makes out Almambet's figure coming on in the distance, and goes back down the pass to summon his men to seize Almambet and ask him his business. *Almambet, ascending the same pass, finds Manas's footprints in the sand and sees that his own footprints are a finger's-breadth smaller; likewise, the hoofprints of his horse Kıl-jiren were a finger's-breadth shorter than those of Manas's mount, Ak-kula.

10. (1553-1610 [57]) Almambet, approaching the defensive picket placed by Manas, states his khanly status to Manas's heralds. The heralds acknowledge that by his

²²⁴ Hatto's rendering of I,2) 1108-1111 should be emended (as for punctuation) and translated as follows, as a minor epic moment: "...*sūrup alar Almambet!*" / *Alakanın čak koyup, / kötiün jergä tak koyup, / anda ayttıj Er Kōkčö:* / "*Kök-alamı berijär!...*" ""...Almambet would lead [him] off!" [said Ak-erkeč]. Then, clapping his hands and plopping down on his rump, (you,) Er Kōkčö said, "Give him Kōk-ala!..." Ak-erkeč has flung her husband flat onto his bottom with her scolding, and he relents. The second-person *ayttıj* 'you said' is a common apostrophic figure of Kirghiz epic bards, with which agreement of the third-person *alakanın, kötiün* should not be sought too diligently; moreover, the *-ŋ* may well be the frequently occurring intervocalic excrescent consonant, emending which would bring us back morphemically to *ayttı* 'said (3pers.)'.

status his business is with their lord, but they try to take his horse's lead-rope for him to dismount. *Almambet tears the rope from their hands and proceeds to Manas on horseback.

11. (1611-1747 [136]) Manas greets Almambet graciously, and immediately offers him of his own accord princely gifts of the kind which Kōkčö had lately refused to give. *Almambet declines all of the gifts except for the steed Sar'ala.

12. (1748-1819 [71]) Manas dispatches his companions Serek and Sırgak to his father Jakıp Bay's yurt and bids Jakıp to organize a feast and horse-races in honor of Almambet. Jakıp gives Serek and Sırgak the gift-for-good-news that they demand (for informing him of Almambet's arrival) only after *recalling for them that in their own earliest childhood days they [their people] had migrated away from the fearsome Almambet.

13. (1820-1862 [42; end]) The feast begins. In the horse race *Almambet, riding Kıl-jiren, comes in first ahead of Manas on Ak-kula. Immediately, Manas's mother Čakan's withered breasts flow with milk. *Manas sucks one breast and Almambet sucks the other, and thus they become brothers.

The bard of I,2) has marshalled a range of high scenes and epic moments, some of which command attention with their scenic mastery, while others nestle unobtrusively but powerfully among the thorns of the characters' pride. The epic is undeniably about Almambet, but it is a sure sign of the gravitational force of the *Manas* cycle, and the underlying intent of the poem, that every high scene or epic moment that the bard gives to Almambet is sooner or later placed in the context of his relationship with Manas. High scenes and epic moments featuring Almambet not only attract complementary actions or effects by Manas, and *vice versa*; they also locate the two within the nesting layers of a

heroic universe. The bard has constructed the plot of the epic as an iterative process of comparisons that result in an exhaustive calibration of Almambet's character.

The high scenes and epic moments around which the plot of I,2) is organized may be grouped into six distinct threads which run through the plot and overlap, each thread consisting of two or three scenes. The threads represent distinct spheres of human and spiritual relations. We may imagine each high scene or epic moment to be a term and each thread to be an expression or equation in a kind of narrative "algebra," with Almambet as the variable which the audience is to solve for. In Table 1 (p. 114, below), the vertical lines on the left delineate these threads or expressions, with each of their constituent high scenes and epic moments indicated by a horizontal bar along the line. Each expression is identified to the right of its originating scene, in the column labeled "Character relation."

The thread or expression begun in episode 1 concerns Almambet's and Manas's relations within the ethnic and religious space of their geographic territories. The bard opens on a mythic note: "When land became land, and water water, there were the Infidels, Sons of six Fathers, and the Muslims, Sons of Three,"²²⁵ then with appropriate epic robustness the news of Almambet's birth causes the three Muslim "fathers," Jamgırçı, Kökçö, and Manas, to shift about in confused migrations. No doubt the source of such power behind Almambet's birth was the mediation of the assembled (Muslim) elders and Lord Allah himself, by which he was conceived.²²⁶ The bard returns to the

²²⁵ I,2) 1-4.

²²⁶ I,2) 5-15. Allah is localized: *Arčaluu mazar azrät Aldasınan bütüptü!* (14f.) "[He was] conceived ... from the Lord Allah of Arčaluu Mazar!" *Arčaluu mazar* "Juniper-y mausoleum" has not been geographically identified (*MWR*, p. 616; also no entry in *Manas entsiklopediya* or standard reference works on toponymy). About such a place there may be a hint of the juniper boughs burnt by Mongolian peoples as incense at Buddhist shrines. The only other occurrence of the place-name in mid-nineteenth century epic is at *Joloy Khan* 810, where the captured dam of

miraculous perturbations surrounding Almambet's birth in episode 12, when Manas's father Jakıp takes Serek and Sırgak down a peg at their jubilant demand for a good-news gift: he rebukes the Companions with the reminder that the reason they do not know the land of their birth is that "Not enduring Almambet's biting cold breath, my camel-calves, you all migrated and came to naught!" (1812-1813²²⁷). Thus the thread that began in mythic terms is concluded in concrete social terms. The fact that Almambet towers in status over two of Manas's chief companions is one element in the calibration of his character.

The second thread initiated by the bard concerns the relationship between Almambet and his Muslim lords (first Kökčö, then Manas) in terms of personal rights and obligations. Kökčö, a lesser hero than Almambet, makes errors great and small in the art of *largesse*. The first high scene occurs when Almambet and Kökčö have just met, and Almambet refuses and then accepts Kökčö's thrice-offered tea. The Muslim hero mixed up tea and religion, offering the drink before Almambet fulfilled his request by accepting Islam. Almambet correctly declined the premature offer until after he converted. Then, significantly, he refused the tea again until he had formally (i.e., formulaically) become

Joloy's horse Ač-budan tells him (Ač-budan) to go and beg Joloy to take her and slaughter her for a sacrifice at the tomb *Arčalū mazar Asrät*. It will be remembered that the Rabelaisian hero of *Joloy Khan* is a Muslim for the nonce; elsewhere throughout the tradition he is one of Manas's most formidable Kalmak adversaries. A monograph on religious sacrifices among the Kirghiz would be desirable.

Later bards such as Sagımbay and Sayakbay include the detail that Almambet had a Muslim mother or wet-nurse (see Žirmunskii 1961, pp. 161-166). Almambet's name, with the element *mambet* from *Muhammad*† is sufficient evidence to show that the mid-nineteenth century tradition recognized him as a personally predestined Muslim rather than a "mere" convert.

(† The *Al-* element is not so easy to place: Ar. *ʿAlī*? *al-*? Turk. *alp*? It seems possible that *Almambet* arose in jingling relation to an older form of Manas's name such as **Almamaš* [see p. 53, above].

²²⁷ My translation differs slightly from Hatto's. Cf. the *flyting* recollections of Nestor and other heroes at crucial plot-points in the *Iliad*, R. Martin 1989, pp. 77ff.

Kökčö's friend.²²⁸ The importance of the friendship-relation between heroes is spelled out later by Almambet in a speech at the beginning of episode 5. He has just slain his father Kara Khan's own armies *en masse* in order to extricate himself from the infidel Oyrot society. Returning to Kökčö, he announces that the deed is done, and makes a solemn declaration of friendship in explicitly operative terms: he will enrich Kökčö's people, and, in return: "If I slay a man I'll pay no blood-price, killing a camel I'll pay no scot! For my deeds I'll incur no obligation! Honour me well and cherish me, my Friend!"²²⁹ The bard adorns this entire speech with the line-terminal apostrophe, *dosum!* "my friend," emphasizing that in this proclamation Almambet is appealing to the legal essence of friendship between heroes.

In the great crisis in the middle of the epic, this essence fuels both Kökčö's ill-advised abuses and Almambet's arrogant response. Almambet commits no lapse by ordering and drinking ten cupfuls of *arak* in the face of Kökčö's attempts to sever their friendship. On the contrary, Hatto very perceptively saw that this was the haughty exploit of a hero *in extremis*.²³⁰

Like other well-known heroic impasses, such as that between Achilles and Agamemnon in the *Iliad*, the clash of Kökčö and Almambet vividly illustrates the uncompromising extremes of the heroic ethos.²³¹ Kökčö has fallen prey to the false information of his retainers who are jealous of Almambet, and is convinced that his wife Ak-erkeč has been sleeping with him. But in order to have it out with Almambet, Kökčö

²²⁸ I,2) 102-182.

²²⁹ I,2) 475-478.

²³⁰ *MWR*, pp. 13, 422 (n. to l. 860). For cyclic aspects of the interpretation of the *arak*-scene, see Hatto 1969c, p. 189f.

²³¹ Cf. also *Nibelungenlied*, pp. 111-118, for a similar situation between two heroes and the wife of one of them, discussed by Hatto, 1969c.

must negotiate the constraints of their heroic friendship, which is so strong that it will dictate even the enraged response of a husband who believes he has been cuckolded. According to the terms of the friendship, Kökčö is bound to give Almambet anything he asks for. A good Companion, however,²³² is expected to know at all times approximately what he is worth in the lord's eyes, and he in turn ought to expect no more nor less as his due. Thus the stage has been set. It will be useful for an understanding of both the heroic ethos and the function of Almambet's epic moment to analyze this sequence in detail:

1. Kökčö summons and addresses Almambet (at first, aloofly, through the words of a retainer): "What is taken today is good for you, what is given is good for me. If he needs a horse, let him ask for one, if he needs a tunic, let him ask for one! Let him choose a gift and take it! Let him ask for something and take it!"²³³ [This is an announcement that a legal trial of the friendship-bond has begun. It is also an attempt to goad Almambet into stepping over the line. Naturally, Kökčö would damage his own honor by making the adultery accusation outright in public. In I,7), Semetey negotiates his way out of having stolen Ay-čürök from her betrothed, Ümütöy, by paying the latter a steed and a coat of chain mail.²³⁴ From this we may infer that the wording of Kökčö's offer was itself an insinuation of the offense Almambet is alleged to have committed.²³⁵ For a lesser hero than Almambet, the choices from this point onward would rapidly narrow down to ignominious exile or combat.]

²³² It is incorrect to speak of Almambet as Kökčö's vassal, since he has the rank of a khan.

²³³ I,2) 829-835.

²³⁴ I,7) 856-869; see Hatto 1973/74, part II, pp. 2 (n. 7) and 3 (n. 11).

²³⁵ Besides the striking parallels between the gifts involved in these two similar quarrels and the not surprising similarities in formulaic diction [cf. I,2) 831-834; I,7) 790-793, 846f.], it is perhaps significant for understanding cyclic development to note that Ümütöy, Semetey's "maternal uncle" (first cousin once removed), is Er Kökčö's son.

2. Almambet answers that he needs neither horse nor tunic from Kökčö. He generously recasts Kökčö's offer in the best possible light by saying, "It is no question of a jaded horse, or of my tunic being tattered"; at the same time he knowingly jibes, "May the work of him who spoils be spoilt, and may the one who wounds be wounded!"; and by scratching a cross on the floor with his knife he may be subtly indicating that he is prepared to draw a larger blade.²³⁶
3. A second retainer goads Almambet: "putting on airs, [...] aspiring to be the equal of my lord, [...] Whenever you have asked something of the lady Ak-erkeč, has she not unfailingly granted it? You are truly a young man who undercuts the happiness of others!"²³⁷ [This is as close as one can get to actually making the accusation of adultery. Almambet cannot be complacent or coy any longer, but neither will the situation permit a first-rate hero to stoop to arguing points of fact.]
4. "Then Almambet said: 'For what God has done I have no escape, for what the All-highest has done I have no remedy!—Bring me *arak*!' They brought him some *arak*, and tiger-born Almambet drank five cupfuls."²³⁸ [A vassal of Almambet's status will not abide being summoned to his lord only to be addressed, and scurrilously at that, by an inferior hero. By ordering *arak* he asserts his rights²³⁹ and exemplifies good manners: indoors at court is not the place for swordplay. One imagines the drinking as a leisurely process, with Almambet knowing full well that if he waits long enough he will hear from Kökčö, whose agitation is surely rising the longer Almambet takes to drink.]

²³⁶ I,2) 836-843; my translation differs from Hatto's. The inscribing of the cross has eluded ethnographic interpretation.

²³⁷ I,2) 845-856.

²³⁸ I,2) 857-863.

²³⁹ Cf. Hatto 1969c, p. 189.

5. [With his retainers having done the dirty work and Almambet appearing to have taken offense, Kökčö can afford to venture a show of dispassionate magnanimity:] "Then Kökčö addressed him: 'If you need a horse, Almambet, ask for one and take it! Or if you need a tunic, Almambet, ask for one and take it!'"²⁴⁰
6. Almambet relents, uttering a gnomic aside: "Among the illustrious, there are not five; if a woman's character is besmirched, she is no beauty! Among the famous there are not six; while a woman deceives, she is no beauty!"²⁴¹ He asks for Kökčö's prized steed Kök-ala (Blue-gray Dapple), identifying the horse with a circumstantial epithet alluding to the raid in which Kökčö captured it. He also asks for Kökčö's Blue Tunic (*Kök-kübö*), a cap of pure black sable, and his princely boots with span-high heels.²⁴² [Being blameless, he in fact deserves the best gifts.]
7. [To be rid of a friend who cuckolded him, Kökčö would owe no better than ordinary gifts; he makes a last-ditch attempt to prevent disaster by means of a broad—and clearly obtuse—second guess:] "Kökčö rose and answered him: 'There are many blue-gray dapples (*kök-ala*) [...]—which particular blue-gray dapple do you mean?'"²⁴³
8. Almambet again specifies the prize animal with much the same epithets²⁴⁴ and with the same affirmative formula he used to seal his friendship with Kökčö in the beginning: "I have one soul in my breast, my friend; I have one tongue with my uvula, my friend!"²⁴⁵

²⁴⁰ I,2) 864-868.

²⁴¹ I,2) 872-875 (my translation differs slightly from Hatto's); cf. *MWR*, pp. 422f., n. to ll. 872-875.

²⁴² I,2) 876-892.

²⁴³ I,2) 893-896.

²⁴⁴ I,2) 898-914.

²⁴⁵ I,2) 899f. My translation differs from Hatto's.

9. [Since he is convinced he is the wronged party, Kōkčö has no choice but to interpret this specific request as a decisive affront and consider the friendship severed:] "Coming down from the high land and putting on airs, fancying yourself above the Forty Companions, affecting generosity fit for the Almighty, aspiring to be the equal of a lord—If you ask for a Kōk-ala who would give you the rump [...]? Swing the lash over his head, grip his collar tight! When one says 'Out!', a cur goes away! Why does not Almambet the Kalmak go?"²⁴⁶
10. Almambet maintains control of the situation by drinking five more cups of *arak* (while none of the retainers moves against him) and then addressing Kōkčö with a complimentary epithet and an appeal to his generosity—followed by a veiled threat if he does not give Kōk-ala.²⁴⁷
11. Kōkčö repeats his words from (9) almost verbatim.
12. Almambet curses and threatens Kōkčö with utter despoliation,²⁴⁸ places Kōkčö's friendship vows on his (Kōkčö's) own neck, and rides away, bringing the sixth episode, and one of the longest epic moments in the Kighiz epic tradition, to a close.²⁴⁹

The last high scene in this narrative thread echoes the first two. Manas, in welcoming Almambet as his new friend and companion, orders a long list of the choicest gifts to be given to Almambet, including Manas's own chief steed Ak-kula, his mail-coat Ak-olpok, other horses, weapons and gear, a black sable cap, and costly boots with span-

²⁴⁶ I,2) 916-927.

²⁴⁷ I,2) 928-944.

²⁴⁸ Almambet does not carry out the threat, but Manas does in another epic, making explicit and detailed reference to this very grievance of Almambet's; see I,3) 411-460. The bards of I,2) and I,3) were probably different; see Hatto 1990, p. 602.

²⁴⁹ I,2) 956-1006.

thick heels. These are just the sort of gifts Kökčö had lately refused to give to Almambet—and now Manas is offering them without being asked and before Almambet has served him for even a day. But order has been restored with Almambet's arrival in Manas's orbit, and Almambet may once again, as with the tea, show his quality by restraint: he declines all the gifts except for the steed Sar'ala (who becomes his usual steed in later poems in the cycle).²⁵⁰

The high scene in episode 3 initiates a narrative thread that calibrates Almambet's and Manas's characters on another important scale: the one hero is as vehement and dangerous as the other towards his father. Almambet's first act as a converted Muslim was to proffer the new religion to his father, Kara Khan, and the numerous infidel peoples he rules (Oyrot, Kalmak, Kıtay, Orus). Kara Khan's people propose fleeing from Almambet in secret, but Kara Khan will not be bowed: "My people dense as a forest, I will not be parted from you, My Person shall not alight from my throne gilden with gold, I Myself shall never open my door—would not my Khan's head be demeaned?"²⁵¹ But when Almambet returns to receive his father's answer, riding clean through a defensive force numbering fifty myriads, "There was no response from his father. His father then descended from his throne gilden with gold, and as he (Kara Khan) lifted the door himself, tiger-born Almambet seized his father."²⁵² This high scene finds its complement in episode 8, in the scene in which Manas and his companions rush to his father Jakıp to have his dream interpreted. Manas, troubled by the dream, is in a violent mood: "Seeing

²⁵⁰ I,2) 1710-1747. Sar'ala figured enigmatically in the narration of Almambet's last scene with Kökčö—Kökčö spoke as if Almambet had asked for Sar'ala, but no such request appears in the text (cf. 895, 897, 922, 952).

²⁵¹ I,2) 254-259.

²⁵² I,2) 279-284. My translation differs crucially from Hatto's: it is Kara Khan who lifts the door, not Almambet (282 *ešikti özü aškanda*); contrast Kara Khan's vow at 258 (*ešikti özü açpaimın*).

him, the people (wondered), 'Is he going to kill his father Jakıp-bay, or perhaps his lady mother Čakan?'²⁵³ Then after offering a reward to the assembled people for a correct interpretation and threatening death for an incorrect one, "He made for him whose path through life was drawing out, whose life was growing long. Er Manas born a warrior seized his sword of black steel by the grip, drew it from its sheath and made for his father to strike him!"²⁵⁴ Manas is pacified by his eloquent counselor Ajıbay, who in the next high scene stakes his life and correctly interprets the dream.

A major theme of this epic is the predestination of Manas's friendship with Almambet, and the fourth narrative thread consists of premonitions of the relationship, one for Almambet and one for Manas. In episode 4, the newly converted Muslim Almambet, trying all alone to subdue his father's massed armies, succeeds despite his best efforts only in chasing them eastward. He needs the intervention of a *ghāzī*-spirit to finish the job, so he calls upon the venerable Er Koşoy (here styled *khoja (kojo)*—a rare label for Koşoy, and perhaps here meant to show Almambet's naïveté?) by means of a long epithet which alludes to Koşoy's *ghāzī*-exploits in another part of the cycle. Again he expertly readies his lance and charges,²⁵⁵ but again the Oyrot retreat eastwards.

²⁵³ I,2) 1254f.

²⁵⁴ I,2) 1291-1297.

²⁵⁵ Here, where Almambet strives twice without success to conquer the Infidel forces, the interpretation of the formula *jeläkti jerdän tüir-* "to furl the pennant from the earth" requires reexamination. Despite Hatto's suggestion of ethnographic support for his proposed image [see the note to l. 396 of I,4) *Bok-murun*], I do not agree with the interpretation that the "furling of (someone's) pennant from the ground" was symbolic of ending one's adversary's life or hereditary line. The contexts of all the recorded instances of this formula accord very well with a literal interpretation: the hero, in preparing for an attack or charge, reaches down and gathers up the end of the pennant that hangs loosely from his lance. He does this so that the pennant will not interfere with his aim (as Hatto allows for in the interpretation of a different formula in the same note, loc. cit.) or with his horse's movement. Warriors would naturally let their pennants dangle to catch the breeze and thus to allow for the communication of any heraldic signs, until the arrival of the crucial moment in battle. The image is expanded in I,4) 396-398: *jeläkti jerdän türölü! / Jelbirätpäi naızanı / tura karmap sayalık!* "let us furl the (our) pennant(s) from the earth! Not

Almambet prays to Allah, tucks up his skirts and utters the war-cry "Kökčö!", again to no avail. "Then, suddenly, Manas's Ancestor-spirits (*arbak*) entered his mouth, he was shouting the war-cry 'Manas!'"—and Almambet succeeds in annihilating the Oyrot army.²⁵⁶ Balancing this scene, Manas's premonition of their close relationship comes in episode 8, mentioned above, in which he has a dream, the interpretation of which is that Almambet is on his way to him.²⁵⁷

The fifth narrative thread concerns Almambet's relations with his lord's family and retainers—first Kökčö's, then Manas's. Most of this subplot dwells on the triangular relationship between Almambet, Kökčö, and Kökčö's loyal wife Ak-erkeč.²⁵⁸ The bard of I,2) may well have been utilizing material from an older, independent epic about this triangle in constructing the present component epic in the Manas-cycle. In doing so, he clearly demonstrated the subordination of the episode to the figure of Manas by placing it at one end of a thread of comparison between Almambet and his two lords' families and retainers.

The high scene that opens this thread belongs to Ak-erkeč, who perceives that Almambet's presence in their camp will bring benefit. She greets Almambet so

letting them flutter, let us hold (our) lances at the ready and thrust!" Thus, *jeläkti jerdän türdü* means, here and in I,4), "he furled (his own) pennant from the ground," with figurative allusion not to destruction of an enemy, but to the beginning of a fight in dead earnest. The formula is thus a kenning for a charge with leveled lance. Almambet's three charges against the Infidels—for which he furls his pennant from the ground—meet with success only after he invokes the name of Manas in a charge. The obvious meaning of the passage, "success on the third try," requires this reading of the formula if the enemy is not to be extirpated before the third try.

²⁵⁶ I,2) 385-436.

²⁵⁷ I,2) 1132-1371.

²⁵⁸ This arrangement, in its dénouement, has fascinating congruencies with the involvement of Siegfried, Gunther, and Brunhild in the *Nibelungenlied*, and has been explored in considerable depth by A.T. Hatto (Hatto 1969c, pp. 169ff., 189-198; *Nibelungenlied*, pp. 297ff., 328-332). N.K. Chadwick's assertion that the relation between Almambet and Ak-erkeč is impure (Chadwick, *Growth*, vol. 3, p. 38; Chadwick & Žirmunskii 1969, pp. 42f.) has no support in the text of the present telling and must, as Hatto maintains, be rejected.

solicitously that Kōkčö grows angry, then handily deflates Kōkčö with a cutting appraisal of his own middling achievements. At this stage in the cycle Manas lacks a wedded wife (Kanikey), and thus the potential for direct comparison between Ak-erkeč and Manas's wife is unrealized. In the present narrative thread, the complement to Ak-erkeč is represented by Manas's retainers, in their role as the intermediaries between Almambet and the lord he seeks to serve. This is clearly shown by the business of the reins. Noble Ak-erkeč hastens to hold noble Almambet's reins when they first meet, in preference over Kōkčö's, while Manas's men fail in their attempt to take Almambet's reins upon his arrival. Thus the characters are calibrated, and Almambet can expect a more harmonious existence in the second camp, where his status vis-à-vis his lord's intimates is less problematic.

The five narrative threads described above begin in the first five episodes of the epic, in Kōkčö's part, and end in Manas's part. These threads, measuring Almambet's character in five general dimensions, naturally spanned the divide between Almambet's earlier life and his coming to his predestined friend. The sixth and final narrative thread, beginning in episode 9, calibrates Almambet and Manas as human beings, and thus takes place wholly within Manas's half of the epic, over the course of their approach, meeting, and symbolic unification as brothers.

It is certainly of the nature of epic moments that they have great scenic potential in the business of foreshadowing. This is probably why Hatto has cited the pregnant image of Manas's and Almambet's footprints, which opens this thread, as a cardinal example of an epic moment.²⁵⁹ Then, three episodes intervene which tie up the loose ends of threads 1 (the miraculous birth), 2 (the tea), and 5 (the reins). With the outstanding

²⁵⁹ Hatto 1992, pp. 334f.

narrative threads resolved on their proper planes, the paramount issue of Manas and Almambet together *as men* immediately leaps to the foreground. The epic comes to a close in an episode with a pair of high scenes that complement the foreshadowing of the footprints. The first, Almambet's victory over Manas in the horse race, appears superfluous from the standpoint of tradition. There is nothing in the rest of the mid-nineteenth century epics to suggest that the two heroes' similarly matched strengths and abilities required definitive reckoning in a contest—least of all on the racecourse, where, among the Kirghiz, outcomes could be fudged notoriously. But the rhetorical force of the victory is clear: if the two men are a match "close enough to decide in a horse race," then the paramount hero Manas has found his true partner in Almambet, and *vice versa*. Although mid-nineteenth century Kirghiz epic audiences appear to have been moderate in their taste for fabulous happenings, the bard of I,2) has laid his rhetorical groundwork so carefully as to make the final epic moment, featuring the miraculous rejuvenation of Čakan's breasts and Manas's union with Almambet as milk-brothers, seem the natural culmination of the story.

Table 1. High scenes and epic moments in I,2)

<u>High scene/Epic moment</u>	<u>Character relation</u>
1. Almambet's miraculous birth disturbs the Muslim heroes	Almambet's (and Manas's) place in ethno-religious space
2. Almambet accepts Kökčö's tea	Almambet with lord as juridical persons
3. Almambet frightens his father down from the throne	Almambet (and Manas) with father/patrimony
4. Almambet conquers the Oyrot only after he invokes Manas's name	Almambet and Manas as instruments of each other's fate
5. Ak-Erkeč favors Almambet over Kökčö	Almambet with lord's family and retainers
6. Almambet orders and drinks <i>arak</i> in Kökčö's presence	
7. Ak-Erkeč cows Kökčö	
8. Manas's appearance makes the people fear he will kill his parents; Ajıbay interprets Manas's dream.	
9. Almambet's and Kıl-jiren's footprints are smaller than Manas's and Ak-kula's	Almambet and Manas as human beings
10. Almambet tears the reins from the Companions' hands	
11. Almambet accepts (only) the steed Sar'ala from Manas	
12. Jakıp informs Serek and Sırgak that their people migrated away from Almambet	
13. Almambet beats Manas at horse-racing; Čakan's withered breasts flow with milk and Manas and Almambet become milk-brothers	

At this point it will be useful to look back at I,5) and I,2), and to summarize what has been learned from these plot analyses about high scenes, epic moments, narrative contracts, and the heroic ethos and cosmos. Both epics have structures which express the heroic ethos and engage the heroic cosmos through high scenes and epic moments that mark successive arcs of "arousal and fulfilment of expectation." Epic moments are high scenes, but not every high scene is an epic moment. In I,5), when Kanikey blesses and Akılay curses Manas's raid, and when Manas turns a deaf ear to both his wives, these are high scenes—they enact contracts and condition the development of response-actions later. But they lack the "visual magnificence" of epic moments. Such moments occur, for example, when Almambet orchestrates mayhem and bloodshed inside the Kalmak yurt to mark—literally—the girl Altınay as his own. Pitched even higher than this is the moment when Almambet speeds ahead of the fleeing Manas, stops him in his tracks, and begs him with a gesture of abject entreaty to turn around and fight. I,2) boasts several epic moments, some grandiose, such as Almambet's *arak* scene in episode 6 and the miraculous conclusion, and others more modestly scaled, as when the mere sight of Almambet sends his vacuously boastful father scurrying away from the throne, and when Almambet, "third time lucky," mows down his father's armies with the war cry "Manas!". Ak-erkeč has a high scene, in which she upbraids Kōkčō for his meanness, and a minor epic moment, when her persuasions on Almambets behalf become so forceful that Kōkčō is knocked on his backside in acquiescence—but too late.

It is crucial for an accurate understanding of the oral composition of these epics to recognize that the structures we have identified are but one facet, albeit important, of their narrative content. The numerous traditional narrative elements such as itineraries, descriptions, catalogs, and invocations of the Forty Companions crowd together vividly

about the framework of high scenes, and there is no lack of lively and unique detail at all levels of the narrative. There are considerable stretches of interesting storytelling which barely appear in our mode of plot analysis. Some examples are the repeated comings and goings and verbal exchanges between Köz-kaman's herald Sly-boy and Manas's people, and the scene of the Köz-kamans' conversion to Islam, a high-spirited feast featuring a sacrifice by the old "Gossip of God" Bakay, a horse race, and (perhaps once the converts' senses have been dulled by hard galloping) circumcisions by axe. Even whole supporting roles have fallen through our coarse mesh. Meñdibay and Ajıbay, the devious adviser of Kökçö and the agreeable adviser of Manas in I,2), have much to do, but barely register on the framework of high scenes and epic moments. This framework seems to capture as much of the epic as we would have of *Hamlet* without getting down to, say, Polonius. Most of the episodes in I,2) have one epic moment or high scene at or near the end; in this way they are like the episodes in Smith's analysis of *Pābūjī*. In contrast, the episodes of I,5) may have more than one high scene, and indeed some of its episodes seem to attract high scenes in clusters, as in (1) Kankey blesses the raid/Akılay curses the raid/Manas ignores them both; and (5) Serek rouses Manas/Kökçököz wounds Manas/the bard apostrophizes on Manas's solitude. High scenes and epic moments have qualitative varieties as well. Dreams and their interpretations are a special class of high scene. Hatto notes:

Dreams and visions in heroic/epic poetry overlap with epic moments. It would not do to separate them, with dreams and visions as prospective and predictive (women's warning dreams are there to be brushed aside by heroes and yet fulfilled) and epic moments as retrospective and summative [...] What links epic dreams and epic moments are their high visual-symbolic content and their structural links with the action.²⁶⁰

²⁶⁰ Hatto, *Anatomy*, p. 180.

Thus there is more than one kind of high scene and more than one way to use them, and high scenes in turn are one device among many the bard employs in performance. This variety and copiousness of function are inherent in epic narrative.

Upon closer examination of episodes 3, 4, and 5 in I,5), we may discern the bard's concern with narrative balance down to the sub-plot level. If Almambet has broken his trust with Manas/Kanikey in the epic moment of episode 3, then he atones for the lapse decisively in episode 5 when, "born a sensible fellow," he takes Kanikey's hint and tries to deceive the companions into thinking that Manas is too drunk to meet the Kōz-kamans. Episode 4 features a small contract (iv'), "Manas is automatically placed under contract to accept the invitation to appear at his cousins' feast," which Manas fulfils in the next episode on the insistence of Serek. It would be possible to tabulate these and other small obligations in more detail, down to sub-contracts, for instance by noting that Almambet enters into a contract to atone for the betrayal of trust in episode 3 and then fulfils the contract in episode 5. At this early stage of research, however, analysis is best focused on the level of high scenes such as those analyzed above.

The above assertions have touched on the ethnography of speaking of the mid-nineteenth century Northern Kirghiz. As much as is possible in such hybrid historical and ethnographic research, it is appropriate to plot these assertions in the realm of the *etic* and the *emic*.²⁶¹ To what extent can available information reveal native concepts or values underlying high scenes, epic moments, and narrative contracts? Were these structures real—cherished and sought, on some conscious or unconscious level, by Kirghiz epic bards and audiences in performance? When viewed on such a slender material basis, these features would seem to be deprived of the support of one of the common empirical

²⁶¹ Cf. Honko 1998, pp. 117-131.

frameworks associated with verbal arts analysis, the poetic axes of variation and selection. In other words, high scenes, epic moments, and narrative contracts cannot reliably be distinguished by stylistic markings.²⁶²

Assessing the appropriateness of the present theory and method of analysis is best begun by considering the state of research in interpreting the narrative structure of Kirghiz epic poetry. The general character of work on this subject, as in much scholarship on oral epic traditions up to now, seems to be determined primarily by the work load, the sheer profusion of linguistically challenging incident and detail found in typical specimens of the poetry. This may be one of the reasons why preliminary philological groundwork on the mid-nineteenth century Kirghiz material has only recently been concluded.²⁶³ Advanced scholars in the field, including Wilhelm Radloff, Viktor Žirmunskii, Mukhtar Auezov, and Arthur Hatto, have skilfully analyzed what lay available to them, but always, out of necessity, with at least one eye focused on exploiting information from such fields as linguistics, ethnography, and history, to recover the basic meaning of the texts. As Hatto's articles on I,5) and I,2) show,²⁶⁴ the very complexity of these epics' plots throws the analytical emphasis on a host of issues relating to the cultural origins and connections of individual narrative themes. In such a view of the tradition, epic plots are seen quite correctly as combinations of elements surviving in various states of mutation from earlier sources. The main yield is, in a sense,

²⁶² In all likelihood, mid-nineteenth century bards encoded emotional tension and release by means of musical features, including melody, scale, and tempo. Contemporary observers hinted as much (e.g., Veniukov 1861; see p. 65, above), and the *Semetey* of Kenje Kara, recorded on phonograph some 40 years after the epics we are considering here, displays close and complex relationships between narrative contours and musico-poetics (see Chapter 2, below, and Prior 1998b).

²⁶³ Hatto 1990; Hatto 1977; and the associated articles by Hatto.

²⁶⁴ Hatto 1971/72; Hatto 1969c.

external. Our concern at present is with the internal—what the attested combinations of themes meant to the bards and audiences as the epics were composed and performed.

Dell Hymes, Lauri Honko, and Roberte Hamayon have all incorporated empirical research among native narrators and audiences into their theories of oral narrative structure. Yet it is interesting that even the most empirically-oriented of them, Honko, supplements detailed debriefings of his Tulu epic bard with consideration of "implicit ethnopoetic rules."²⁶⁵ Hamayon spells out what such concepts mean in relation to the cognitive states of the bearers of the West Buryat epic tradition:

[L]et us insist upon the logical necessity of a unifying concept which underlies—if only subconsciously—the contents of the epic narratives. Without being organized or connected with each other in any way, the many details, anecdotes and events encountered could not be memorized the way they are. This, however, does not imply that absolutely every detail is related to the all-embracing, underlying set of concepts: some can be personal improvisations of the bards, arbitrarily included and reproduced merely by virtue of repetition. This does not imply that everything is understood by the listeners, or even by the bard himself.²⁶⁶

This perspective effectively calls for a reorientation of the process of close critical examination of Kirghiz epic texts, toward internal as well as external connections. Such an orientation is very much in line with the performance approach, with Hymes's work on measured verse and the "organization of expectation," and with the findings of John D. Smith on epic moments and narrative contracts in *Pābūjī*. In that epic, Smith found that each episode constitutes a contractual action ending with an epic moment. Yet, while the Rajasthani bard and audience share an unvarying concept of the structure and order of

²⁶⁵ Honko 1998, p. 129.

²⁶⁶ Hamayon 1987, p. 130.

these episodes, in conversation with Smith they betrayed no awareness of the underlying contracts, the meaning of that structure.²⁶⁷

In the end, the question of emic structure in the Kirghiz epics under investigation, as indeed in *Pābūjī*, the West Buryat epics, the Tulu *Siri Epic*, and others, ought to be grounded in the principle of parsimony. Assuming that bards use some structural plans in their performances of epic narrative, it would be extravagant to reject or attempt to explain away an internally consistent, culturally apposite account of that structure derived from the text. But as Hamayon seems to suggest, there is potential to mistake loose ends for leads, and vice versa. The important thing is to start research in the right direction.

There is no question that study of the materials of the Kirghiz epic tradition will continue to yield valuable information about Kirghiz history and culture. Devin DeWeese has recently focused due attention on aspects of religious history reflected in the treatment of Almambet's conversion to Islam, showing engaging parallels with other types of Inner Asian conversion narratives.²⁶⁸ Accomplishing this seems to have required drawing upon epic texts of various periods, not only I,2) but also related epics by twentieth-century Kirghiz bards. On this basis DeWeese evinces a complex of traditional conversion-themes.²⁶⁹ The result of the exercise, as in past analyses, is that certain critical implications relating to the composition and performance of a specific epic like I,2) remain outside the reader's control. Such control would seem to be necessary to elucidate,

²⁶⁷ Smith 1986; Smith 1991.

²⁶⁸ DeWeese 1994, pp. 59-66. Additional comparative material is found in Jarring 1938, pp 142-160.

²⁶⁹ The substantial conversion scene in the nearly contemporary I,5) is also comparable in many respects and ought to yield unique insights into Kirghiz concepts of religious conversion.

for example, "the role of the narrative itself"²⁷⁰ as between the bard and the audience (cf. "the narrative's central concerns").

Hatto has interpreted the plots of I,2) and I,5) as a demonstration, "as in a theorem,"²⁷¹ of the superiority of the Muslim Nogoy culture over that of the infidel Kalmak. One easily sees that Manas's friendship with the Islamized infidel Almambet is of greater value than his blood ties with the Kalmakized Nogoy Kōz-kamans. It is a nice touch that I,2) shows Er Kōkčö behaving far beneath the standard of good heroes as exemplified by Almambet: something about the best of heroes transcends religious formulas for life and defies control by Kōkčö, a more marked and exemplary Muslim than Manas. I,2) ended on a high note: born enemies may become friends. In I,5), the bard again gives us a world that resists neat division into "us" and "them," but here the inversions afford no comfort: one's blood relatives may be enemies. It is a sure sign of the heroic cosmos that the ultimate formulation of morality in I,2) hinges on the discharge of friendship-obligations between unrelated men. Almambet insisted upon becoming Kōkčö's friend before becoming a Muslim, and the other episodes in the epic underline the fact that Almambet's religious conversion was a step in the process of his becoming realized as the sworn brother of Manas. The analysis of high scenes and epic moments shows that this self-realization served as a context for heroic displays of right action, rather than being an end in itself.

The unique value of folklore as a means of investigating issues of culture and communal identity multiplies to the extent that the "communal" perspective can be approximated to the pragmatic level of oral performance: oral tradition affects and is

²⁷⁰ DeWeese 1994, p. 64.

²⁷¹ *MWR*, p. 227.

affected by, first and foremost, relatively small groups of people within earshot of one another.

The plot analyses and discussions of I,5) and I,2) have begun to clarify the concept of "heroic structure" as distinguished from "heroic content." The heroic ethos resides in poetic structure, where oral performance activates it and makes it the subject of artistry. The following plot analyses will show, in varying degrees of detail, how mid-nineteenth century Kirghiz epic bards employed heroic structures more or less at will, sweetening and leavening structural rigor with immanence and copiousness. Running through all these epics is a concept of the hero that is well expressed in the words of James Redfield: "The hero, after all, is not a model for imitation but rather a figure who cannot be ignored; his special excellence is not integration, but potency."²⁷² It will be useful to bear this characterization in mind as we examine another kind of "figure that cannot be ignored" which is integrally related to the hero—the rhetorical figures known as high scenes and epic moments.

The Memorial Feast for Kōkötöy Khan

This epic is attested in two versions from the Older Period. The manuscript *MKNB* (=KO), of 3,250 poetic lines in Arabic script, originated from a field record made between May 26 and 28, 1856, at San-taš Pass in present-day eastern Kirghizstan. The bard was Nazar Bolot, the collector was Čokan Valikhanov, and the chief under whose ultimate authority the session took place was the Bugu *manap* Borombay. The subject of the epic is a grand memorial feast and games for a dead hero (compare *Iliad* Book

²⁷² James M. Redfield, (foreword to) Nagy 1979, p. ix.

XXIII),²⁷³ with a guest list that includes “all” of the Muslim and Infidel grandees. The planning and presidency of the feast is obviously conceived by the deceased khan’s young foster-son and heir, Bok-murun, as a heroic exploit to gain him a hero’s name and honor. Bok-murun leads his people through arduous country on a brilliantly-timed migration to the feasting ground, but it is Manas who takes over the presidency of the feast. After a series of colorful sporting events, fighting inevitably breaks out between Infidels and Muslims over the outcome of the horse race. Manas leads the Muslims to final victory and emerges as the politically paramount hero. Another version in 2,197 lines, I,4) *Bok-murun* (*BM*), collected by Radloff in Bugu territory in 1862, largely parallels the plot of *MKNB*.²⁷⁴

Before turning to a discussion of epic moments and other narrative elements in *MK*, it will be useful to dwell on the overall form of this complex epic. More has been surmised about the narrative antecedents of *MK* than of any other Older Period epic, and the information that has come to light can enhance understanding of the range of traditional resources and the processes by which they are combined in a given bard’s mental performance text. In its barest form, the plot of *MK* has two threads. The first actions concern the measures by which Bok-murun, the adopted son of deceased Kōkötöy-Khan, boasts he will achieve his heroic fame. These actions consist in planning and executing the wholesale migration of his people to the site of Kōkötöy’s great

²⁷³ Cf. reports of actual memorial feasts among the Kazakhs slightly later: “As (pominki) v Karkaralinskoi uezde,” 1894 (*KSGČOP*, pp. 330-332); “O kirgizskikh pominkakh,” 1900 (*KSGČOP*, pp. 711-715); “Nekrolog,” 1890 (*KSGČOP*, pp. 140-142). The last is an obituary of Sarıbay Aydosov, chief of the Čapraštı Kazakhs at Uzun-agač, summarizing his career as far back as conflicts with Kirghiz raiders in his youth and his participation in the Russian conquests of Pishpek and other Kokandian fortresses. Radloff attended the anniversary memorial feast for a Kazakh of the Senior Horde (Radloff, *Iz Sibiri*, pp. 314-319).

²⁷⁴ (*KO*) Hatto 1977; Botoyarov 1996; (*BM*) *MWR*, pp. 159-225 and Commentary, pp. 487-528; Hatto 1969a; Hatto 1971; Margulan 1971; Hatto 1978; Hatto 1992; Prior 1998a.

anniversary memorial feast and games, to which he invites all the heroes and grandees in the world, Muslim and infidel, with choice threats for non-attendance. From there the narration subtly shifts to the actions by which Manas overshadows Bok-murun and brings himself to, if not explicit supremacy, then a position of nearly unquestionable moral and military advantage vis-à-vis friend and foe. The particulars of the story are redolent of the culture of the Central Asian steppes.

Bok-murun means "snot-nose" in Kirghiz. Bok-murun's unspoken purpose in planning and directing the long march, with its precisely-timed stops coinciding with the nomadic calendar,²⁷⁵ is to carry out a heroic exploit that will rid him of his awkward (probably evil-deflecting) boyhood name and gain him a hero's sobriquet. It will be no less an exploit for the young hero to preside over the feasting and sporting events between Muslims and infidels. Peaceable but patently heroic action of the kind Bok-murun aspires to is not unknown in Turkic epic. A mature hero in the Oghuz *Book of Dede Korkut* gives this pithy summation of the life: "[E]ach one of the beys sitting here has earned his place with his sword and bread. What have you ever done? Have you cut off heads, shed blood, fed the hungry, or dressed the naked?"²⁷⁶

Enter Manas, who is prone to violent pique at infidels and Muslims alike (his epithet in *BM* is *tentäk* 'Hothead'). He gradually takes control of the feast and games, and when the worst brawling finally breaks out, Manas leads the Muslims to victory in a maximally escalated conflict. The infidel khan Joloy is killed, (and, *MKNB*:) his corpse is burned and his ashes scattered. In his comparative study of the two *MK* epics, Hatto identified the pretext of the plot and illuminated its probable development into the

²⁷⁵ Prior 1998a; Hatto 1992.

²⁷⁶ *Korkut*, p. 145.

attested forms.²⁷⁷ Hatto sees the blinded development of Bok-murun's story to the benefit of Manas as an effect of the attraction of an older, independent Bok-murun epic into the Manas cycle: "We might know less of Bok Murun's achievement than the little we know, but for his association with the celebrated funeral feast of K  k  t  y. It is as though Manas had stolen Bok Murun's glory and the K  k  t  y tradition would not let him die: he is held in suspense between the two, a mere shadow of his former self".²⁷⁸ The two Older Period texts of *The Memorial Feast for K  k  t  y Khan* seem to preserve layers of narrative contracts—old, new, completed, headless, and defaulted—as well as the highly developed catalogs and cyclic allusions that gravitate around the copious scene of the feast. High scenes and epic moments occur in variety. We will now turn to an analysis of a coupled high scene and epic moment which begin the poem *MKNB*.

The high scene is K  k  t  y Khan's last testament.²⁷⁹ We have already seen in the case of the real *manap* Borombay that a chief's last testament has a potent existential charge which is actuated by his survivors. Borombay's testament is a crucial reminder that the epic testament of K  k  t  y had more significance than as an atmospheric scene-setter. The testament sets forth a program which the bard Nazar exploited in building the subsequent action. The testament "exposes the narrative's central concerns with stark directness," but a concern that was obvious to the Bugu audience of 1856 has become a point requiring philological recovery. The central concern of *MKNB* is the attitude of the Bugu toward a life of frontier d  tente. The people with whom the d  tente is practiced are of course the infidel Sino-Kalmaks. The answer to the dilemmas the Muslims face lies in the person of Manas.

²⁷⁷ Hatto 1969a, part I, pp. 347f.

²⁷⁸ Hatto 1969a, part I, p. 348

²⁷⁹ *KO* 1-161

MKNB begins with a concrete image of the détente by which Kōkötöy has lived. The bard, rightly judged by Hatto to have been more courtly in outlook and polished artistically than his *BM* colleague,²⁸⁰ draws fine and vivid distinctions among the upper echelons of Nogoy society. It is a bard who is perfectly at ease rubbing shoulders with VIPs, and who has minutely observed their vanities, who can have Kōkötöy set the epic rolling with the distinctly wry words:

"Kalın bir kara köp Nogay—çorom
başınan ıldıy körö kör!—çorom
Üyşünlörnün Ametke,
Amet-kulu jaysaŋga,
karını salık biyine ayt,
kette kursak bayına ayt!
sarı sakal, tik murut,
ayır bir sakal, kiş murut,
barına birdey ayta kör!—çorom
batpan ayak bal içken,
batpansıgan mırzaga ayt!
ayak-ayak bal içip,
alçaŋdagan mırzaga ayt!"

"Visit the black-teeming Nogay from chief [in rank] on down!²⁸¹ Speak to Amet of the Üyşün, their Amet-kul the Zaysan, to the droop-bellied biys, to the pot-bellied bays! To the red-beards, prick-moustaches, to the fork-beards, sable moustaches, all together—speak! To the mirzas, who quaff mead from cups holding²⁸² a batman and throw their weight around, to those mirzas who quaff mead by the cupful and lord it so—speak!"²⁸³

The interpretation of the first four lines of this passage relates significantly to the meaning of the existential charge of Kōkötöy's testament. The question is, who is Amet

²⁸⁰ Hatto 1969a, part II, p. 570.

²⁸¹ Hatto: "from end to end!" (*KO*).

²⁸² Hatto: "weighing" (*KO*).

²⁸³ *KO* 10-22; my translation differs slightly from Hatto's (see discussion). One has only to compare the trifling version of the summons in *BM* to perceive the social privilege to which Nazar was accustomed.

of the Üyşün, Amet-kul the Zaysan?²⁸⁴ The answer arises if we take into account the rhetorical force of the testament in the structure of the poem and the context where he is mentioned—a Muslim camp existing in détente with the infidels. It emerges from the following analysis that Amet-kul was a Kalmakized Kazakh grandee attached to Kökötöy's *ordo* (camp, court).

Amet-kul, zaysan of the Üyşün, a figure found nowhere else in mid-nineteenth century Kirghiz epic, is the first person whom Kökötöy mentions by name in his Summons to his Testament, by which Amet-kul becomes only the third person to be named in the whole poem, after Kökötöy and the herald ordered to summon the people. His sterile, two-line invocation, *Üyşünlörnünj Ametke,/ Amet-kulu jaysaŋga*, initiates the colorful run-down of dandies and rowdies at Kökötöy's court. Yet despite the comparative lack of zest with which Amet-kul is made to appear, it is obvious that as the first-named personage in the Khan's summons, Amet-kul possessed top rank. The summons is a type of address that Nazar, privy to the *manap*'s inner circle, would have heard countless times in real life, and there can be little doubt that the order of summoning went from high to low. (At KO 11, *başınan ıldıy* must be understood as "from chief in rank on down," rather than Hatto's "from end to end.") Nazar signaled adequately who this Amet-kul was in three strokes: ethnicity, name, and rank. Üyşün was an overarching ethnonym in the Senior Horde, as well as the name of a tribe within it.²⁸⁵ It was also the name of a Junghar ("Kalmak," to the Kirghiz) grouping.²⁸⁶ Hatto plausibly interprets *jaysaŋ* as if it were a title acquired by an individual of the Kazakh Üyşüns,

²⁸⁴ Hatto's generous note on line 12 (KO, p. 106) assembles a useful range of ethnographic data towards the interpretation of *Üyşün* and *jaysaŋ*.

²⁸⁵ Valikhanov, *Rodoslovie*, p. 206. Tribe: *Wei-siun* in the *Ch'in ting Hsin Chiang ch'e liu* of 1821 (Pelliot 1960, pp. 40, 95 n. 317).

²⁸⁶ Valikhanov, *Rodoslovie*, p. 206.

defining it after Iudakhin as "in epic a Kalmak chief."²⁸⁷ An additional definition of *džaisan* comes from Soviet *Manas*-commentators: "military leader, commander of an army of the Kalmaks."²⁸⁸ The title presumably could have been acquired by Kazakhs through achievement, honor, purchase, or some other means—and so would have had "military" rather than tribal signification. Lastly, it is noted that *Amet* (*a.m.t* in the Arabic-script MS) appears to be the Arabo-Islamic name Ahmad.²⁸⁹ On first glance this is a more likely name for an Üysün of the Kazakh side than of the Kalmak.²⁹⁰

Thus *Amet-kul*, *zaysan* of the "Üjšün" is most probably to be understood as a Kalmakized grandee of the Üysün division of the Kazakh Senior Horde bearing the Kalmak military rank and title of *jaysaŋ*, and residing at Kōkötöy's *ordo* in an official capacity under his Sino-Kalmak sovereign. He may have been a commander of troops, an envoy, or even a hostage, or some combination of these.²⁹¹ The fictional *Amet-kul* was thus an agent of the *détente* between the Nogoy and the Sino-Kalmaks. *jaysaŋ* was not a

²⁸⁷ *KO*, p. 271.

²⁸⁸ *MMSO*, vol. 3, p. 500.

²⁸⁹ However, even if the bard's pronunciation was *amet*, it seems unlike our scribe, who elsewhere tended toward literate spelling, to have written down such a form. Perhaps the Kirghiz pronunciation was different enough that *jaysaŋ*, a Mongol-flavored word, blocked the identification in the scribe's mind. It is quite unlikely that a Mongol name is encoded in *a.m.t*.

²⁹⁰ In the social whorls and eddy-patterns along the *limes* between the Dar al-Islam and late- and post-Jungharia, a Kalmak named Ahmad would not have been an impossibility Cf. Pelliot 1960, p. 72 n. 117, where it is noted that a *jaisang* of the Jakhacin clan of the Junghars, "appelé Mamut (Mahmūd) avait pillé du bétail chinois en 1730." Cf. Slesarchuk & Demidova 1996, where Russian documents from the late 17th century mention envoys with Muslim names arriving from Junghar khans and *taijis*, especially Abdula Erkhe-zaisan (index entry p. 509), Kairiat (p. 520), and Mametalip zaisan (p. 524).

²⁹¹ In three epics recorded in 1862 by Radloff, *Manas* names (*Üjšün*) *Ümöt* and *Jaizaŋ* together as two heroes when summoning his Forty Companions [I,4) *Bok-murun* 363; I,2) 1147; and I,5) 1473]. The name in *KO* must be the traditional one; the Radlovian versions appear to be forgetful rearrangements of the older epithet-plus-name, with the additional result that this once-meaningful if minor personage has ended up in the bardic storage closet of assorted names, the list of the Forty Companions. More fittingly, at *BM* 1970-1974 *Jaizaŋ*'s are mentioned (though not by name) among the troops of Joloy.

particularly lofty rank among the Kalmak. And after Amet-kul, the caliber of grandees summoned by Kökötöy takes a giant step down: biys, bays and mirzas distinguished not by name but by their hairstyles, arrogance, and love of drink. These are the hotheads whom Kökötöy had gathered like hunting-birds and made into a *jurt*.²⁹² Things are not well in this camp...

For Kökötöy to have had a personage from the infidel nomenclature within his circle tallies very well with the substance of his testament. It also explains the statesmanship practiced by Bay-mirza, the regent who succeeds him, and by the young Bok-murun when he has matured. For as Hatto has pointed out, the policy-instructions included by Kökötöy in his testament require the Nogoy to migrate towards China and submit to Koñur-bay of the Kıtay. Bay-mirza carries out this part of Kökötöy's wishes. The ordering of commands in the testament is somewhat confusing, but the idea is quite clear. By sheltering under the Kıtay, the people may be seen through safely until the time when the child Bok-murun will be ready to be raised as khan, and through unstinting material generosity the regent Bay-mirza shall have the best chance of keeping the Nogoy united and loyal. Hatto further notes that the oscillation between submission to China when weak and removal beyond the frontier when gaining power is a classic political pattern among nomadic leaders which for the Turks dated back at least as early as the movements made by the rulers of the Second Türk Kaghanate on the advice of Bilgä Toñukuk.²⁹³ But the practiced skill with which Nazar exploited the theme of rapprochement with the Sino-Kalmak derived directly from his own observations:

²⁹² KO 92-95.

²⁹³ KO 90-136; cf. Hatto 1969a, part I, pp. 353f. The latest episode in this tradition came in 1978 when Rahman Kul, khan of the Kirghiz of the Afghan Pamir, led his *el* of 1,083 souls with their livestock over passes to China and into eventual asylum in Turkey before the advance of the communist regime (Malik & Repond, n.d.; cf. Dor 1979; Shahrani 1979, pp. 39-43).

Borombay, the most powerful Bugu *manap*, possessed ranks and insignia from both the Russian and Chinese sovereigns, and Toksaba, in whose camp Nazar probably performed *MKNB*,²⁹⁴ wore a Chinese insigne.²⁹⁵ In the epic, the fact that the tutelage half of the cycle was about to begin was immediately plain to connoisseurs by the presence of one "Amet-kul zaysan" and the imminent death of the khan with no adult heir.

Kökötöy concludes his testament by commanding Bay-Mirza to show respect to the orphan Bok-murun and raise him as khan when he is older; to go to Koñur-bay to hold the fortieth-day memorial feast (apparently to give tribute²⁹⁶ and to seek protection); to go to the hero Manas when it is time to give the great memorial feast; and to have everyone invited, Muslims and infidels alike.²⁹⁷ The commands to "go to" Koñur-bay and to Manas suggest that these heroes are supposed to preside over the respective feasts. We can be sure that if Bok-murun really was once the hero of an independent epic, it did not include a behest by his father for Manas to direct his feast. These commands are all contracts, but since the enacter is dying, they are there to be fulfilled or broken.

We are now ready to meet Bok-murun. The young hero makes such an auspicious start in both *MKNB* and *BM* that there can be little doubt about mid-nineteenth century Kirghiz audiences' respect and affection for him. Traditionally he was the natural son of Er Töštük and a peri, abandoned on the steppe and adopted by Kökötöy.²⁹⁸ He was thus triply vulnerable to failure, for he was an orphan of an adopted father, an only son (like Manas), and too young to rule. In the face of this, Bok-murun makes his entrance into

²⁹⁴ See pp. 60ff., above.

²⁹⁵ Valikhanov, *Priloženie II*, p. 546.

²⁹⁶ *KO* 224-225.

²⁹⁷ *KO* 114-161.

²⁹⁸ *Er Töštük*, pp. 31-47.

men's affairs (his growing up is compacted into five lines²⁹⁹) with a speech in which he displays wit, independent policy, and good sense.³⁰⁰ Coming to the *boz-döbö* or court-mound, he first rebukes the regent Bay-mırza, who is submerged in luxury and incapable of making decisions. He then takes control of the last of his father's undone business by *flouting his testament*, and decreeing that he, Bok-murun, will give the Great Memorial Feast. Bok-murun dismisses Manas, his father's designee, with a few ripe words (calling him "Sart of Samarkand" and saying, "if you wish to move camp, go to that yellow-eared cur"³⁰¹).

Bok-murun's epic moment is his great boast-plan for the feast, including the itinerary of a long migration to be undertaken by the whole population. This itinerary has been carefully examined for its economic-existential realism, and has been shown to have a degree of coherence that, in short, would make a nomad herdsman of those parts nod in approval.³⁰² During the journey, Bok-murun shows himself to be a kind and generous leader as well. Echoing the very words with which Kökötöy in his testament urges solicitude for the people, the poem says, "If [Bok-murun] met a wretch trudging on foot he laid hold of a nag and gave it him, or a poor man with next to nothing on he unlaced his robe and gave it him."³⁰³

Thus Bok-murun has selectively prolonged certain contracts in Kökötöy's testament. There is an unmistakable element of statesmanship in Bok-murun's project, and a brilliant extension of *détente*. By extracting his *jurt* from Kıtay suzerainty, and then by planning to play host to his former overlords at the grandest feast ever, Bok-murun

²⁹⁹ KO 236-240.

³⁰⁰ KO 257-372.

³⁰¹ KO 262-264.

³⁰² Prior 1998a; Hatto 1969a, part I, pp. 359-365; Hatto 1992.

³⁰³ KO 378-381.

will make for himself not only a hero's name, but also a commanding position in the world. The formulaic invitation which he orders his herald to deliver to the grandees of the six and seven corners of the earth proclaims in the language of heroes that he has the sternness to be one of them:

"... himself shall come to my Feast, his steed shall come to my side! If he and his steed do not appear, let him hide his anger and keep out of my sight! Else he shall see Kōkötöy's red-and-gold Crescent-moon Standard loom over his pavilion! If I do not come and seize his red coin in such loads that my beasts cannot turn their heads, and do not come and take his red-tailed camel-weanlings that gnaw their curbs; and if I do not come and seize his black coin in such loads that my beasts cannot turn about; do not destroy his flower-gardens where the petals lie scattered; do not uproot his crops³⁰⁴ and dig out the charred stumps; do not take as booty his sons of an age to pasture sheep, his babes in their cradles, and his wives; if I do not take from their pastures the racers he denied his friends and do not seize by their white arms the lovely girls he withheld from suitors and thrust them behind my saddle!—may my name 'Bok-murun' perish!"³⁰⁵

Now it is apparent that Bok-murun's ambitions in *MKNB* have placed him on a collision-course with a figure who, as every Kirghiz knew by the mid nineteenth century, would not tolerate a rival: the paramount hero Manas. Hearing this invitation from Bok-murun's herald Jaš-aydar, Manas becomes so enraged that he summons his Forty Companions (signaling a high scene) and orders them to kill him.³⁰⁶ Barely mollified by the herald's eloquent begging, Manas vents his anger in a slew of curses, and vows in turn that he will bring his Forty Companions to the feast and do to Bok-murun what Bok-murun threatened to do to him in his invitation.³⁰⁷

³⁰⁴ *KO* 568 *tüp-tübünö jetmesem*; Hatto (*KO*, p. 17) prefers "destroy his kindred root and branch."

³⁰⁵ *KO* 552-578; cf. Chingis Khan's *bilig* on man's greatest pleasures, in Rashid ad-Din, *Sbornik*, vol. 1/2, p. 265.

³⁰⁶ *KO* 993-1073.

³⁰⁷ *KO* 1074-1084. *BM* has Manas's companions carry out his order to murder the herald before the invitation is even uttered: Manas is in a fit of anger over being disturbed while losing at chess (*BM* 315-338). Hatto has emphasized the significance of this action: "Needless to say, the killing of an envoy was a crime of the first order on the steppe. That Bok-murun does not rise to this

If this is a contract, Manas fortunately does not fulfil it to the letter. It is, perhaps, the sole prerogative of the paramount hero to leave his boasts and threats undone; in the end he gets his way. In *BM*, Manas explicitly assumes the presidency of the feast soon after he arrives.³⁰⁸ Bok-murun still calls the events and posts the prizes, by which we see that leadership of a feast could come in two parts carried out by two individuals: a host and a judge/sergeant-at-arms. The latter was the post with real power, at least when Manas occupied it. Bok-murun silently disappears from the action well before the real fighting commences between Muslims and infidels. This is in keeping with the scant recognition paid to Bok-murun as a hero in later phases of the tradition.

Nazar, however, preserved some regard for Bok-murun, and we know this because of the bard's treatment of the outcome of the hero's initial boast. For Nazar, Bok-murun was a hero because he had a contract to fulfil. In the feast in *MKNB*, Bok-murun also plays an adjunct role, but one with a bit more substance than that in *BM*. Manas never openly assumes the presidency of the feast. Also, besides posting prizes and announcing events, it falls to Bok-murun to present gifts of honor to the infidel greats who are vanquished in the various sporting events. And Bok-murun continues to act as an individual outside the requirements of ceremony, for it is he who goes out to placate Manas with a gift and soothing words every time the hero's temper threatens to destroy the already strained festivities. With his last appearance in *MKNB*, Bok-murun achieves the drastically shrunken share of triumph that remains within his reach, and fulfils his

provocation decides, in this cruder variant [than *KO*], that he will never be Khan" (*MWR*, p. 160). In other words, the killing of the herald would automatically impose a contract on Bok-murun to avenge the wrong, but through the bard's handling of narrative structure (no fulfilment of the contract), Bok-murun is marked as a nonentity. It is assonant with the "lowness" of the scene in *BM* that when Manas summons his companions to this service, he does not name them.

³⁰⁸ *BM* 520-615.

contract, by dissuading Manas from making full-scale war until the feast has concluded.

Here is the scene.

Joloy has stolen the first prize in the horse-race (horses/cattle) which Manas's steed Ak-kula had rightly won, and in anger Manas wounds Joloy with his battle-axe:

And now Bok-murun of sturdy race waylaid Manas.

"Warrior Manas, my lord Padishah! A man who gives a feast is a villain, a man who gives a feast is a sinner! Until my old man's feast is over do not wreak havoc among my people! Single-handed I will myself take your Prize from Joloy for you, rapacious warrior though he be!" Thus saying he joined Manas and led him away, and the latter's anger was assuaged.³⁰⁹

[. . .]

Now as a new day dawned the time had come for the Infidel and the Muslims to go their ways.³¹⁰

It is touching, as well as highly relevant to the contract structure of the narrative, that Nazar saw poor Bok-murun through to this little ending. The real fighting commences soon after the two sides "go their ways," but it was no small thing to Nazar to provide Bok-murun with the one final night of peace he asked for. Bok-murun is undiminished in his final exchange with Manas: he speaks with khanly dignity of "my people," and he bravely promises to face Joloy himself for Manas's sake. For this subordinate hero to lead Manas away from a fight with firm but calming words is a visually magnificent gesture—an epic moment. Thanks to the bard, we are free to imagine Bok-murun having attained the right to his hero-name through his perseverance in the ways of diplomacy. But even

³⁰⁹ *šondo Manastayın baatırđı/šuntıp koštop alıp ele ketti.—dedi/Manastıñ ačuwu basıldı.—dedi* (KO 2587-2589). My translation differs from Hatto's, "With these words he linked up with the warrior Manas so that the latter's anger was assuaged," in the crucial matter of imagery. It is essential to the visual magnificence of the moment that Bok-murun be visualized as calming Manas by physically escorting him away, as with his arm around him—*koštop alıp ele ketti*. Needless to say, it is rare enough in the tradition for any hero to prevail physically over Manas, and unique for one to do so in soothing him.

³¹⁰ KO 2578-2608.

for a courtly, elite bard like Nazar, who showed much sensitivity to policy and diplomacy from the start, Bok-murun is doomed by the rising tide of Manas's personal energy.

Two other epic moments in *MKNB* deserve to be discussed precisely because they are unrelated to contracts on-going in the poem itself. The first one is the only epic moment to occur during the Games, the long interlude in the second half of the poem full of serial spectacles. The moment here is at once comic and cosmic, and bears comparison with the non-contractual, "algebraic"-type epic moments of I,2), where the bard gives a scenically and gesturally magnificent juxtaposition of two characters. The game in question is so singular that it is best to quote the definition K.K. Iudakhin provided for the Kirghiz term, *töö čečken* or *töö čečtirmey*, in his Kirghiz-Russian Dictionary: "(hist.) a bizarre entertainment of the feudal-tribal nobility: a naked woman, bending over, tried to untie a camel which was tethered to a pinion beaten down into [i.e., flush with] the ground; the camel went to the woman who untied it."³¹¹ The feat is graphically depicted in *MKNB*, with the winner and sole contestant being the warrior-woman Orongu. As she leads away her treasure-laden camel, the heroes standing around are overcome with mirth, and Manas taunts her with scabrous insults that could earn top credit from boys on many a middle school playground.³¹² Orongu's reply silences them all:

"Shame on you, Manas!" she said. "What are you saying? In God's name, Manas, what are you saying?" Then slapping her vulva that woman said: "This rump of mine gave birth to my Agış and Kojoş, gave birth to my Aleke and Boo-bek, to my Manas and Joloy, Koşoy, Töştük, Kökčö and Idige. But for this rump of mine where would you have come from, my warriors? My cave is full of coin, my pasture teeming with cattle—God be praised, it is enough to keep body and soul together! I have attained to my strength, I am in possession of my force: these have enabled me to heap shame on men, whereas to women there is no shame at all, Manas!"³¹³

³¹¹ Iudakin, *Slovar'*, s.v. *töö*. The term as such does not occur in *KO*, but cf. l. 2143.

³¹² *KO* 2152-2162.

³¹³ *KO* 2163-2186. My translation differs slightly from Hatto's.

It hardly bears mentioning that Oroᅅgu is not the real mother of any of these heroes. She speaks as the Mother, and at one and the same time in the language of heroes—for the warriors she lists all have their exploits and some even have their epics. The cosmic shading of this moment is so strong that the heroic ethos seems to have posed it in the context of scandalous humor. *BM* has a similar scene,³¹⁴ but in that poem the taunter is Almambet, sent out to the arena by Manas to award Oroᅅgu after a humiliating run-in with a practical-joking hero. After the insults—cruder still, if that is possible, than Manas's in *MKNB*, Almambet covers her with a robe of honor, and she goes away in silence. Thus the epic moment was blinded, but this less refined bard still held (perhaps in Radloff's behalf, for the moment?) that Oroᅅgu was not to be utterly humiliated.

Another epic moment in *MKNB* is notable for its sense of fairness to the enemy, and may possibly be illuminated by actual events in very recent Bugu memory. When Manas kills the Kalmak khan Joloy in the final battle, Joloy's steed Ač-buudan becomes a hawk, flies over his burning corpse, and laments him:

. . . softening hearts of stone as he uttered words of lament, Ač-buudan in his hawk-shape raised his voice and circled round.

"How could you be such a bloodthirsty heathen? Do leave enough of the Khan my Master to sate the ravens that peck, do leave enough for the foxes that nibble! Was there a blood-feud for your father or your mother? I have not been able to recover as before—nor, Manas, have I let you capture me! If I do not run myself spare and lean down the path my master took, to its very end, let my name 'Ač-buudan' perish!" Such were his accusing words as he descended into the fire.³¹⁵

A lament for a dead hero is one type of epic moment which need not conclude a contract—it stands above the plot and encapsulates the hero's life and death. Manas is given a lament by Kanikey in I,3), but other examples from within mid-nineteenth

³¹⁴ *BM* 1342-1401.

³¹⁵ *KO* 3060-3074. The passage begins at a lacuna.

century epic texts are lacking. Ač-buudan's lament manifests a level of generosity and regard toward the Enemy people that is not an altogether common feature of heroic poetry. In this tradition, not only can the "home" heroes lose, but also the opposing side is due its courtesies. In a nice inversion, Ač-buudan even calls Manas *kepir* 'heathen'. These details bring to mind a mid-nineteenth century heroic lament that Radloff collected in which the dead Muslim warrior is compared briefly, in the words of his own daughter, with Manas *and Joloy*.³¹⁶

Ač-buudan's accusing question to Manas also helps to evince the limits of mortal conflict in the heroic cosmos: "Was there a blood-feud for your father or your mother?" All the big talk of war and killing is truly underlain by a pervading sense of scale and proportion, which Manas has clearly overstepped. This was nothing but a *barımta*-raid to retrieve stolen cattle, and instead a chieftain has been killed.³¹⁷

Could there be an echo here of the felling of the Sarıbagıš *manap* Ormon Khan by members of the Bugu tribe under Borombay? In 1856, the recent intense fighting between the Bugu and Sarıbagıš (coincidentally, the main item on the working agenda of Valikhanov's visit to the Bugu) had also been the result of a dispute over prizes (horses) in a game of knucklebones³¹⁸ between Borombay's and Ormon's men *at a feast*. The quibbling and score-settling rapidly spiraled out of control into full-scale raiding, and Ormon lost his life when in captivity nominally under Borombay's authority. Borombay

³¹⁶ Radloff, *Obraztsy*, vol. 5, p. 595 (= *Proben* p. 600), ll. 51ff.; cf. p. 76, above.

³¹⁷ It befits the coarser finish of *BM* that it lacks the lament-scene. Joloy dies, and he is dead.

³¹⁸ *ordo*, resembling skittles.

was remembered as having been greatly pained by this calamity.³¹⁹ The Muslim parties in such feuds were *kapır* 'heathen' to one another.³²⁰

All is not sullenness and politicking in *The Memorial Feast for Kōkötöy Khan*. The plots of both versions are harmoniously leavened with copiousness and sweetened with immanence. Bok-murun's invitation-threat has already been mentioned. This set speech is delivered by his herald (in progressively shortened form in performance and/or field record) to no less than five heroes. And before the herald can set off, he needs his instructions on where to go and whom to see: Bok-murun has given him a lengthy catalog, also couched formulaically as an itinerary,³²¹ of more than 20 heroes and their steeds to whom this invitation and threat should be given. Many a man and horse receives a cyclically allusive epithet, some amounting to minor embedded narratives.³²² One of the most creative uses of the epic subgenre of the catalog is the "review of heroes and steeds" in *MKNB*.³²³ As guests are assembling at the feast, the infidel khan Nez-kara approaches Košoy in order to get the low-down on the Muslims and, primarily—for the race was all-important—on Muslim horseflesh. The premise is a perfect one for oral narrative performance. The outsider sees and describes a hero (—the audience tries to guess who it is,) and the insider identifies him, adding cyclic allusions, an identification and description of his horse, and a liberal dose of catcalls at heathen ignorance.

³¹⁹ *Kirgız tarıkhı*, vol. 2, pp. 18ff.

³²⁰ Two historical poems on the disturbances of the mid nineteenth century found in the Kirghiz Archives use this kind of distinction: MS KF (315)112 (ca. 1920s) *Bugu, sarbagıştın soguşu* p. 27 (Sarbagış warriors referring to the Solto as *kapır*); and MS KF (280)80 (ca. 1910) *Kenensarı Qıssası* p. 95 (Kirghiz author referring to the Kirghiz opponents of the Kazakhs under Kenesarı as *musulman*).

³²¹ Here, the toponymy is neither entirely precise nor realistic.

³²² *KO* 490-811.

³²³ *KO* 1303-1435.

The *BM* bard's performance provides an interesting control case for some of the conclusions drawn in this discussion. Unlike *MKNB*, in *BM* Kōkötōy's death is followed immediately by Bok-murun's edict launching the preparations for the memorial feast. Kōkötōy utters no testament; there is no funeral, burial, or fortieth-day feast for Kōkötōy; no regency of Bay-mırza, no acceptance of tutelage under the Kıtay, and no flight from the Kıtay to start the migration to the feasting-grounds. Thus the epic is devoid of all the signs by which Nazar had built up the setting of untenable détente.³²⁴ The *BM* bard concentrated on the central incidents in which Manas overshadowed Bok-murun. In this connection it is helpful to remember that the six years between the collection of *MKNB* and *BM*, 1856 to 1862, were unusually eventful for the Bugu, as they marked the watershed between possible and inevitable Russian hegemony over the Northern Kirghiz. In 1856, the more perceptive members of the Bugu epic audience may have seen that the carefully wrought depictions of détente with the Sino-Kalmak were becoming old-fashioned even for epic. By 1862, such concerns were passé. Any "statement" that *MK* may once have made about different modes of governance and foreign policy available to the Kirghiz was no longer heard. Manas had been on the rise in the tradition for some time, and as of 1862 it may be said that the cyclization under Manas of the independent epic *MK* (if there had been one) was completed.

³²⁴ Indeed, the starting point of the heroic itinerary in *BM* does not conform to a position under Chinese tutelage. In this epic, Bok-murun starts out from somewhere beyond Sayram (to the west and/or south; Tashkent is the location of Kōkötōy's seat in the great majority of later versions), and travels mainly east to give the feast at Kulja, within Chinese territory. The traditional place of the *MK* feasting grounds, was the Karkara valley east of Issyk Kul, a crossroads between Muslim and Sino-Kalmak lands. See Prior 1998a, Hatto 1992.

I,6) *The Birth of Semetey*

I,6) *The Birth of Semetey* (BS,³²⁵ recorded in 1862 in Bugu territory³²⁶) climaxes in the first of two great peaks of revenge with which the Older period *Manas*-cycle finally exhausts itself. The title of the epic is inapt. Unlike the biographical curiosity I,1) *The Birth of Manas*,³²⁷ BS has a "stark and shapely plot."³²⁸ This concerns Semetey's regaining the patrimony that is torn from him as a babe. More than half of the 1,078-line poem deals with Manas's death and the women's vicissitudes before they reach a safe place to raise the child. This part of the plot features high scenes and preparatory epic moments. The first high scenes are Manas's last testament³²⁹ and Kanikey's lament,³³⁰ which reinforce the aloneness of the child who will be born posthumously to Manas. Semetey is born amid hostile maneuverings by the illegitimate but for the time being powerful inheritors and executors of Manas's posterity. These are Manas's feckless companion Meṇḍibay, his junior wife, his evil half-brothers Abeke and Köböš—evidently the issue from another mother than Manas's,³³¹ and his father, Jakıp—who has turned his favor on the half-brothers. The latter three sack and burn Manas's yurt and send Kanikey and Bagdı-döölöt into wandering exile with Semetey in arms. This epic moment opens a contract upon the *Manas-stirps* to exact revenge on its enemies. Much of the business in high scenes and epic moments in the poem, that is, its structure, relates to this revenge-contract. Other structural nodes have a character more like the indicative,

³²⁵ MWR, pp. 305-337 and Commentary, pp. 562-575; Hatto 1973/74.

³²⁶ MWR, p. 602.

³²⁷ See Chapter 2, below.

³²⁸ MWR, p. 305.

³²⁹ I,6) 9-43.

³³⁰ I,6) 53-67.

³³¹ Hatto 1980c, p. 323.

"algebraic" high scenes encountered in I,2). One may say that I,6) has a mixed structure with regard to high scenes and epic moments.

The early turning point comes when Kanikey, rejected where she thought she would find shelter, at last finds Manas's old friend Bakay Khan, who had been by Manas at his deathbed. In an epic moment with dual significance, Bakay joyfully welcomes Kanikey, Bagdı-döölöt, and Semetey, and takes the boy in his arms for his first ride on horseback. The tenderness which Bakay feels for the boy is easy to miss, for although Bakay's acceptance of Semetey is contrasted with the inimical or apathetic attitudes toward him expressed by the other adults met thus far in the poem, the visual magnificence of the epic moment consists in Bakay turning Semetey into a "roughneck," his crucial character trait: "That Bakay son of Bay turned his horse's head and halted on that spot. He pulled the babe from Kanikey's arms and galloped uphill—and the babe leant over sideways! Then Bakay galloped downhill—and the babe bent over, grazing the ground!"³³² In this meeting, Bakay, Kanikey, and Semetey became bound together in ways that the bard commences to reveal with a purposive sense of narrative economy.

Two other high scenes in the first part lay up contracts for the future. Kanikey vows before Bakay to cut off Abeke and Köböš's heads and spill their blood like water,³³³ and at the long-delayed naming-feast, the white-bearded man who appears out of nowhere and names the child Semetey utters the injunction that he should grow into a hot-tempered rogue and warrior, and "Let him kill his Grandfather".³³⁴ Thus the plot is charged with contracts aimed at final revenge.

³³² I,6) 350-358, and Commentary, n. 353-361 on p. 567.

³³³ I,6) 373f.

³³⁴ I,6)580.

The naming-feast had taken place at the court of Kanikey's father Kara Khan, where on the advice of Bakay she finally found a welcome along with her mother-in-law and son. As a lad, Semetey comes quickly into his own in a high scene which, in this bard's hands, constitutes a highly individual treatment of the worldwide theme of an orphaned hero-to-be learning of his origin and destiny.³³⁵ Semetey is ready to ride to his people and country.

The scene in which Kanikey sends Semetey off is an epic moment, but it hinges on an image the significance of which has eluded interpretation until now. Kanikey asks for and receives from Kara Khan a steed and armor for Semetey, then at parting she places in his hands a small purse and directs him to give it to Bakay at the headwaters of the Sulpukor.³³⁶ The image of the purse is eye-catching. It is *altından ōs ketäčik* 'a gold-rimmed, embroidered ladies' neck-purse'.³³⁷ The first question is, what is Kanikey doing giving Bakay a gift of a small, embroidered purse? The typical cultural context in which females gave males small articles as presents was in premarital relations, when a boy and girl had come to an understanding. The gift-giving took place in both directions. S. Abramzon remarks on the possible range of girls' gifts to boys: "Girls gave *jigits* embroidered handkerchiefs—*bet aači*, embroidered skullcaps—*sayma topu*, patterned

³³⁵ I,6) 623-679.

³³⁶ I,6) 710-721. The hydronym *Sulpukor*, which is unique to this epic (cf. Hatto 1990, p. 620; *Manas entsiklopediya*, s.v.), apparently signifies variously the headstream of the Talas, i.e., the Karakol, and, as a nickname, the Talas or its upper sources in general, including Bakay's home at Üč-košoy (cf. his localization *Sulpukordun başında* 'at the head of the Sulpukor'). The real *Sulpukor kümbözü* 'tomb', which the editors of *Manas entsiklopediya* locate on the left bank of the Karakol, is in the right place, and may be the origin of the hydronym.

³³⁷ I,6) 717. Iudakhin, *Slovar'*, s.v. *ketečik*: "A small embroidered bag (recalling the work-box of European women) which women wore from their necks as an ornament." On the philology, appearance, use, and analogs of this object, the reader is directed to Hatto's generous note to l. 717 of I,6) (*MWR*, p. 570) and the excellent range of verbal and visual sources cited there.

drawers—*ıçkır*, and also tobacco-pouches—*tameki baştık*."³³⁸ Both the embroidery and the smallness of the *altından õs ketäčik* chime with the context of the gift: Kanıkey is unmarried, and Bakay may well be, for all that is said of his wives in any of the epics.³³⁹ A later observation from the towns of East Turkistan establishes that girls used small, patterned cloth bags to send "messages" to their lovers.³⁴⁰

The second question is, what is Kanıkey doing giving Bakay a courting-gift? Attempts to find a tale-type or motif such as "son goes courting for his mother" were fruitless. The appearance of this curious theme should rather be understood as an effect of the cyclic energy of this mature epic tradition, and as a token of the preeminent regard which mid-nineteenth century Kirghiz audiences had for their Kanıkey, best of all females. As the exiled widow of the hero preparing to send her only son off to seek his patrimony, Kanıkey naturally will have been seen by audiences as a woman facing a state of social insecurity. Her welcome at her father Kara Khan's court was conditional upon the presence of Semetey; it was the boy who really counted, as is shown by Kara Khan's taking the boy from his mother and raising him as his own.³⁴¹ But Kanıkey's real reluctance to send Semetey away flows from a combination of maternal love and maternal skepticism: although it is she who requests a horse and armor for him from Kara Khan, she does it after protesting that he is too young to go.³⁴² And Semetey's heroic

³³⁸ Abramzon 1978, p. 108. In his note to the passage, Abramzon adds that this type of gift from girl to boy was called *öntö* (cf. Iudakhin, *Slovar*).

³³⁹ At any rate, since the available literature sheds no light on the matter of premarital gifts and relations between married men and prospective second, and later, wives, we may presume they bore some resemblance to the customs between singles.

³⁴⁰ As one recipient explained to Le Coq in 1913, the signification lay in the numerous small articles contained inside the bag: e.g., a feather = "Had I wings, I would fly to you" (Le Coq 1928, p. 90).

³⁴¹ I,6) 538f., 597f.

³⁴² I,6) 680-699.

speech, "Stand back, woman!..."³⁴³ left no doubt anyway that the Roughneck has grown into his fate.

Kanıkey is one of the few characters in the cycle who naturally resists "limelighting," as Hatto has described the bardic technique of bringing forth only so much of a character's background and attributes as is required for a given epic plot.³⁴⁴ This is eminently true at Semetey's departure, where Kanıkey's actions are fully nuanced. Kanıkey has conflicting emotions. She must do what she can to ensure Semetey's success, but behind her goodwill lurks her apparent conviction, as by second sight, that Semetey is doomed even from her grace, for she does not bless him. So she puts her trust in Bakay, who, as neighbor of Abeke and Köböş, will know even better than she what will need to be done "on the ground." But how to communicate this to Bakay, if Semetey is not to hear her condoning his mission (for by condoning it she would be expected to bless it)? She sends the wise old man a sign—a courtship-gift, indicating to Bakay merely that she is henceforward, as it were, in need of a station in life. From this Bakay will know all, and she has only to admonish her son, "Ah, Semetey, dear Son, do not depart from what Bakay says, try to be one with his words!"³⁴⁵ After all, it was Bakay who made him a Roughneck.

Kanıkey's withholding of her blessing from the departing Semetey is a portentous omission which has been overlooked in previous discussions of Semetey's tragic career.

³⁴³ I,6) 665-679.

³⁴⁴ Hatto 1979, p. 111.

³⁴⁵ *E balam-ai Semetey, /Bakaydın aykanınan çıkpagın, /Bakaydın tili-minän bolo kör!* (I,6) 719ff.). My translation differs in a small but crucial way from Hatto's ("Ah, Semetey dear Son, do not depart from Bakay's advice, see that you do as he says!"—*MWR*, p. 327). At issue is the fact that Bakay never gives Semetey any advice or instructions. He merely speaks, and Semetey interprets and acts. We will discuss the passage in question presently.

Indeed, it seems that Kanikey's reticence and that of Manas's *arbak*³⁴⁶ are bound together as the two principal spiritual axes in the later cycle, I,6) and I, 7).³⁴⁷ For this reason, the small, embroidered neck-purse that Kanikey hands to Semetey represents just the sort of image that looms as a "highly charged narrative gangli[on]" "enhanced by visual magnificence." The sudden, close-up view of this intricately-wrought object catches the eye amid a story made up mostly of panoramas and mid-range shots. It focuses the knowledgeable audience's attention on the demands which fate has placed upon both the heroine and the hero.

The final third of the epic, the story of Semetey's meeting with Bakay and the score-settling with Jakıp, Abeke, and Kōböš,³⁴⁸ is well-punctuated with high scenes and epic moments that play out the contracts opened in the first part. The discussion below will concentrate on a cluster of actions the interpretation of which may suggest how a strong plot arc such as a revenge-contract can stand above, while even conditioning, inconsistencies in the story. Examination of I,6) and the only surviving Twilight Age text of this part of the Semetey story, *SMB*(1), shows that the two poems have very similar plot structures. *SMB*(1) handles the same cluster of enigmas differently, and a comparison will be made in the next chapter.

The end of the story is divided into two parts by Semetey's premature retrieval of his father's heirloom possessions. Only then, and after an interval, does he go after the

³⁴⁶ See discussion of I,7), below; and cf. Kanikey's extrinsic method of ascertaining Semetey's worth in the Later Period: by divination through a horse race, in which the victory of the horse Tay-toru foretells that Semetey will prevail. The vignette was one of Sayakbay Karalayev's specialties, and he developed it in performances famous for their pathos.

³⁴⁷ The breach between Kanikey and Semetey is further evidenced at I,7) 95-98, where Semetey "chooses" Manas over her: "Oh, my Mother Kanikey, now I shall not be concerned with you, I will not be parted from the legacy left by my father!"; cf. I,7) 153.

³⁴⁸ I,6) 723-1078 (end).

usurpers. The early retrieval, an act treated as a deception in I,6), is a natural one in the context of comparative folklore. Hatto has noted, "As in the basic Siberian plot [of the son's revenge for the murder of his father], Semetey in *BS* has to gain possession of his father's accoutrements before he can wreak vengeance."³⁴⁹ Bakay welcomes the newly arrived Semetey joyfully, but it is significant that the boy makes no speech telling the elder hero that he has come to recover his patrimony. The bard seems to surrender him to the unfolding of events, much in accord with the "Siberian plot" and with Kanikey's injunction to do as Bakay says.

Bakay, having helped Semetey thwart Jakıp's plan to poison him³⁵⁰ and after a scuffle on his own with Abeke and Köböş, at last manages to bring Semetey to the evil twins' yurt. They welcome him politely, serve *arak*, and proceed to get drunk. Only when they are incapacitated does Bakay point to and name for Semetey one by one the objects, lying and hanging about the yurt, that used to belong to Manas: padded armor, saddle, pouch, and dagger, ending with an indication of where Semetey may find Manas's steed, Tay-buurul. Semetey stands up and—simply takes them all.³⁵¹ The hint is all he required. Leaving to return to Kanikey astride Tay-buurul, Semetey gives Bakay his parting good wishes—and Bakay makes no answer.³⁵² Indeed, Bakay recedes into oblivion from this point in the epic.

The remaining enigma in the plot revolves around the bard's attempt to bridge two parallel but distinct purposes. Kanikey has vowed revenge on the usurpers, and Semetey

³⁴⁹ Hatto 1973/74, I, p. 165. For examples of the topos of recovering equipment in the widespread "Siberian plot" to which Hatto refers, see (for Nenets) Kupriianova 1965, pp. 137-142; (for Oroch) Avrorin & Lebedeva 1966, p. 162.

³⁵⁰ I,6) 771-841.

³⁵¹ I,6) 918-921.

³⁵² I,6) 922-928.

has made a somewhat sketchier vow to return to his land and people.³⁵³ For their contracts to be fulfilled, both of them need to be present at the climax of the story. From a practical standpoint, the revenge cannot happen without Semetey. He is the warrior and the inheritor. Kanikey is not a warrior-woman, and would not have been thought of as the sort of woman to ride on a military expedition. If we visualize a Kirghiz heroic *stirps* as a circle with a burning hearth at the origin-point and sharpened lance-tips forming the perimeter, it is in the center, around the hearth, that Kanikey's virtue and grace settle. How can the bard bring both Semetey and Kanikey through space to the precise locality where they both will fulfil their contracts in opposition to the same people? Kanikey must be tricked into going along on the journey. Semetey's stolen heirlooms will give him the power to prevail militarily in the culmination of the "Siberian plot," but in order for the Kirghiz version, which really concerns Kanikey, to proceed to its appointed ending, Semetey's character will have to be compromised by a bald lie to his mother:

"They gave me my Father's Tay-buurul! Saying 'This is your Father's legacy!', my two Elder Brothers Abeke and Köböš gave me all the equipment, every item! They said: 'Since you have returned, take your Father's Ak-kula—he ordered the youngest Companion Taz-maymat, who used to boil the kettle, to tend it before all else!' I shall go to my People, Mother, I shall go to my Country!"³⁵⁴

Semetey, Kanikey, and Manas's mother Čakan then set off for Talas with animals and treasure given by Kara Khan, and the bard proceeds with rapid sureness through a bold series of movements and high scenes to the final outcome.³⁵⁵

³⁵³ I,6) 666-679.

³⁵⁴ I,6) 932-944.

³⁵⁵ The following discussion will focus on certain hitherto unnoticed aspects of the plot; for a full discussion of the final scenes, see Hatto 1973/74, part I.

Even in the speed of the ending, the bard manages a nice gesture toward Kanikey, a gift of narrative detail that saves her from the kind of compromise Semetey's rougher persona had to absorb. Semetey brings his mother and grandmother eastward up the Talas river,³⁵⁶ but: "They did not go to Jakıp-khan, they turned towards the headwaters of the Čüy and arrived at the place where Bakay was encamped. Then the khan's daughter Kanikey knew that Semetey had tricked her."³⁵⁷ Both Jakıp and Bakay had their home camps in the Talas valley, Jakıp along the tributary Keñ-kol and Bakay higher up along the branch named Üč-koşoy.³⁵⁸ The sense of this passage hangs on the detailed and accurate topographical knowledge shared by the bard and audience. Since Semetey has told his mother that his patrimony has been restored, (to Kanikey) the logical stopping-place would be Jakıp's camp. But his grandfather is in truth still hostile, so Semetey must divert the travelers to Bakay to receive a friendly welcome. In this way Kanikey discovers that she has been deceived.³⁵⁹ Although our attention is thus drawn to the awkward join between the "Siberian plot" and the Kanikey revenge-plot, the bard's treatment here reveals that Kanikey *is not to be lied to by*—this is a characterization based on the present

³⁵⁶ There are significant blank areas on the map of this epic, including the location of Kara Khan's capital, but the geography described appears to be correct. Kanikey is traditionally conceived as a princess of a city, as if of Mawarannahr, to the west of Talas.

³⁵⁷ I,6) 956-961: *Jakıp-kanğa barbadı,/ Čüidiin bir başın bura'dı,/ Bakay jatkan jerinä/ barıp kelip tüstü deit./ Kan balası Kanikey/ aldağanın bildi deit.* Radloff's form *başın* 'the head (acc.)' makes more sense if emended to *başına* 'toward the head (dat.)'. From this point, travelers would have to cross 120 miles and two major passes to reach the nearest headwaters of the Chu. This type of reference to a central Kirghiz locality—amounting to a kenning for "eastward" here—has an unusual ring for the Older Period.

³⁵⁸ *Keñ-kol-ata* in other poems but not in I,6); cf. *MWR*, p. 618 (under *Kol-ata*, Hatto's mistaken reading of the toponym).

³⁵⁹ We recall that elsewhere Kanikey was clairvoyant. Why have her powers of second sight failed, and not warned her of Semetey's lie? Perhaps for the same reason she withheld her blessing from Semetey: having written him off as the Endangerer of the line, she seems unable to fathom him at all. That Kanikey's clairvoyance fails her here is a matter that the poet of *SMB*(1) addresses in a highly original attempt to patch up the hole in her ability; see the next chapter and Appendix 2.

analysis—a *spiritually inferior person*, *Semetey*. Now, Kanikey is in a predicament: arriving as a guest in the camp of a man with whom her last contact was sending him a courtship-gift, she has a bit of explaining to do. And our bard, respecting this, pauses amid the gathering storm to allow this proud woman to excuse herself from the old man:

"Have you been keeping well, Bakay? Have you had good fortune untouched by sorrow? Have you prospered, Bakay, have you been happy, free of all anguish? Blessings on your name, Bakay, Blessings on yourself! My Kid that lost the Goat, my Wretch bereaved from the Womb, tricked and coaxed us into coming here, Bakay!"³⁶⁰

It is an adequate indication of who the important character is here that Bakay is absent henceforward from both I,6) and the sequel, I,7). His limelight was cut to nil after he served his purpose (Falstaff dies offstage).

If the notion of a genetic tie with the "Siberian plot" of boy's revenge is accurate, and it appears to be, then it follows that Kanikey's revenge-contract was drawn into the basic story only later. It certainly came to predominate. Kanikey's and Čakan's grisly revenge (referred by Hatto to the implied theme of the unfulfilled obligation to give a memorial feast for the dead Manas)³⁶¹ is the culmination the epic. Semetey, having vanquished and tied the victims, has left the scene. It is as if all he wanted were his rightful status and possessions, and once attaining them he became an instrument of

³⁶⁰ I,6) 963-971.

³⁶¹ *MWR*, Commentary, n. to II 1047-1050. However, there are noteworthy similarities between the dismemberment and blood-drinking revenges of the women in I,6) and I,7) and accounts of actual blood-revenges reported by Levšin, where no issue of a memorial feast pertained: in 1785, women of the Junior Horde Kazakhs near the Chinese border killed a Kirghiz prisoner by many small wounds with their bare hands in revenge for a murder in which a Kazakh victim had been dismembered by Kirghiz, itself an act of revenge for a killing; and in 1821 (also Junior Horde), prisoners from the guilty side were killed at the tombs of the murder victims [also, beforehand, *prinudili ikh k protivostestvennomu prestupleniiu*—cf. Čakan on Jakıp in the final scene of I,6)?], and the blood was drunk (Levšin, *Opisanie*, pp. 259, 329).

Kanikey's will. He does not "kill his Grandfather," as the mysterious white-beard who named him had enjoined.

It would be well to consider some of the bard's silences in the final part of the epic as intentional. There *could* be a speech by Semetey telling Bakay his intention to recover his patrimony, but there is not. Bakay *could* tell Semetey to take the heirlooms from drunken Abeke and Köböš, but he does not. Bakay *could* answer Semetey's parting good wishes, but he does not. In such a brief narrative of the revenge (355 lines), and with the knowledge that Radloff's recording techniques drove bards to cut and condense, particularly at the ends of poems, it would be tempting to envision a fuller performance of this story, one better furnished with the speeches just mentioned, for instance. But the interpretation of the problematic passages offered above suggests that good bards, and it is clear that Radloff's was one, may have worked out a narrative path of least resistance over the seams in the plot, where the theme of "Siberian son's revenge" by Semetey verged on Kanikey's more deeply characterized revenge.³⁶²

As we conclude this discussion of *The Birth of Semetey*, it merits recollecting one more time the phenomenal tact the bard has displayed with regard to Kanikey. One cannot readily think of a traditional epic heroine anywhere who is treated by her poet with such affection and respect, not only with the courtesies of diction and motif, but also with an operative regard which at one and the same time penetrates to the hidden framework of the plot and manifests as an outward respect for the minds of his audience. This is the heroic cosmos at its best.

³⁶² Cf. the silences with which the poet of the *Nibelungenlied* wraps even more glaring inconsistencies, and Hatto's observation, "as so often, his rule is 'least said, soonest mended'" (*Nibelungenlied*, p. 315).

I,7) Semetey

*Ol Semetey jaš boldu,
ol akıldan boš boldu!*

'That Semetey was young, he was empty-headed.'

With these words, the anonymous bard of I,7) *Semetey* (S),³⁶³ (recorded in 1862 in Bugu territory³⁶⁴) began the epic that is positioned last in the chronological cycle of Manas's career and posterity. Formed as a roughneck in Bakay's saddle in I,6), Semetey here displays his chief personality trait to an even greater degree than before. But he is dead by not long after the mid-point of the poem, and the calamitous decline into which he has propelled the fortunes of the *Manas-stirps* is halted in the end by his companion, his son, and his wife, working with marvelous interdependence—and the traitor is avenged with gruesome magnificence one last time by Kanıkey herself.

Semetey is the second of the two mid-nineteenth century epics Hatto noted for their "stark and shapely" plots. It is a deliberate and refined plot, fraught with complex, integrated battle scenes and finely drawn moments akin to folktale, where homely details and daily life shine through more clearly and harmoniously than in any other mid-nineteenth century epic. The characters act almost automatically, and the 1,927-line poem appears so thoroughly worked-out that it resists summation except in the briefest form.

Semetey alienates then slaughters his father's Forty Companions. Two of the companions' widows bear sons, who become Semetey's companions, loyal Kül-čoro and treacherous Kan-čoro. Semetey induces the sorceress Ay-čürök to marry him, though she has been legally betrothed to Ümütöy. Semetey's settlement with Ümütöy involves giving

³⁶³ *MWR*, pp. 305, 340-395 and Commentary, pp. 576-600; Hatto 1973/74.

³⁶⁴ *MWR*, p. 602.

him Tay-buurul, the steed he inherited from Manas. Semetey then has a dream, which he interprets to mean that he must perform a sacrifice to Manas's *arbak*. Ay-čürök warns him to sacrifice none other than Tay-buurul, but Semetey sacrifices a different horse. The sacrifice is inauspicious: Manas is "dead" (to Semetey). The interloper Er Kıyaz conquers Semetey's realm, and together with Kan-čoro murders Semetey. Er Kıyaz takes the pregnant Ay-čürök to wife, mutilates and enslaves Kül-čoro, and enslaves Kankey. Semetey's son Seytek is born, and Ay-čürök protects him from being murdered by Er Kıyaz. Later, the boy Seytek heals Kül-čoro. The latter then murders Er Kıyaz and binds Kan-čoro. Kankey wreaks final vengeance on Kan-čoro. Seytek is restored to Manas's realm.

The hero Semetey is a figure of unhappy fate. His character crystallized when Bakay took him for a wild ride as a babe in arms in I,6).³⁶⁵ In that poem, he was the subject of high scenes or epic moments only in the two speeches he uttered to separate himself from his foster-father and his mother and launch himself on the path of destiny. The whole plot of I,7) seems to play out as a huge mechanism of fate, the sole independent action being Semetey's catastrophic rupture with and murder of the Forty Companions. John D. Smith usefully distinguished the Rajasthani *Pābūjī* epic as one whose plot is governed by Fate, seeming to imply that in other traditions the ground rules may be different and the linkage of epic moments with Fate (where "Fate's demands on a hero press in upon him with a particular immediacy"³⁶⁶) may be contingent. Indeed, we have seen how individual choice is a vitally important element in the structure of other

³⁶⁵ We may speculate whether the head injury Semetey suffered then was what made him "empty-headed" for the present bard.

³⁶⁶ Smith 1989, p. 32.

Older Period Kirghiz epics. In *Semetey*, however, fate is the law, and Smith's words apply:

In a story such as that of Pābūjī, where the hero acts not from his own volition but from Fate, an analysis of the narrative in terms of contracts can be revealing, for the contracts into which Pābūjī enters are no more and no less than the demands of Fate, and the conflicts in which he finds himself are all inherent in the mutually contradictory requirements which Fate makes of him.³⁶⁷

Interestingly, with Fate everywhere apparent, the plot of *Semetey* appears so well worked-out and seamless that fewer epic moments and high scenes obtrude. For example, there are none in the episode in which Semetey woos and wins Ay-čürök.³⁶⁸ Even when Semetey gives up Tay-buurul as payment to his maternal uncle Ümütöy³⁶⁹ for Ay-čürök³⁷⁰—a cosmic crux in the epic—the action is pitched no higher than ordinary.

There are three main contracts in the plot. First, Semetey must pay for the outrage he commits upon the Forty Companions³⁷¹ and, by extension, on Manas's *arbak*.³⁷² This

³⁶⁷ Smith 1986, p. 60.

³⁶⁸ I,7) 255-348; see also *MWR*, Commentary, n. to I,7) 271ff., for comparative notes on Ay-čürök's qualities as a "Complete Wife" for Semetey.

³⁶⁹ Ümütöy is Semetey's *tay* 'maternal uncle' in the text (e.g., l. 786). The maternal uncle was traditionally the elder male relative with whom a boy had an easy-going relationship, and this verged into harassment and even plunder, presumably as the expectations of gifts and indulgence from this figure spiraled out of control amid a culture of raiding. Ümütöy is Semetey's first cousin once removed. According to scattered data in the tradition, Manas's mother Čıyrıçı and Ümütöy's father Kökčö were brother and sister, the children of Aydar Khan. See *MWR*, Commentary, n. to I,7) 786f.

A revision of Hatto's interpretation (translation) of I,7) 384 etc. *Kan-čoro uktap ölüp kaldı deit* 'Kan-čoro fell asleep and "died"' (the context is when Ümütöy comes to raid Semetey's herds for stealing Ay-čürök: Kan-čoro lets him get away): Hatto reads *uktap ölüp kaldı* literally to mean that Kan-čoro (temporarily) died in his sleep (Hatto 1973/74, p. 2). But it has become clear by examination of a *Semetey* text from the Twilight Age that Kül-čoro and Kan-čoro are known to fall asleep when their lord needs them to be awake. Thus 'fell dead asleep' is the less drastic and ever more logical meaning here, despite Iudakhin's silence on the idiom.

³⁷⁰ I,7) 850-863.

³⁷¹ I,7) 163-184.

³⁷² Crucial here is the partial identification of the Forty Companions with the forty *čilten*, helping spirits who also appear around Manas from time to time, and which tended to merge notionally

he does when he is murdered by Er Kiyaz with help from Kan-čoro (the son of Almambet, one of the murdered Companions—thus fulfilling a revenge-contract), and his body is burned and his ashes scattered.³⁷³ Second, Semetey's death must be avenged. This is done by Kanıkey, with help from Kül-čoro, who beheads Er Kiyaz and then binds Kan-čoro so that Kanıkey can drink his blood. The third "contract" is more of the nature of an axiom such as was encountered in *Köz-kaman*. The *Manas-stirps* must be preserved, and fate works by seeking out, assembling, and empowering the right people to do the jobs that need to be done, one after the other, to fulfil this plan.

Semetey's alienation from the Forty Companions is shown by the fact that he cannot manage an invocation of them by name. He exhorts them up and down, and even starts to invoke them once, but he gets no further than the name of the head companion, Kırgın-čal.³⁷⁴ The bard shares with us the important knowledge that this is a failing of Semetey's, not his own. He does this not by directly impugning Semetey, which would ill befit the tone, but by using "the language of heroes."³⁷⁵ When the companions meet to consider among themselves what is to be done about the rascal Semetey, they call to one another: "My Čubak, son of Ak-balta, dearest friend among men! My Börüč, son of Börü, who, when my horse goes limping, always shoes him firmly! My Tölök, the diviner, my doler-out of many lots for the Companions! Kırgın-čal, Head-man of the Forty! Smooth-tongued Ajıbay that would not rouse a resting sheep!"³⁷⁶ This is of course a bit of bardic business, an Invocation in Manas's words nominally transferred to the mouths of the

with the *arbak* or lineal ancestor-spirits. See Hatto 1977, pp. 261 f.; Hatto 1973/74, pp. 26f.; (on *čilten*) Basilov 1992, pp. 246-265; Tokarev 1982, vol. 2, p. 629.

³⁷³ I,7) 1306-1358.

³⁷⁴ I,7) 109.

³⁷⁵ Cf. R. Martin 1989.

³⁷⁶ I,7) 53-62.

Companions, as is shown by the unedited use of the first person possessive. What this shows is that, by contrast, Semetey loses his companions through a failure in performance. This is clear evidence that the heroic cosmos was a performance cosmos. In a kind of anti-epic moment, Semetey is revealed as having lost those whom Manas possessed.³⁷⁷

Kül-čoro emerges from the womb of Ajibay's widow grasping a flower; Kan-čoro is borne by Almambet's widow grasping a clot of blood. These are fateful signs, as Kül-čoro will grow up to become the protector of Semetey's line and Kan-čoro will become his betrayer. There is a visual piquancy about the scene, but hardly the magnificence and resonant portentousness that characterizes epic moments. At the very least it figures in a complex high scene with its sequel, Semetey's apostrophe on his aloneness and his making the babes suckle at the breasts of Kanikey.³⁷⁸

An example of the tendency of this plot to amass concatenations of high scenes into an integral whole is the passage after Semetey has his dream. The spectacle of the dream is followed by Semetey's decision to perform a sacrifice, which is followed by Ay-čürök's counter-interpretation of the dream and her imprecation not to perform the sacrifice unless with Tay-buurul, which is followed by the type-scene of Semetey beating her with his lash, which is followed by Kanikey's extremely distraught warning, which is followed by her resigned instructions how to perform the sacrifice and the precise imagery of the portents, which is followed by Semetey performing the sacrifice and

³⁷⁷ Cf. Hatto 1973/74, part II, pp. 6ff.

³⁷⁸ I,7) 185-227. The present interpretation of the plot does not accord with Hatto's translation of I,7) 243-246 *Berištäliüü janında/ birdä turdu bu čoro:/ abıraktū janında/ airılbai turdu bu čoro* ("Those [two] Companions stood as one beside this auspicious man, they stood inseparable at the side of this man blessed by the Ancestors"—A.T.H.) The adjectives *berištäliüü* and *abıraktū* (cf. Iudakhin, *Slovar'*) rather combine with *janında* to express "on his (Semetey's) auspicious side; on the side of his Ancestors"—sides of Semetey's character to which he himself has no direct access.

receiving the unwanted portent: "The cauldron boiled, and blood, cherry-black, flowed over!"³⁷⁹ The action from dream to seething cauldron is articulated so smoothly that the entire passage proceeds with the energy of an epic moment, as if a "macro-moment."

In the matter of Tay-buurul, we observe for the first time a Kirghiz epic bard exercising irony on a structural level. This was evidently no experiment, but rather appears to be a carefully crafted subplot. Semetey unhesitatingly gives Tay-buurul away to Ümütöy in the settlement over Ay-čürök.³⁸⁰ The text harbors no intimations that this action spells trouble, and this silence is the seed of irony. Semetey will need that horse to make the correct sacrifice to Manas's *arbak*, as only becomes apparent in the macro-moment described above. The symmetries spread out from there. Semetey offered just this horse to the Forty Companions as they prepared to leave him. If they had not refused this gift, Semetey's problems with Manas's *arbak* would not have been so hard to solve. In exchange for the horse that truly belonged to Manas's *arbak*, Semetey gains no more and no less than the person who is able to divine for him the hard truth... Thus Tay-buurul—offered but refused, offered and given, needed and lacked—stands for Semetey's entire problem on four legs.

Defeated and surrounded by Er Kıyaz and his teeming armies, Semetey, alone with Kül-čoro, has a curious high scene: "Though Semetey lay on the ground, the Moon stands in dread of his radiance, the Sun stands in dread of his brilliance!—Not a man broke ranks to seize the Wretch Semetey as he lay there!"³⁸¹ Unprecedented in the Older Period and unlike anything Semetey has ever gotten up to before, this *deus ex machina*

³⁷⁹ I,7) 879-1053.

³⁸⁰ I,7) 860ff.

³⁸¹ I,7) 1209-1213.

allows Kül-čoro to escape³⁸² and cherish the restoration of the *stirps*. Semetey is doomed. We are forced to understand that the predicament is so dire that neither man alone nor both together could get out alive—were it not for Semetey's sudden ability to "shine," which will allow him to hold off the troops just long enough for Kül-čoro to make his escape. It is a visually magnificent but hurried moment, and its hollowness on the level of a cosmic sign of Semetey's nature becomes immediately apparent, as Semetey falls victim to the attackers. And since Kül-čoro abandons Semetey, it is clear that he is not really a companion to Semetey personally. He is companion to the *stirps*, and the people for whom his highest service is destined are its other true defenders, the wives Ay-čürök and Kankey.

Once Kül-čoro's life is spared, his capture, mutilation and banishment to Er Kıyaz' herds sets him in his place in a kind of holding-pattern appointed for the corps of avengers. The other members of this group are Ay-čürök and Kankey, also stuck in debased roles in Er Kıyaz' household, and Semetey's son Seytek. Ay-čürök carried him before birth for six months while Semetey was alive and, heroically, for another six months as the trophy wife of Er Kıyaz. This gives her justification to plead to Kıyaz for Seytek's life as belonging equally to him as to Semetey,³⁸³ but her supreme effort to save the child swiftly culminates in her threat to don her swan-habit and fly to her father Akın Khan (and bring his armies) to annihilate Er Kıyaz, who threatens Seytek with drawn sword:

"Er-kıyaz son of Jediger, my lord, reason comes by and by, but anger is quick to come! Six months were his, but six were yours! Still in his caul, what cities of yours has this babe destroyed? Do not slay this child of

³⁸² I,7) 1214f.

³⁸³ Hatto 1973/74, p. 26.

mine! If you slay this child of mine—if I do not don my white-swan mask and fly to Akın Khan, if unavenged I do not wreak vengeance, if, revengeless, I do not take revenge—may my name 'Ay-čürök' wither!"³⁸⁴

Er Kıyaz is cowed. This is the scene that was introduced at the beginning of this essay to illustrate the concept of the epic moment. Seytek is now safe, so the corps of avengers is complete. The end comes on rapidly.

Ay-čürök, Seytek, and Kül-čoro all have parts to play to help another one of the trio achieve his intermediate ends. Kanıkey, terrible and aloof, appears only at the final moment, like the surgeon-specialist for whom the patient has been laid out and prepared. Kül-čoro sets events moving by appearing before Ay-čürök on a pretext after he hears that Seytek has been born. Ay-čürök instructs him to lie low and come back again "if" Seytek reaches manhood.³⁸⁵ But Ay-čürök takes matters in hand at the appropriate time by instructing the precocious little boy Seytek to go ask Er Kıyaz for Too-toru to ride.³⁸⁶ She also utters an oath by way of divining from the outcome of the request whether Seytek is a viable continuator of the *stirps*: "If you do not mount Too-toru, if you prove a spent arrow, if you are an extruded turd, may my womb that bore you be cursed!"³⁸⁷ Seytek's request results, inevitably, in Kül-čoro's being called to escort Seytek on an outing to the herds to ride Too-toru.³⁸⁸ With Kül-čoro and Seytek united and unobserved, the necessary manpower can now be developed. But it is not a fighting duo. We are at

³⁸⁴ I,7) 1462-1482. My translation differs slightly from Hatto's.

³⁸⁵ I,7) 1637ff.

³⁸⁶ The needlessness of Kül-čoro's appearing twice to Ay-čürök—he is present when Seytek receives his instructions, but does not accompany the boy into Er Kıyaz' presence—is the most visible loose end that the bard has allowed to arise in an otherwise virtually seamless plot. The singularity of this rough spot only increases one's wonder at what the bard was able to achieve on the whole.

³⁸⁷ I,7) 1739-1742. Cf. Kanıkey's skepticism about Semetey in I,6), and the Later Period vignette involving her divination over this by means of the horse Tay-toru.

³⁸⁸ I,7) 1726-1774.

least assured of Seytek's warrior-mettle by the minor business of him beating up and driving away the gang of bullying horse-herds who have oppressed Kül-čoro these years. However, Seytek's true role in the corps is to heal Kül-čoro's shoulder, which Er Kıyaz had mutilated when enslaving him. Seytek's work constitutes a high scene culminating in the restored Kül-čoro's look of awesome health.³⁸⁹ Kül-čoro first beheads his oppressor Er Kıyaz, then captures and binds Kan-čoro. Suddenly Kanikey appears:

Has not wretched Kanikey come to meet them? Has she not forsaken the sheep? Has she not run to get even with him? "Dear Kül-čoro, my child, why should I tell all? My child, kindly give me one spoonful of Kan-čoro's blood! After I drink it, let me die!" Kanikey took her Ak-albars and inflicted a gash on Kan-čoro, then sated herself on his blood!³⁹⁰

Kanikey appears in three parts of I,7): first, to be rejected by Semetey³⁹¹ (though he later leads her in unceremoniously to suckle Kül-čoro and Kan-čoro and make them his brothers); next, to warn Semetey not to travel to Manas's tomb, and when he ignores her, in a state of extreme distress to instruct him how to make the sacrifice (but no blessing from her! obviously a tactful omission vis-à-vis Manas's *arbak*); and last, to rush in and drink the blood-revenge. The world she knew has narrowed, and although Seytek has restored the household to Talas, the line of stories can die with her.

As we prepare to leave the Older Period and turn to a later stage in the tradition where Ay-čürök's character came to the fore, some brief reflection is in order on the significance of this heroine in the Older Period and on her qualities relative to Kanikey. Ay-čürök's key action comes when, "[w]ith abandonment by the Ancestor-spirits,

³⁸⁹ I,7) 1819-1834.

³⁹⁰ I,7) 1900-1912; my translation differs slightly from Hatto's. Kan-čoro surely dies, though it is not stated.

³⁹¹ "Oh, my Mother Kanikey, now I shall not be concerned with you, I will not be parted from the legacy left by my father!" [I,7) 95-98]; cf. I,7) 153.

Semetey's fortunes, and with them the fortunes of the lineage, decline to the point where his conqueror Er-kıyaz' sword is raised above the head of Semetey's new-born son Seytek."³⁹² Ay-čürök's epic moment, in which she cows Er Kıyaz and saves Seytek by threatening to put on her swan-habit and fly to fetch her father Akın Khan, is thus justifiably called by Hatto the pivotal moment in the epic. It is noted here, however, that Ay-čürök's great gesture is but the last of two epic moments belonging to her in the poem. The first is her interpretation of Semetey's dream and warning not to make the sacrifice with any horse but Tay-buurul. Ay-čürök drops out of the action after the scene in which she instructs Seytek to ask for Too-toru—hardly an epic moment, but a high scene nevertheless for her skepticism and the divinatory oath she places on her womb. Seytek, not Ay-čürök, heals Kül-čoro. And in the end, it is Kanikey who exacts vengeance. Thus, though Ay-čürök is once majestically potent enough to face down a hero—something Kanikey never did after her first, bloody night as a woman—Ay-čürök's character lacks the range of Kanikey, who can warn, bless, heal, and lament the right hero (Manas), and manipulate and avenge his descendants as needed.

Semetey is unique among Older Period epics for its remarkable evenness of texture. Epic moments and high scenes do occur, and the plot is wonderfully integrated along the lines of fate's demands, with revenge taking place naturally but none the less awesomely. Yet little breath is wasted on extras—on the tokens of immanent art that typically give epic poetry its wealth of colorful detail. There are few lengthy descriptions, although horses come in for the usual affectionate gazes. There are no catalogs, and few cyclic allusions. Geographical space is only sparingly described, and few passages hinge on geographic particulars. One luxury the bard and audience seem to share, which could

³⁹² *MWR*, p. 304.

even be called copious but for its rigorous integration, is the narration of battle scenes: against the companions, against Ümütöy, and against Er Kıyaz. Pathetic apostrophes on Kül-çoro's hard fate are a new feature in the repertoire of topoi.

I believe that this situation is the sign of long, careful, reiterative working-out by a process of dialog between bards and audiences, who together were fully in touch with the possibilities of their epic tradition. The poem is not so much a portrayal of the heroic ethos in action through the characters as a reflection of what the bard–audience *ménage* can accomplish together in a sustained relationship within the heroic ethos in performance. *Semetey* was a classic in the making. How many bards and how many years were involved in its development cannot be known. At the very least, it would seem worthwhile to consider the case of *Semetey* in comparative context and to look for what light it can shed on analogous oral and oral-derived poems with a conjectured history of refinement, such as the *Iliad* or the *Nibelungenlied*.

I,3) *Manas's Duel with Er Kökçö; The Marriage, Death and Return to Life of Manas*

One poem remains to be introduced before we conclude our examination of the Older Period. The extremely loose, composite structure of the long epic I,3) *The Duel Between Manas and Er Kökçö; The Marriage, Death, and Return to Life of Manas* (2,686 lines), collected by Radloff among the Bugu in 1862,³⁹³ has little in common with the plot structures of the other Older Period epics. It will be useful to consider the words which Radloff used to describe the text in his *Preface*:

³⁹³ *MWR*, pp. 73-157 and commentary, pp. 441-486; Hatto 1980/82; cf. Dor 1982.

The third episode sets forth a general picture of the life of Manas. [...] Concerning this episode I draw the reader's attention to the fact that the bard presents Manas throughout the whole song as a friend of the White Czar (the Russian Emperor) and the Russian people. The Czar takes part throughout as an active character. This mention of the Czar was evinced solely by my presence. The bard, thinking that a Russian official [i.e., Radloff—D.P.³⁹⁴] would be offended by Manas's conquering the Russians also, took care to make a change that was pleasing to me. Such a circumstance clearly shows how much attention the bard pays to his audience.³⁹⁵

The plots of I,3)—for there are several—run thus. Manas submits to the Russian Czar and receives his blessing to oppress and plunder any people but the Russians. Manas makes a raid on Kōkčö, ends up in a duel with him, and is shot nearly dead. His soul visits his friend God and the Czar in the underworld, then summons the Forty Companions and comes back, and he plunders Kōkčö. Manas and the Czar reaffirm their promises to each other. Then Manas decides he wants to marry a regular wife, for his others were either taken as booty or "summoned." Jakıp acts as his go-between and arranges a marriage with Kanıkey, daughter of Temir Khan, despite the intrigues of Temir Khan's adviser Meṇdi-bay. After going to the Czar and receiving his blessing and treasure to distribute at the wedding festivities, Manas rides with his companions to Temir Khan's. Kanıkey hotly resists the union, and Manas in his anger brings the Forty Companions and plunders Temir Khan and Jakıp. Manas is on the point of abducting Kanıkey when she finally relents and actively promotes reconciliation. All the Companions get wives. Meṇdi-bay has the Kalmak robbers Kaman-köz and Kōkčö-köz poison Manas, and he dies and is buried. Almambet and Bakay, Manas's closest companions, consult at length with Jakıp on how life is to be lived in the future without Manas for protection. Even an apparent

³⁹⁴ Radloff speaks elliptically: he was not an official, but imagines that this fact was lost on the bard.

³⁹⁵ Radloff, *Predislovie*, pp. xiii-xiv.

consensus cannot overcome Jakıp's grief, however, and the family falls on hard times. God takes pity on Manas's grief-stricken animals—his horse Ak-kula, gyrfalcon Ak-šumkar, and hound Ak-taygan, and sends angels to bring Manas to life. Manas lives in a sort of between-state, riding and hawking by day and enjoying a houri's embraces at night in his tomb-turned-pavilion. Kanıkey dreams that he is alive, and indeed they discover that Ak-kula, Ak-šumkar, and Ak-taygan have vanished. The news spreads among the family and companions, and going to inspect the tomb they find Manas and the animals alive. A joyful celebration follows, and Bagdı-dölöt's breasts flow again with milk for Manas to suck. Manas and the others all settle in valleys near each other. Manas keeps to his oath of allegiance to the Czar, and lives happily.

It goes without saying that the bard who performed this poem used other means than contracts to arrange the narrative. In view of this fact, it is all the more significant that the framing device of Manas's submission to the Czar is of the nature of a contract. Although the action of the epic does not concern Manas's fulfilment of the contract, he and the Czar are seen reaffirming it in every phase of the poem from beginning to end. It is as if the bard attempted to adapt the submission theme (which, as Radloff observed, was required for the nonce) to resemble the structural characteristics of the traditionally constitutive narrative contracts. He simply drew the arc and named it.

The middle section on Manas's marriage to Kanıkey, an essentially free-standing epic of over 1,200 lines, possesses a narrative structure resembling the hybrid sort seen in *The Memorial Feast for Kökötöy Khan*. Both funeral feasts and weddings were complex cultural rituals with gala centerpieces, and I,3) is thus well provided with outlets for copious and colorful fabulation on such aspects of marriage-custom as the go-between's search for a bride, the haggling over the bride price, and the exquisite temptation-games

played on the groom by the bride's elder kinswomen. The "contract" is to complete the union, so the narrative structure may be considered primordially a romance. The adventures and vicissitudes between the dawning of intention and its fulfilment are what make the story. But it is a distinctly heroic characteristic of the epic of Manas's marriage that the whole story is pierced on the central spike of an epic moment. For only when Manas forces himself on her while she sleeps do we meet in the flesh the girl so much talked-about before, Kanikey—as she stabs Manas with her dagger! There is no reconciliation that night, only taunting and threats between the two young people, and indeed their happiness together is henceforward not an issue in the poem. Kanikey's proud act precipitates a massive *barımta*, and thus returned to firm heroic ground the epic stakes out its ultimately optimistic position.

The characteristics of bard–patron relations to which Radloff drew attention will later help to illuminate an important facet of the cultural history of the epic tradition after 1862, in the Twilight Age and beyond. Indeed, it is important to recognize the transitional nature of the structure of I,3), and to bear in mind for now how an argument could be made for allocating I,3) to the Twilight Age on the basis of structural characteristics that will become clearer in the next two chapters.

Figure 2. Kenje Kara, 1904.

Chapter 2. The Twilight Age

"Die Wucht, Tiefe und Vielfarbigkeit der Heldenepik sind derart, daß sie nach Abklingen ihrer existentiellen Phase als Unterhaltung oder Erbauung mit oder ohne Hilfe der Schrift weiterleben kann."³⁹⁶

In 1910, the literate Kirghiz poet Musa Čagatayev finished writing a long narrative poem dedicated to the powerful Tinay Sarıbagış *manap* Šabdan, the son of Jantay, in which a bloody cattle-raid that Šabdan made against the Kalmak in the early 1860s is recounted in a manner resembling epic.³⁹⁷ The poem, consisting of about 2,000 lines, boasts a number of similarities with the kind of oral epic poetry we have been examining. Šabdan has a group of *batır*-companions, as indeed he would have had in real life. The poem begins with the dream-inspiration of a warrior in Šabdan's circle, Bayake. Among the spiritual protectors the warriors invoke at the outset of their journey are the *kırk čilten*, the forty helping-spirits found elsewhere as protectors of Manas. The formulaic diction overlaps with Older Period and later oral epics. The raid takes place along a highly realistic itinerary, and features a catalog of heroes, though without heroic epithets. A Kalmak taken prisoner as the band crosses the frontier begs to be allowed to convert to Islam; he converts, his life is spared, and he becomes a guide and scout.³⁹⁸ There is even an extended topos describing Šabdan's reconnaissance from a high place

³⁹⁶ Hatto 1991, p. 19.

³⁹⁷ Regarding Šabdan's actual cattle raid, see Aristov 2001, p. 513. The MS, which I have not previously noticed in the literature, was microfilmed by me in July 2001 from MS KF (280)80. The 105-page MS consists of two poems by Musa Čagatayev dated 1909-10, (1) an untitled one about Šabdan's cattle raid (pp. 1-83, bearing a later title in cyrillic, "Šabdan jomağı") and (2) "Kenensarı qıssası" (pp. 84-100), plus (3) "Sançı oliyanın gazalı" (pp. 101-105), apparently added later in a different hand. The codex, 14 cm w x 12 cm h, on yellowed, lined pulp paper in a black cloth-covered cardboard cover, is written in steel pen with a succession of black (to p. 25), red (to p. 48), and purple (to p. 105) inks. (1) and (2) are written in approximately 20 lines to the page. On p. 100, in cyrillic: "Belek Soltonoyevdın kolu: Miftakhov 1/IV-47 j.". On last p., in cyrillic: "Kırgız batırları degen poemanı 1909-10- jılı Musa Čagatayev Šabdanga arnap jazgan."

³⁹⁸ The convert is renamed Üsön (MS KF [280]80, p. 31), which was the original, Muslim name of Jakıp's Kalmakized brother Köz-kaman in Sagımbay's version of *Manas* (*Obzor zapisei*, pp. 452f.).

through binoculars in which he spies a land of abundant game and pasturage—two set-pieces (telescope and abundant land) which, as we shall see, recur often in the nearly contemporary versions of *Semetey*. But there are also numerous historical, or at least directly commemorative, elements whose narrative realism immediately drives home, by inversion, just how cultivated and artificial heroic poetry is. The Muslims hold to cautious tactics as long as possible. After events devolve into a general bloodbath, the poet notes how the victorious Muslims wait after nightfall for stragglers to come in, and at dawn, still missing eleven men, the company searches carefully through the countless bodies of the fallen, and recover six wounded and five martyrs. The exhausted men's mood immediately after their successful raid is one of apprehension, not triumph. And, crucially distinguishing this poem from heroic epic, its narration of more or less real events lacks the familiar Older Period structural features—high scenes and epic moments. But in the conclusion we find a striking passage that draws the sharpest line between this literary creation and the tradition to which it refers:

Kazak, Nogoy barı bar,
Kırgızdan kıssa körbödüm.
Barın jazgan Orustun
bilgenimče jazayın,
ar kaysı batır uruşun.
Nogoy eken Manasıñ,
Kırgızdın jeri Talasıñ.
Öz batırñ aytalbay
munu da ırdap kalasıñ!
Manastan Šabdan kem emes,
Šabdandan Manas er emes,
Bayakege Almambet
anık jeri teñ emes!³⁹⁹

³⁹⁹ MS KF (280)80, p. 81.

'There are tales (*kıssa*) of the Kazakhs and Nogoy and all of them, but I have never seen one about the Kirghiz. Let me write down, as far as I know, everything written by the Russians,⁴⁰⁰ every sort of fight between *batırs*. Your Manas was a Nogoy, they say; but your Talas is the land of the Kirghiz. Unable to speak about your own *batırs*, you will stop singing their songs! Šabdan is no less than Manas; Manas was no greater man than Šabdan—and Almambet, it is perfectly plain, was no match for Bayake!'

Besides the new preference for national over traditional epic identity—Kirghiz are in, Nogoy out—it appears that in this poem Manas himself has suffered a blow to his reputation and status as a hero. Was this a general perception circa 1910? Searching for the answer to this question will bring us into contact with some of the essential problems of epic narrative in the Twilight Age.

To begin our examination of the Twilight Age, let us briefly sketch a few more contrasts using the father, Jantay (1794-1868), and the son, Šabdan (1839-1912), as points of reference. There can be no doubt that both of these chieftains listened to and patronized epic poetry in their days. We are already familiar with the performance cosmos in which Jantay participated, and with the outlines of the traditional repertoire of heroic epics that he would have heard. Both men were lamented after their deaths in traditionally extemporized oral poems, texts of which have been preserved.⁴⁰¹ Jantay was remembered in a robust heroic lament which, as befitted a leader of the bellicose Sarıbağış, made no mention of his submission to the Russian Czar. The lament emphasized his conflicts with Kokandian powers, thus showing him, as a true hero, glorified in terms of the enemies he fought (no fool, Jantay's lamenter suppressed past conflicts with his Russian masters). A warrior at that time might even, in his lament, be

⁴⁰⁰ Or, by Orus, a member of Šabdan's retinue (was he literate?).

⁴⁰¹ Jantay: Radloff, *Obraztsy*, vol. 5, pp. 590-594; Hatto 1983. Šabdan: Dmitriev 1914, pp. 533-535; Prior 1998b, pp. 131-135.

compared fleetingly to the paramount hero Manas.⁴⁰² Šabdan's laments were quite different. Although only a Russian translation of one of these has survived, it is obvious that the existential concerns of a Kirghiz chief and his survivors had vastly changed by 1912. We may quote an observer: "All the [laments at Šabdan's memorial feast] amounted to [...] how he fought alongside the greatest Russian generals, how he was honored with a summons to the coronation of the Sovereign, how he obtained distinctions—ranks and orders, how he built a mosque at Great Kebin, how he cared for the well-being of his people, etc."⁴⁰³ Yet while the oral tradition had moved toward pacific laments even among the Saribagiš, the same Šabdan was made the main character, late in his life, of a unique written "epic" that not only glorified that most heroic of subjects, a cattle raid⁴⁰⁴—but also boldly vaunted the chieftain *above* Manas, and his companion *above* Almambet. Let us turn now to the overall historical and cultural context of this striking detail.

The relative calm in the Semirech'e oblast of the Turkistan Governorate-General put an end to the existential worries that had been a fact of life for the Kirghiz for at least the previous generation. The chiefs were forbidden by the administration from engaging in the *barımta* which had given them an arena for gaining fame and, for the better practitioners, wealth. Of course, open hostilities under arms were also impossible.⁴⁰⁵ Šabdan was one of the rich and powerful Kirghiz who adapted to the times and turned their positions to advantage. The new order favored sedentary or semi-sedentary

⁴⁰² Radloff, *Obraztsy*, vol. 5, pp. 594-597 (*Čokčoloy*).

⁴⁰³ Dmitriev 1914.

⁴⁰⁴ Ironically, Šabdan remarks in his autobiography (published recently for the first time in Aristov's history): "Although our raid was successful and we took many horses, nevertheless the times were already not as they had been: on the order of [Military Governor] Kolpakovskii, we had to return the lifted animals to the Kalmaks" (Aristov 2001, p. 513).

⁴⁰⁵ Rumiantsev 2000(1911-16), p. 275.

existence, so Šabdan took the advice of Military Governor Kolpakovskii to live in a built house and practice agriculture. He received a large pension from the government, owned commercial enterprises, and was a prominent underwriter of Islamic education.⁴⁰⁶ Some *manaps*, however, failed to adjust to the new order. One of the measures the Czarist administration of the newly formed Tokmak uyezd⁴⁰⁷ used with some success to weaken the *manaps* was to institute a system of elected tribal leaders and judges divided into volosts. The *manap* Ümötalı, son of the Sarıbagış khan-pretender Ormon, held out the longest against taking the oath to Russia, until 1867, but in the end found himself voted out of an official post by the very same commoners whose lives and goods had once been under his autocratic control. He lived on as an ordinary Sarıbagış nomad and Russian subject until his death in 1879, occasionally scheming in his bitterness to cross over to Kashghar, where he was related by marriage to Yaʿqub Beg's circle.⁴⁰⁸ However, with Russia's liquidation of the Kokand Khanate in 1876 and China's overthrow of Yaʿqub Beg in 1877, the Kirghiz tribes lost forever any hopes that may have lingered for the old alliances of convenience with neighboring Muslim rulers.

Even during the process of pacification of the Northern Kirghiz tribes, Radloff already noted social changes reflected in settlement patterns. Earlier, he had seen Kirghiz tribes wintering—unlike the Kazakhs in their *auls* or separate encampments—"in whole

⁴⁰⁶ Turumbekov 1992, p. 12; *Čüy oblusı*, pp. 703ff.; Khasanov 1961, pp. 61-65. On Šabdan see also *Tarikh-i kirgız[-i] Šadmaniyya* by Osmonalı Sıdık uulu (Sıdık uulu 1914; a 1994 cyrillic reissue is also available), one of the earliest printed books in Kirghiz. The *Tarikh-i kirgız[-i] Šadmaniya* is composed on the model of the Islamic general history beginning with Adam and is dedicated to Šabdan (Šadman), whose Tınay clan receives lengthy treatment. Other materials on Šabdan, including laments on his death, are published in Jusupov 1992. The autobiography of Šabdan, obtained by N. A. Aristov and stored in the archives of the Russian Geographical Society, was recently published for the first time (Aristov 2001, pp. 512-515.)

⁴⁰⁷ Established in 1867; renamed and seat moved to Pishpek in 1878.

⁴⁰⁸ Khasanov 1961, pp. 47f.

tribes, [...] erecting their yurts along the banks of rivers in an unbroken chain" that might reach 20 versts (about 20 km) or more in length. But "[w]hen I was with the Solto in 1864, officials told me that the Kirghiz, having finally been subjugated by the Russians, have begun to alter the distribution of their yurts, and started to divide into *auls* exactly as the Kazakhs."⁴⁰⁹ Belek Soltonoyev (1878-1938), writing his history of the Kirghiz in the early decades of the twentieth century, caricatures the social effects of Russian colonialism:

From that time [1867], the free roaming Kirghiz could no longer engage in the raiding that was their specialty. When they could no longer cross the borders from their assigned volost lands to other places, they saw it as a constraint. It was as if they had been imprisoned in a cage or come into a dark tomb: the way of life of the timid townsmen, whom they had always hated as flightless chickens in immovable houses, bowed them to the law of the colonizers. From that point, Kirghiz children began to call a chair a horse and to ride in carts.⁴¹⁰

A further observation made by Radloff in 1869 suggests that the economic aftermath of submission to the Czar was negative: he notes that the Kirghiz were far poorer, and engaged in agriculture to an incomparably greater extent, than their neighbors the Kazakhs.⁴¹¹ Settled agriculture was the standing economic alternative to nomadic pastoralism when a group's herds were diminished to the point where living off of their natural increase was impossible.

As is the case for the Older Period, almost all available information about the bards of the Twilight Age was recorded later, after the beginning of the Soviet era. These oral sources give a picture of the Twilight Age bards that is not much clearer than for the Older Period. There is a longer list of bards, but their biographies and repertoires are

⁴⁰⁹ Radloff, *Iz Sibiri*, p. 348.

⁴¹⁰ Soltonoyev, *Kirgiz tarikhi*, vol. 2, p. 60.

⁴¹¹ Radloff 1870, p. 99.

fairly obscure. Here we note the main Twilight Age bards. *Akılбек* (c.1840-c.1925), a Bugu of the Kıtay clan, was famous as a highly talented bard. Sagımbay, a generation younger, rated him highest of all the bards he had heard. He was said to have been able to sing *Manas* in Kalmak for Kalmak audiences. *Tınıbek* Japıy uulu (1846-1902), of the Tınımseııt clan of the Bugu, was born poor but held the office of *biy* in later life. He learned the bardic art from Keldibek, Akılбек, and especially a bard named Čoŋbaš, about whom little else is known. Tınıbek in turn taught Sagımbay and Togolok Moldo, among others. He was generally held to be the greatest bard of his day. Oral history recalls that Tınıbek and Nazar were pitted against each other in a *Manas*-reciting contest by the *manap* Čınıbay. Both sang for a day and a half on the final days of *Manas* and on the construction of his tomb. In 1898, Tınıbek was ordered by a local Russian official to write down⁴¹² his *Manas* and *Semetey*. This is presumed to be the origin of the *Semetey* text (*STJ*) that was published under his name in 1925; see the discussion below.

Naymanbay (1853-1911), son of the Older Period bard Balık of the Čoŋčarık Sarıbağıš, got his start singing *Manas* as a youth when his father belonged to the circle of the Solto *manap* Baytik. Naymanbay likewise found patronage under Baytik's son, Suleymankul. Parts of Naymanbay's repertoire have been preserved indirectly in the form of texts taken down in the 1920s from the dictation of another person who allegedly memorized them from Naymanbay. *Jandake* (Jandeke) Baybolot uulu (1853-1917) was the pupil of Nazar Bolot uulu, the bard of *KO*. *Kenje Kara* (1859-1929), of the Solto tribe near Pishpek, was an *akın* (oral folk poet) and *Semetey*-bard from whom a short *Semetey* episode was recorded on phonograph in 1904. An apparently unique feature of Kenje Kara's

⁴¹² It appears to be debatable whether Tınıbek was literate; see *Manas entsiklopediya*, vol. 2, p. 302, col. 2.

performance manner was that he accompanied himself on the *kıl kıyak*, a two-stringed fiddle. He also performed laments at the funeral feast of Šabdan in 1912. Bayımbet Abdırakhman uulu (*Togolok Moldo*, 1860-1942), from Kurtka in the central Tian Shan, was a literate bard and also an accomplished lyric poet. He learned to sing epic poetry mainly from Tınıbek, but he also listened to Sagımbay. Like many Kirghiz, Togolok Moldo went to China for a time in the upheavals following the 1916 Turkistan Rebellion. While on this journey he lost all the epic texts he had written down and collected. In 1922, Togolok Moldo dictated to the Soviet folklore collector Kayum Miftakov a sizeable text of the episode of Semetey's journey to Ay-čürök, the manuscript of which survives. In the 1930s, he himself wrote down a full *Manas*-trilogy, including *Semetey*.⁴¹³ Togolok Moldo was silent on the subject of a dream-inspiration. Čoyuke Ömür uulu (1863?-1925 or '28) of the Arık Bugu knew *Manas* starting from the *Great Campaign* (*Čoŋ kazat*) to Kanıkey's flight to Bukhara. He had heard the performances of the older bards Nazar, Akılbek, and Tınıbek, but one eyewitness recalled that Čoyuke sang better than his predecessors. When he sang the popular episode in which Kanıkey races Taytoru,⁴¹⁴ it was said that not a single person in the audience remained dry-eyed. Šapak Rısmende uulu (1863-1956) was from the family of a *manap* of the Čoŋčarık Sarıbağış in the Kočkor region, and was able to read and write. He began singing epics at age 25 after befriending Naymanbay. Šapak also heard Akılbek perform, and managed to learn the *Great Campaign* (*Čoŋ kazat*) episode in its entirety from Naymanbay's father, Balık, before he died. Šapak's *Semetey* comprises the greatest portion of the texts taken down

⁴¹³ See n. 558, below.

⁴¹⁴ The episode, in which Kanıkey performs a divination on the fate of the boy Semetey by means of a horse race, has been worked to a high level of pathos by later bards as well, including Sayakbay Karalayev (1894-1971).

from him in the Soviet era. *Sagımbay* Orozbek uulu (1867-1930), of the Moynok (or Kurmanmoynok) clan of the Sayak tribe, was widely renowned in the Twilight Age, before the start of his epochal *Manas*-sessions of the 1920s, as an epic bard and *akın* of tremendous talent and wide repertoire. He was particularly famous for his *Semetey*, which was never recorded. He said his dream-inspiration had come from Semetey. Sagımbay's father, Orozbek, was a trumpeter (*kerneyçi*) in the retinue of the Sarıbağış *manap* Ormon, and Sagımbay seems to have passed most of his life under Sarıbağış patronage. He was said to have learned to narrate the *Great Campaign* episode from Šapak, who also appreciated Sagımbay's work. He spent some time in China after the 1916 rebellion, and was able to read. Sagımbay's life will be treated in further detail in the next chapter. Sagımbay's elder brother, *Ališer*, was a bard also, and was said to perform the episode of Semetey's journey to Ay-čürök particularly well. *Dıykanbay* (1873-1923), from the Tüp river valley in Bugu territory, was widely traveled and also spent time in China after the 1916 rebellion. Among his predecessors he was acquainted with Nazar, Tımbek, and Sagımbay. *Bagıš* Sazan uulu (1878-1958), of Jumgal, learned to sing epics from a certain *Baybağıš* Jakıp uulu (d. 1914), a relative of Tımbek's, as well as from Sagımbay.⁴¹⁵ Nearly all of the bards mentioned above, with the exception of Kenje Kara, are connected in some way in oral historical accounts with at least one of the others, and in some cases with Older Period bards as well. These connections take the form of mentor-pupil relationships, "having heard" another's version, and competition with one another in reciting contests.⁴¹⁶

⁴¹⁵ Soltonoyev, *Kırğız tarıkhı*, vol. 2, pp. 135-168; Rakhmatullin 1942; Rakhmatullin 1968(c.1946); Kydyrbaeva 1984; Auezov 1961a&b; *Obzor zapisei; Manas entsiklopediya*.

⁴¹⁶ Kydyrbaeva 1984.

The known records of Twilight Age epics break down chronologically into two groups divided by roughly three decades of silence. The first group consists of two poems taken down by Radloff in 1869 and published in 1885: I,1) *The Birth of Manas*, his shortest text, from among the Sarıbagış,⁴¹⁷ and II. *Joloy Khan*, his longest, from among the Solto.⁴¹⁸ The latter is given an English synopsis for the first time in Appendix 1. (Radloff's collecting trip of 1869 also produced III. *Er Töštük*,⁴¹⁹ but because this is a fairy-tale epic with shamanic overtones rather obliquely connected to the *Manas* cycle, it has been excluded from this study.) The second group of sources consists of four items with widely varying provenances and textualization histories. The *Semetey* of Maldıbay Borzu uulu (*SMB*), dated ca. 1899, is a manuscript of approximately 6,000 lines in Arabic character, consisting of two separate episodes copied from older originals, now lost. This text is fully described and given an English synopsis for the first time in Appendix 2. The *Semetey* of Tınıbek Japıy uulu (*STJ*) is a book published in Moscow in 1925 containing about 3,600 lines in reformed Arabic script, synopsized for the first time in English in Appendix 3; the approximate date of the lost original manuscript is 1898-1902. "Der Abschied des Helden Manas von seinem Sohne Semetej" (*MGA*) is a 72-line fragment published in Latin transcription with a German translation by the Hungarian explorer and ethnographer Dr. Georg Almásy in 1911-12; it was taken down by him in the Narın-kol area in 1900.⁴²⁰ The *Semetey* of Kenje Kara is a wax-cylinder phonograph recording of an

⁴¹⁷ Radloff, *Predislovie*, p. xiii, puts the text with the tribe; as for the date, Radloff says he spent time among the Sarıbagış in 1869 (Radloff 1870; Radloff 1863).

⁴¹⁸ Similarly by deduction: see Hatto 1990, p. 602, and Radloff, *Predislovie*. Radloff's statement that he was with the Solto in 1864 (Radloff, *Iz Sibiri*, p. 348) is not corroborated by the generally accepted facts of his movements. If it is not an error for 1869, or if indeed an error for 1862, some doubt might be cast on our accepted date of 1869 for *Joloy Khan*, but the probability is slight.

⁴¹⁹ Ditto. (Radloff, *Obraztsy/Proben*, vol. 5, [*Obraztsy*] pp. 526-589; [*Proben*] pp. 530-593.)

⁴²⁰ Almásy 1911/12; Almásy 1903.

epic performance by the bard Kenje Kara, made in Pishpek in 1904; the text and English translation are reproduced in Appendix 4 from the first edition, the present writer's M.A. thesis.⁴²¹

The two texts recorded by Radloff as it were on the cusp of the Twilight Age exemplify two structural tendencies of epic narrative—toward shorter and longer performances. The texts thus signal the transformations which took hold during the Twilight Age and which found their fullest development in the Later Period.

I,1) *The Birth of Manas*

The 164-line *Birth of Manas* (B),⁴²² which Radloff collected from a Sarıbağış bard near Tokmak in 1869, is by far the shortest mid-nineteenth century text in existence. This is understandable in light of the fact that the bard evidently composed the poem on the spot after Radloff asked him about Manas's birth.⁴²³ Thus the text may represent the first, or an early, attempt by a Kirghiz bard to flesh out and rationalize the Manas cycle with biographical background on the hero's origins and childhood, subjects that are touched on in several epithets in the mid nineteenth century but find full, episode-length development only in the Later Period. As with the Older Period poems, the contents of I,1) have already been given thorough study by Hatto. His article highlights particular

⁴²¹ Prior 1998b. Two other brief *Semetey* manuscripts from the Twilight Age, which the present writer was unable to examine or locate precisely, are discussed on pp. 187f., below. One more text from this group, *Qissah-i Saykal*, was published at Kazan University in Arabic script in 1896. It is said to contain a part of *Manas*, and indeed Saykal is the name of a heroine in twentieth-century *Manas* recordings as well as in *Joloy Khan*; apparently nothing more is known about this rare edition. (Not registered in Berkov & Sagidova 1961; see Urstanbekov & Čoroyev 1990, p. 107; *Manas entsiklopediya*, vol. 1, p. 380.)

⁴²² MWR, pp. 3-11 and Commentary, pp. 400-405; Hatto 1969b.

⁴²³ Radloff, *Predislovie*, p. xiii.

tendencies of bardic performance technique—the ready expansion and contraction of epithets⁴²⁴ and the flexibility of thematic composition:

At its most typical the Kirgiz bardic tradition is one of frenzied improvisation, requiring an extremely flexible medium [... W]hereas many motifs of *Manas* in isolation will be 'ancient', very few narrative sequences built up from them can be so. For where the web of poetry is woven before our eyes in this exciting fashion, as soon as it leaves the loom it unravels again, to be woven anew and differently on the next occasion.⁴²⁵

It is interesting to note, however, that two epithets of *Manas* which are well known from Older Period poems and refer to his birth, *kabilan tūgan* 'tiger-born' and *kandū tūgan* 'bloody-born', were not expanded into narrative details or even mentioned in I,1). Such expansions are not attested until Sagımbay's version was recorded in the Later Period, when *kabilan tūgan* finds reflection in *Manas*'s mother's desire to eat tiger's heart⁴²⁶ while she is pregnant (with the implication of magical transfer of power from the animal to the babe) and in *Manas*'s emerging from the womb grasping clotted blood (a topos also found in the *Secret History of the Mongols* as a power-omen of Temüjin).⁴²⁷ The absence from I,1) of such a seemingly ready bit of narrative as the eating of tiger's heart suggests that this epithet preceded the action it supposedly encapsulates, and that ca. 1869 *kabilan tūgan* could have meant simply the laudatory-hyperbolic "of the race of tigers."

Brief comments on the structure of I,1) will be sufficient. The plot is self-contained yet highly referential. After *Manas*'s genealogy is stated and his birth by Čıyırıcı, the long-childless wife of Jakıp, is briefly narrated along broadly traditional lines, the poet launches into a "send-off" for the rapidly maturing *Manas* with pregnant

⁴²⁴ Hatto 1969b, p. 235.

⁴²⁵ Hatto 1969b, p. 238.

⁴²⁶ *MMSO*, vol. 1, ll. 1300 ff., with *jolbors* for *kabilan*.

⁴²⁷ *Histoire secrète*, p. 130.

allusions to his future exploits and proclivity for plunder (ll. 51-end). Jakıp enlists Bakay to be Manas's friend, preceptor in religion, and companion-in-arms on a series of *kazat* to achieve Manas's avowed goal of Muslim victory over the infidel Sino-Kalmak. In terms of geographical scale, these projected *kazat* form long, realistic itineraries of greater extent than in any other mid-nineteenth century epic, barring only I,5)⁴²⁸ (where Manas's long journey to Mecca had mythic-spiritual overtones).

Almost seventy percent of the text is made up of boasts, threats, predictions, exhortations, and pledges, all of them in contexts that may clearly be characterized as existential. Let us consider whether these narrative features constitute markers of heroic plot structure in the way defined so far. (1) When Jakıp yearns for a son, he wishes for one who will shatter and despoil the Noygut, the Kokanders, the Sarts, the Kazakhs, and the Kirghiz (ll. 28-38). (2) At Manas's birthday feast, guests from Yarkend, the Chinese, and the Nogoy predict that Manas will grow up to do them harm (ll. 51-59). (3) Manas threatens from the cradle that he will advance the Muslims and harass the infidels (ll. 68-72). (4) Jakıp expands on the same boast, calling to Bakay and (as if) quoting Manas's own words describing the long campaigning-itineraries he will follow against the Kalmak (ll. 82-118). (5) Jakıp then exhorts Bakay to be Manas's friend, companion, and guide (ll. 119-143). (6) Bakay agrees to do so, adding a pledge to open the path of the Muslims all the way to Bejin (ll. 144-149). (7) The poem closes in the third person, not with a speech but with Manas's heroically accelerated maturation to khan-hood and his lightning campaign against Kokand, Bukhara, the Chinese of Kashghar, and the Chinese of Uč-turfan (ll. 150-164). (1) through (4) all present the same expectation of the hero Manas, with the modulations: wish—prediction—boast/threat—elaborated boast/threat. (5) and

⁴²⁸ Hatto 1992.

(6) present Bakay with an obligation, which he affirms with an added pledge, but does not yet fulfil. (7) shows Manas doing things much as anticipated in (1) through (4), though not exactly and completely fulfilling any of those wishes, predictions, or boasts. Two techniques are obvious in the bard's arrangement of these elements. First, the emphasis is on expectations rather than their fulfilments. It is as if the template of Manas's later life is being described by means of traditional speech-acts of the kinds that, in earlier epics, had functioned as contract markers. Second, the narrative is saturated with these speech-acts, a situation that impresses the listener more with their cumulative energy than with their logical relations.

The Birth of Manas is full of narrative themes and structures that display a high degree of heroic character, and indeed, in light of the time and place of its composition, it will be advisable in certain contexts to think of it as a heroic poem. However, the idea of creative intersections between ethos and structure directs one's attention rather to certain distinguishing characteristics of the poem. Biographically determined, stirringly allusive, and crucially brief—these are the alternative models of epic narrative composition that the poem embodies. The issue is one of proportion, as Hatto has considered: "The heroic ethos is stylized sentiment. Its serviceability, as in an alloy, depends on the mix. In poetry it may appear as tough as steel, the name of which often adorns its formulations. Or if the vital ingredient of artificiality be too great it may prove brittle."⁴²⁹ Whether it is warranted or useful to characterize *The Birth of Manas* as a heroic epic poem is a matter for discussion. What is certain is that it could only have been composed by a heroic epic poet.

⁴²⁹ Hatto, *Anatomy*, p. 223.

II. *Joloy Khan*

II. *Joloy Khan (J)* was written down by Radloff in 1869 from an anonymous bard among the Solto tribe, and published by him in Kirghiz and German in 1885.⁴³⁰ Hatto, one of only a very few scholars to have mentioned *Joloy Khan* since Radloff, calls the text “in part mock-epic.”⁴³¹ At 5,322 lines, by far the longest single poem in Radloff’s Kirghiz collection and representing roughly a quarter of his total, *Joloy Khan* should attract more attention than it has. The prose synopsis in Appendix 1 is the first rendering of the epic into an international language of scholarship (however concisely) since Radloff’s German verse translation of 1885. Hatto is responsible for the only published study dedicated to *Joloy Khan*, an analysis of a short passage.⁴³²

The epic belongs to the cycle of *Manas* in the sense that the main character, Joloy, is the chief (heathen, Kalmak) antagonist of (Muslim, Nogoy) Manas in such mainstream epics as *MK*. Also, *Joloy Khan* contains brief jibing mentions of other heroes of the cycle. Manas is the subject of one of these jibes, but he plays no part in the plot of *Joloy Khan*. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine what role the supreme hero of the cycle could play in this strange, sometimes sentimental tale in which Joloy is not a despised heathen, but a Muslim whose enemies are Kalmak heroes! The inversion is only partial, however, for in *Joloy Khan* the main character retains his famous gluttony and habit of walking, felt to be so perverse among those born equestrians the Kirghiz. In *Joloy Khan*, the hero’s bare mainstream epithet “gone on foot” is unfolded into some hilarious vignettes of his inability to stay on top of his horse. Rounding out his Rabelaisian résumé, Joloy is lazy,

⁴³⁰ Radloff, *Obraztsy*, pp. 369-525; on dating see Hatto, *MWR*, p. 602. There is a French translation from Radloff’s German: Corsi & Karro 1999, pp. 103-206.

⁴³¹ Hatto 1980c, p. 302.

⁴³² Hatto 1976.

vain, cowardly, drunken, short-tempered and cruel to his family, niggardly to his retainers, slow-witted, and possessed of a sexual presence proportional to his girth. One of his epithets is *sorgok tūgan* 'glutton-born (of the race of gluttons)', parodying Manas's *kabilan tūgan* 'tiger-born'.

The sprawling plot of *Joloy Khan* breaks down into two halves, the first concerning Joloy and the second his son Bolot.

(Joloy)

1. (1-680) Nogoy, Joloy's father, loses all his herds in a raid. After much resistance, Joloy agrees to go out and bring them back. He kills one of the three khans who are responsible, Ak Khan, and takes his wife, Ak-kaniš. He then kills the other two khans and brings home the horses and Ak-kaniš.

2. (681-933) Joloy's *tulpar* (magic steed) Ač-budan exhorts him in a human voice to go take the khan Aŋgičal's beautiful daughter Saykal. Joloy accomplishes this with the help of a clever stratagem worked by Ač-budan.

3. (934-2102) Joloy's younger sister Kardıgač falls in love with the Kalmak prince Karača, and together they hatch a plot to kill Joloy and take over his realm. Joloy ignores warnings about the plot by both Ač-budan and Saykal. It falls to Saykal to outsmart Kardıgač at the moment she is serving poisoned *arak* to Joloy. After battling the massed Kalmak armies, Joloy takes a nap, and Saykal is abducted by Koŋur-bay and brought to his lord, the Kalmak Urum Khan. Through a ruse, Saykal manages to leave Urum Khan before he marries her, and she escapes homeward. Saykal wakes Joloy, and together they sack Karača's realm and capture Karača and Kardıgač. Joloy spares their lives, and they go on living as in-laws.

4. (2103-2463) Taunted by Saykal, Joloy goes out to defeat Urum Khan and take his daughter Kızıl-kıs. An old crone working for Urum Khan manages to get Joloy drunk and imprisons him in a dark pit, but Kızıl-kıs, who was the bait in the operation, falls in love with Joloy in his stupor. Urum Khan orders Joloy released so that he can marry Kızıl-kıs, but he continues to lie inert in the pit.

(Bolot)

5. (2464-3554) With Joloy gone, Karača invades his realm, captures Saykal and Ak-kaniš, and makes them herd his sheep. Saykal (who believes Joloy dead) gives birth to Joloy's son, Bolot, and the two women nurture him. Saykal sends Bolot away with Ak-kaniš to keep him safe from Karača. After a long journey they arrive in the land of Köčpös-bay, whose senior wife (Baybičä) adopts Bolot in a ritual re-birth. The time appointed to return to Saykal comes when Bolot turns 13, and Bolot and Ak-kaniš leave secretly. Devastated, Köčpös-bay vows never to sleep nor lie down until the two come back.

6. (3555-3916) Bolot and Ak-kaniš return home to Saykal and Joloy's loyal retainer Čečen. Bolot and Čečen conquer Karača; Saykal kills Karača and Kardıgač, burns their corpses, and scatters their ashes. Bolot rules in his father's realm.

7. (3917-4264) Bolot and Čečen go with an army to free Joloy from Urum Khan. On the advice of the old crone, Joloy is freed and sent off in their direction; Joloy attacks Bolot and Čečen, and only with difficulty do they convince him of their identities. The three conquer and sack Urum Khan, and Joloy takes Kızıl-kıs and returns home to Saykal and Ak-kaniš.

8. (4265-5322) Learning that Köčpös-bay and Baybičä are pining for him, Bolot returns to their land. A supernatural slave-girl, the beautiful Karačač, says now that

she has arranged Bolot's return, she can leave Köčpös-bay's service. Bolot chases after her, but Karačač warns that an army of infidels is coming to attack. Bolot holds them off while Karačač flies in hawk form to fetch Köčpös-bay's nine sons to help fight. They arrive just as Bolot is on the point of death. After he dies, Baybičä revives him with milk from her breast. After a bride is sought unsuccessfully for Bolot, Karačač builds a cart, and Köčpös-bay, Baybičä, and Bolot ride home to Joloy, Saykal, Ak-kaniš, and Čečen. They live contentedly, and Köčpös-bay rules the land.

It is clear that *Joloy Khan* has a minimal family-cycle structure. Joloy's son Bolot is born during his absence (presumed death), and the story of Bolot's maturation from insatiable newborn, to avenger and liberator of his father, to defender of his foster-father, takes up over half of the poem's length. The echoes with the Manas–Semetey–Seytek line are unmistakable. Both Semetey and Bolot are raised as only sons by mothers exiled and enslaved after the reduction of the (dead or missing) father's realm by outsiders. The line is preserved by the hero's loyal wife (Kanikey in *Manas*; Saykal in *Joloy Khan*) working against a perfidious blood relative (Manas's father Jakıp in *Manas*; Joloy's sister Kardıgač in *Joloy Khan*), in a struggle that climaxes in the wife's avenging murder of the traitor. The cyclic structure combines aspects of from-birth narration (Bolot) with the other well-known style of epic narration beginning *in medias res* (Joloy, whom we first meet just after his father's horses have been stolen).

The episodes of the Joloy half of the epic are notably loose, resembling the serio-comic. If a hero is a character who is an agent in a heroic plot as we have defined it, then Joloy is an anti-hero. Events that would become grounds for narrative contracts in a heroic context are treated carelessly by Joloy. He has to be begged and cowed into

righting the wrong of the stolen horses in the beginning. His horse Ač-budan is the leader, and Joloy the follower, in his adventure to win the famous beauty Saykal—a situation that is usual in Mongol and some other Turkic epic traditions,⁴³³ but not in Kirghiz. Even his sister's treachery, when fully exposed to Joloy, does not rouse him to judgment. His final campaign to Urum Khan, brought on by his own vanity and Saykal's peevishness, ends in disaster for himself, his family, and his realm. In the Bolot half of the epic, a more discernible plot arc is present. What raises Bolot's adventures of revenge and restitution above the level of folktale to that of epic is the grandiose nature of the messes that Joloy's entropic career has left for Bolot to clean up.

There is nothing indifferent about the narrative style of *Joloy Khan*. The boring repetitiveness into which the bard was reported to have sunk later on in the session⁴³⁴ is absent. Rather, the bard's masterly sureness with the strange subject is apparent, and is sometimes set at an exquisitely high pitch that veers in and out of the maudlin. The erotic imagery is more mature, both emotionally and poetically, than in the Older Period epics. A bard who depicts the rape of a virgin by means of the flights of geese and swans startled up by her cries⁴³⁵ has had some practice with the theme.

Joloy Khan is an early example of what results when a Kirghiz epic bard is unleashed together with his prerogative of copiousness. The poem has a compilative nature that is rich in references to the older tradition. The forging of a sword, the beauty and charms of a girl, the appearance of an army's banners, the last testament of a dying hero, and other elements of narration are accomplished in much the same words in *Joloy Khan* as in various Older Period *Manas*-texts. The name of Joloy's younger sister,

⁴³³ Heissig 1988; Berkov 1961; *Baškirkii narodnyi epos*, p. 45; Lipets 1984, p. 139.

⁴³⁴ See pp. 32f., above.

⁴³⁵ II. 915-922.

Kardıgač, matches that of Manas's younger sister.⁴³⁶ The similarities between the generational-cyclic structures of *Manas* and *Joloy Khan* have already been noted. Digressions in the plot include a meeting in (2) between Ač-budan and his dam in which she genealogizes some famous Nogoy steeds,⁴³⁷ and the supernatural slave-girl's autobiography in (8) with its cyclically allusive, jibing catalog of heroes and heroines.⁴³⁸ The copious traditional references in the narration tend toward irreverence. To give but one example, in *MKNB* Nazar had described a hero whipping his horse to speed in the following manner:

Jaš-aydar brought down his lash hard on Maniker's flanks that none had ever toughened with the lash before. The flesh, tender as a colt's, fell apart, and he straightened his back so like a greyhound's: his flesh, tender as a sheep's, fell away, and he straightened his back so like a hare's. He opened his mouth gaping wide, and blood-flecked foam bespattered Jaš-aydar's skirts.⁴³⁹

In *Joloy Khan*, it is the horse who begs for the lash in a human voice: "Then Ač-budan spoke: '[...] Go on, bring your lash down on these flanks that none has ever beaten with a lash before! Let my flesh, tender as a sheep's, be split: let my legs, delicate as a hare's, be skinned! Let me open my mouth gaping wide! Let me spew my white foam!'"⁴⁴⁰ Such advice from horse to rider is a typical feature of Mongolian epics.⁴⁴¹ *Joloy Khan* also coheres with Mongolian examples and differs from Older Period epics in its lack of realistic itineraries. Very few place names are mentioned, and those appearing with regularity, such as the mountain-spur Kök-beläs, have not been identified.

⁴³⁶ I,3) 365.

⁴³⁷ II. 749-815.

⁴³⁸ II. 4712-4912; cf. Hatto 1976.

⁴³⁹ *KO* 842-850.

⁴⁴⁰ II. 203, 209-214.

⁴⁴¹ Heissig 1988, vol. 1, p. 323; cf. Hatto 1993, p. 271.

Of relatively minor importance in the copious, parodying narration are the heroic exchanges that in the Older Period often formed the situations for high scenes and epic moments. There are few boasts, threats, blessings, curses, or dream-interpretations. When characters open their mouths to speak, they rather more frequently and eloquently show that they know how to plead, rebuke, dissemble, castigate, jibe, and haggle. One character around whom authentically "heroic" speech seems to gravitate is the loyal retainer Čečen. As he and Saykal prepare to face the overwhelming forces of the Kalmaks alone, in (5), Čečen exhorts Saykal with words that recall famous expressions of the heroic ethos in different traditions worldwide:⁴⁴²

Joloy töröm jok boldu,
ölö-tuɣan bistin jan,
öksöbösin sistin jan,
ketä-tuɣan bistin jan,
kejäbäsin sistin jan,
önörümdü körüp tur!⁴⁴³

'My lord Joloy is gone, and our souls are dying—do not let your soul complain! Our souls are departing—do not let your soul worry!⁴⁴⁴ See my prowess!⁴⁴⁵

Bolot's investiture of Čečen as his companion and regent⁴⁴⁶ also has dignity, but in neither case could we speak of a high scene or epic moment of the sort that "exposes the narrative's central concerns with stark directness."

⁴⁴² Cf. the Anglo-Saxon *Battle of Maldon*: "The mind must be the harder, the heart the keener, the spirit the greater, as our strength grows less"—widely quoted, as in Gordon, *Introduction*, p. xxxi; on "pithy formulations of the heroic ethos" in Kirghiz, see Hatto 1980c, p. 308.

⁴⁴³ II. 2601-2606.

⁴⁴⁴ *kejäbäsin* 'do not let [your soul] worry', cf. Radloff: "Möge ächzen eure Seele!" (Radloff, *Proben*, vol. 5, p. 449, l. 2605); *kejä-* not in Iudakhin, *Slovar'*, nor Radloff, *Opyt*; cf. Kazakh *keže-* (dial.) 'offend verbally, speak maliciously; sadden (with words); provoke, chaff' (*Tüsindirme sözdik*, vol. 4, p. 546; Kazakh (*Qazaq*)–*English dictionary*); Altay *kiče-* 'priležat', *zabotit'sia*, *peščis'*, *nastaivat'* (Mong. *kečiyeku*, *starat'sia*)' Budagov, *Slovar'*, vol. 2, p. 174.

⁴⁴⁵ Radloff's *körüp tür* is emended to *körüp tur* 'see!'.

To summarize the characteristics of *Joloy Khan*: this is a long epic that displays minimal contract structure based on the son's prerogatives to put right what has gone wrong with and through his father. There is thus a bare cyclical structure in the mode of a generational progression (with both *in medias res* and from-birth starting points). Epic moments are absent, and the high scenes tend toward the pathetic. There is an abundant stock of verbal material in common with the *Manas*-epics, and a notable atmosphere of parody. This epic is clearly a compilative *tour de force*. Yet *Joloy Khan* is not merely an additive, quantitative plateau, and not merely a “mock” version of something else. It is a qualitatively different creation actuated by a principle of compilative or copious composition-in-performance—a non-heroic poem arising on the edges of the heroic cosmos where long, even multi-day epic performances had their aficionados. A poet with special gifts composed *Joloy Khan*, gifts which he shared in varying degrees with bards later (and, presumably, earlier) in the tradition.

After Radloff left Kirghiz territory in 1869, systematic and intensive study of Kirghiz epic poetry ceased until the 1920s, the start of the Later Period. For the remainder of the Twilight Age, textualization of and reporting on the epic tradition was the work of a fitful, serendipitous combination of hands, with Kirghiz literati making their first contributions. A manuscript of a Kirghiz epic poem in Arabic script, of unknown provenance and age, has reportedly been found within a group of archive documents from Pishpek uyezd from the 1880s and 1890s. These documents are said to relate to the economy and “national liberation movements” of the population of the mountainous regions of the uyezd. This brief poetic text (320 lines) deals with one of the

⁴⁴⁶ II. 3909-3912.

more romantic episodes in the epic repertoire, and one that was soon to become overwhelmingly popular: the liaison between Semetey and Ay-čürök.⁴⁴⁷ Little else is known about the manuscript, and its text has never been published. Efforts by the present writer to locate it in July 2001 were not successful. Another, much lengthier *Semetey* manuscript in Arabic character dated 1937, possibly constituting a copy of a Twilight Age text originating from Sagımbay or a bard who learned from him, such as Togolok Moldo, was found in Kočkor in 1975,⁴⁴⁸ but despite investigations it too remains at large.

A valuable but little-known source of information on the epic tradition in the Twilight Age is the product of one of the first Kirghiz intellectuals to aspire to Western scholarly practice in historiography. Belek Soltonoyev (1878-1938) wrote a long-unpublished historical work, "History of the Kirghiz," which contains an appendix on *Manas*.⁴⁴⁹ The work was prepared between 1895 and 1934, and although much of the *Manas*-section reads like an unedited draft, the author's original eye and conscientious efforts at dating his facts make the source intrinsically interesting. Dating the essay itself is a problem that requires particular judgment. For reasons having to do with the radical, eruptive cultural changes that occurred in the Later Period, it is important to ascertain whether this work, which was "collected starting in 1895 and written in 1934," could reflect any current thinking of Soviet intellectuals about Kirghiz epic. Analysis of the text strongly indicates that Soltonoyev, writing the piece in 1934, did so by compiling,

⁴⁴⁷ Aydarkulov 1989, pp. 35ff.

⁴⁴⁸ Aydarkulov 1989, pp. 37-40.

⁴⁴⁹ Soltonoyev, *Kırgız tarıkhı*, vol. 2, pp. 135-168. Collection of materials for the work as a whole began in 1895 and drafting was carried out in 1934 (vol. 2, p. 223). Soltonoyev, of the Ayuke Sarıbagış, was executed in the Purges and posthumously rehabilitated in 1955. His book, alternatively titled *Kızıl kırgız tarıkhı*, lay unpublished until 1993. For a brief biography, see Urstanbekov & Čoroyev 1990, p.161. Awareness of Soltonoyev's work in *Manas*-scholarship circles, if there is any, has apparently not reached into print. Jacquesson (1998) makes good use of this source in her examination of Kirghiz literary history.

without significant alterations, basic material that he had gathered and drafted much earlier. Virtually the latest date in the text is 1924-25,⁴⁵⁰ when he conducted an interview about *Manas* with informants. Other relatively late dates include the 1916 rebellion and a 1920 oral history interview. The last in the list of epic performances Soltonoyev witnessed was in the year 1908. It is highly significant for the chronological control of this piece of writing that the bard whom Soltonoyev heard perform in 1908 was none other than Sagımbay Orozbek uulu. Soltonoyev was a colleague of Kayum Miftakov,⁴⁵¹ the initiator of the epochal Sagımbay sessions that took place starting in 1922, yet Soltonoyev betrays no knowledge of this work. Upon the basis of these facts and omissions, and others scattered throughout,⁴⁵² it is reasonable to characterize this text as a collection of notes and drafts dating mostly from the pre-revolutionary era (before 1917) and not substantially altered or supplemented after 1925. Thus the work is a description of the Kirghiz epic tradition created by an educated Kirghiz during the Twilight Age, and merits quotation at length:

The most melodious, surpassingly interesting, and famous songs of the Kirghiz which have never been forgotten since olden times are: (1) *Manas*, (2) *Košoy*, (3) *Kökötöy's Memorial Feast*, and (4) *Er Töštük*. According to the old men, *Manas* was not written down on paper but was sung orally. The singers who sing it have said, "I saw *Manas* in a dream, and sang because he demanded that I sing." [...]

Those I have seen among the singers who sing *Manas*: In 1888, in the encampment of Ormon's son's clan, a man named *Alaš* of the *Saruu*⁴⁵³

⁴⁵⁰ Later than this, fleeting mention is made, at the end of a section, of attempts to decipher the inscription on "*Manas's tomb*" in 1928 and 1935 (Soltonoyev, *Kırgız tarıkhı*, vol. 2, p. 152).

⁴⁵¹ MS KF (280)80: the two worked together ca. 1928 in the Scientific Center of the Kirghiz Education Commissariat.

⁴⁵² It is particularly telling that the bard Sayakbay Karalayev (1894-1971), who was already famous and living in Frunze by 1930 (*Manas entsiklopediya*, vol. 2, p. 185), is mentioned by Soltonoyev only in passing at the end (Soltonoyev, *Kırgız tarıkhı*, vol. 2, p. 168), as if on hearsay information obtained before the bard attained his stature.

⁴⁵³ Tribe.

Kirghiz. In 1889, at the head of the stream named Toru Aygır, which flows into Issyk Kul, Kištoobay Meder uulu from the Čoňčarik clan of the Sayak Kirghiz. In the winter of 1890, at the place called Balıktı, Sagınbay Orozbak uulu. In May 1896, at an assembly held in Pishpek, Naymanbay Balık uulu; and in July of that year, when all the Karakol, Pishpek, and Narın⁴⁵⁴ Kirghiz gathered at Kötıaldı, I heard the famous Tımbek from the Tınımseııt clan of the Bugu Kirghiz sing for five or six days. In the spring of 1898, at Alaguš Mirzaalı uulu's house at Čoň Kemin, I heard Dıykanbay of the Aldayar clan of the Bugu sing (he sang Manas for two or three days, and recited Semetey for longer). In late winter of 1901, at the mouth of Kalmak-ašuu at Issyk Kul, I heard Akılbek of the Bugu Kirghiz sing at the house of Bayımbet Boronbay uulu. In the spring of 1908, at Kočkor, I heard Sagınbay Orozbak uulu sing twice. Sagınbay's elder brother Alıšer is apparently a Manas-bard, but I have not heard his.

If you ask singers who sing Manas how many days it takes to sing the whole Manas (I myself asked), they answered that it could take at the very least two to three months to sing to the end. Perhaps even longer. Many times I have heard shepherds and old people (sitting around the fire after eating supper on winter days, gathering the old men and women, married women, maidens, and brides, in order to defend the flocks from thieves and wolves, and for entertainment) reciting Manas, Kökötöy, Košoy, and Töštük as they sit and warm up by the embers. Several times I have seen horse-herds pitching their temporary shelters in the snow and ice on the mountain crests and then dividing into two groups and fighting, with one playing Manas, one Almambet, a few the Forty Companions, and the rest Koňurbay, Joloy, and the teeming Kıtay.

Many times I have heard when two or three old men sat on a hill or with the flocks and talked about Manas without singing it.⁴⁵⁵

Soltonoyev also gives brief biographies of some bards, particularly Tımbek:

Tımbek is from the Tınımseııt clan within the Bugu, and is considered among the top rank of Northern Kirghiz *manasči* and *semeteyči*⁴⁵⁶ [that lived] after Arstanbek.⁴⁵⁷ It is not clear to me when he was born and when he died. But in July 1896, when all the Kirghiz under Karakol, Pishpek,

⁴⁵⁴ Uyezds.

⁴⁵⁵ Soltonoyev, *Kırız tarıkhı*, vol. 2, pp. 135f.

⁴⁵⁶ *manasči* 'Manas-bard'; *semeteyči* 'Semetey-bard'. As provisionally dated to no later than the early 1920s, Soltonoyev's text is among the earliest known instances of these terms, if not the earliest.

⁴⁵⁷ Arstanbek Buylaš uulu, a famous Bugu *akın*, is said by Soltonoyev to have had Kökötöy's Memorial Feast in his vast repertoire, but he is not generally remembered as an epic bard, and his mention here appears to be as a chronological datum rather than as a watershed performer in the epic tradition. Soltonoyev gives his dates as 1840-1882; Kebekova 1994 (p. 3) gives 1824-1878.

Narın, and Tokmak had a 15-day assembly at Kötimaldı, I heard Tınıbek recite "Manas" and "Semetey" for about three days. He sang "Manas" and "Semetey" for three days, and when the people asked him to go on to the end, he said it might take two months. I listened to Akılbek and Sagımbay reciting "Manas" several times, but as far as I know, Tınıbek surely sang the pure, genuine "Manas."⁴⁵⁸ The people as well had the same opinion. Nor did any *manasçı* have a voice as deep and melodious as Tınıbek's. At that time he was approximately 45-48 years old [...] It seems that he himself was a *biy*. He sat in the assembly. But the *manaps* and *volost* elders, in order to get him to recite "Manas" and "Semetey," made a request of the [Russian] head of the *uyezd*, and he was not sent to the assembly but made to recite. The people, instead of attending much to the assembly, were with him day and night. I saw how, when he sang from sunset to dawn, 200-300 people sat watching inside and outside encircling the yurt, not sleeping and not making a sound. At that time I heard Sagımbay recite several times. Their contents were both the same. But in later times Sagımbay was sometimes exaggerated.⁴⁵⁹

It is important to understand what Kirghiz audiences thought about oral epic performances. We know that they listened enthusiastically, cheering or even sitting open-mouthed in silence, but we have only a general idea of the kinds of narrative characteristics that they admired. Radloff had said that Manas's invocation of the Forty

⁴⁵⁸ Incidentally, the original sentence, *menin bilüümçö "Manastın" uuzday ınak tunugun Tınıbek aytsa kerek ele* is cited by K.K. Iudakhin, *Slovar'*, as a usage example s.v. *uuz* 'colostrum'. Soltonoyev wrote Kirghiz in a robust, supple pre-Soviet style whose usages could not have failed to attract the attention of the lexicographer Iudakhin.

⁴⁵⁹ Soltonoyev, *Kırğız tarıkhı*, vol. 2, pp. 163f. The last two sentences may have different interpretations: *Baarının mazmunu bir ele* may mean that both Sagımbay's and Tınıbek's versions had the same content, or that the contents of Sagımbay's version were monotonous. *Birok soñku zamanda Sagımbaydın apırtkan jerleri bolgon* may mean that Sagımbay's reputation tended to become inflated (over Tınıbek's), or that Sagımbay later exaggerated in places in his narrations. Without clarification from the text, it is necessary to rely on the rhetorical context of this and other passages for a resolution. The reading that puts Sagımbay in his place with respect to Soltonoyev's favorite master, Tınıbek, is preferable. Thus there is the strong hint that Soltonoyev added at least this detail to his text after his colleague Miftakov had discovered Sagımbay and launched the large-scale *Manas*-sessions for which that bard is famous. (Note that in the passage above, Soltonoyev first used the spelling *Sagımbay*, and later *Sagımbay*—a possible sign that the two parts were written at different times; interestingly, the latter spelling conforms to Miftakov's preferred spelling with *m*.) One senses a reluctance on the part of Soltonoyev to praise Sagımbay's talents over-much, and even a tinge of one-upmanship, with the lower-ranking native Kirghiz connoisseur Soltonoyev gently chiding the come-lately Bashkir methodologist Miftakov for naiveté in dealing with Sagımbay.

Companions was a *pièce de résistance* in the performances of the bards he heard. But how were performances rated overall? An interesting narrative by an eyewitness to a Twilight Age epic reciting-contest provides a good idea. The event was attended by Balbay, the elder brother of the still living bard Jusup Mamay (b. 1918), of China. In the aftermath of Russia's bloody suppression of the 1916 Turkistan Rebellion, great numbers of Kirghiz of Semirech'e oblast fled up into the mountains and across to China. Sagımbay Orozbak uulu was one of these refugees. In January 1917, when Balbay was 24 years old and a budding oral and literate epic poet, he heard Sagımbay compete with the Chinese Kirghiz bard Jüsübakun (ca. 1870-ca.1920). The contest was organized and judged by a number of eminent local and refugee Kirghiz, an Uyghur official of the Russian consulate at Üč-turfan, and others, and was held at Kara-çiy:

The officials designated the parts of the epic to be recited. To begin, they told Sagımbay, "Recite how Manas called the Seven Khans and went on the (great) campaign." Sagımbay recited from late afternoon until dawn the next morning, and concluded the long January night with "the vanguard was at the crest of Tabılǵı, the rear of the army was in the valley of Burana." Then that same day, starting in late afternoon, they told Jüsübakun to recite from the place Sagımbay had left off. Jüsübakun recited until the sun rose and stopped at the place where Almambet and Sırgak meet Karagul. The next day they let them rest for a day, then they had Jüsübakun recite the part that Sagımbay had recited. Jüsübakun directed the army and just barely got to Kanıkey's plaint. Then they had Sagımbay recite the part that Jüsübakun had recited. Sagımbay led [the army] into the city of Beijin [...]⁴⁶⁰

The people who had listened to the epics and the judges generally elected by the people said that Sagımbay had recited the Seven Khans fully and well, and that Jüsübakun had recited the Great Campaign well. Then Sagalı [one of the refugee judges] said thus: "One of the epic bards

⁴⁶⁰ These events appear to be ordered as follows in traditional outline:

1. Kanıkey's plaint
2. Burana
3. Almambet and Sırgak meet Karagul
4. Beijin

is a Sarıbağış,⁴⁶¹ one is a Čerik, and I am a Kıdık,⁴⁶² and if I say so, the evaluations you have just given are correct. But Sagımbay changed the place where the seven khans were summoned, from Talas to the Ala-too, and he had them round Issyk Kul and come to Talas via Almaty. It seems that Sagımbay himself and his crowd had drunk a bit of kumiss and eaten a bit of fatted foal and made the rounds a bit during the day, and so he just barely brought the army to Burana. He did get them into Beijin on the campaign, thank you.

"Jüsübakun recited the route to Beijin well. There are people who have heard the name Beijin, but no one in this group has ever seen it. And Jüsübakun laid it on when he recited. He was stopped before the seven khans had made it completely out of their encampment. He got to the point where Almambet and Sırgak meet Karagul, when Manas hasn't caught up to the campaign. In my opinion, Jüsübakun is the winner." Everyone went with Sagalı's opinion.⁴⁶³

This detailed account of the comparative merits of two *Manas*-bards gives a good picture of the common wisdom among the Kirghiz concerning good epic narration. No mention whatsoever is made of plot structure. Sagalı's assessment, which was approved by all, was that the bard who provided the more fulsome narration was better; he made less progress in the narration because he had more to add at each turn. Less watchful persons may have been fooled by Sagımbay's apparent slow progress in only getting to Burana by morning, but Sagalı insinuates that it was because Sagımbay was tipsy and sent the campaign on an improbable, looping itinerary. It is also interesting that the people gave their approval to the description of an itinerary that none of them had actually taken themselves, the road to Beijin narrated by Jüsübakun. Epic narration was a way for people to enjoy a world outside their own. It is poignant that this Kirghiz person expressing curiosity about the real "Beijin" was a refugee to China from Russian Turkistan.

⁴⁶¹ Sagımbay; he was actually a Sayak, but spent many years under Sarıbağış patronage.

⁴⁶² A Bugu clan.

⁴⁶³ Mamay 1994, pp. 9ff.

Despite the continued vitality of the *Manas*-epics such as we see in the account above, there is clear evidence that a preference for *Semetey* began to manifest itself during the Twilight Age. One has only to review what is known of the repertoires and performances of Twilight Age bards to see that this is the case. (Soltonoyev's notes seem to suggest that *Manas* was flourishing, though one is not completely assured that by *Manas* he meant "and not *Semetey*.") Hatto has convincingly referred the origin of *Semetey* (more precisely, its attraction into the *Manas*-cycle) to the historic identification of the hard-pressed Kirghiz tribes with the theme of imminent catastrophe, symbolized by the endangerment of Manas's hereditary line.⁴⁶⁴ The time when this took place was possibly no earlier than two or three generations before 1862. By the turn of the twentieth century, *Semetey* was striking other chords in society. V.M. Žirmunskii characterized the situation in this manner: "The monumental, archaic heroics of *Manas* and the grandiose, superhuman scales of the events described in the distant, legendary past were brought down [in *Semetey*] to more human dimensions, closer to real life and to representations of modern times."⁴⁶⁵ It cannot be denied that in *Semetey* the scale of the epic was pared down, but a concern with "modern times" is open to interpretation. It is telling that the expanded Russian presence in Kirghiz life did not lead to more mention of things Russian in the epics. This is in fact natural. The political-existential underpinnings of the epic tradition experienced significant erosion in the latter half of the nineteenth century. At the same time, submission to Russia had been changed from a pressing subject of concern [cf. I,3)] and even intertribal conflict into a fact of life. The episode best loved by the late pre-revolutionary Kirghiz was *Semetey*'s wooing of Ay-čürök, with its romance and

⁴⁶⁴ Hatto 1973/74.

⁴⁶⁵ Žirmunskii 1961, p. 168.

luxury.⁴⁶⁶ The increasing gravitational field of *Semetey* also had the effect of attracting beloved Manas-episodes into its structure as flashbacks, while Manas slipped into archaism. Two episodes thus incorporated into later bards' *Semetey*-performances were *The Memorial Feast for Kökötöy Khan* and *Köz-kaman*.⁴⁶⁷

The *Semetey* of Maldıbay Borzu uulu

The *Semetey* of Maldıbay Borzu uulu (*SMB*) is an unpublished manuscript in Kirghiz dated ca. 1899 and comprising two separate *Semetey*-poems. It has been the subject of only a few brief notices in publications beginning in the 1980s. This situation deserves to be corrected, because the text is an important monument of Kirghiz literature. *SMB* is one of the oldest examples, if not the oldest, of the concerns of native Kirghiz literati for their oral epic tradition. There are Kirghiz literary works in the nineteenth century that predate it—and at this early stage, literature always meant poetry—but such manuscripts are in genres other than epic, such as *kazals*. With *SMB*, we have before us for the first time the handiwork of some combination, albeit still undetermined, of Kirghiz oral bards and Kirghiz mullas producing an epic text for Kirghiz (at any rate, Turki-speaking) consumption. The contents of *SMB* are given a full synopsis and substantial analytical treatment in this essay for the first time (see Appendix 2 and the notes there).

We speak of the creators of the manuscript in the plural because examination of the work indicates that the stated author, Maldıbay Borzu uulu, could not have been the

⁴⁶⁶ Abdykarov, *Sud'ba*, p.18. On the transformations of the Ay-čürök wooing passage, see Reichl 1992, pp. 223-235.

⁴⁶⁷ See Mamırov 1963, pp. 20, 34f.; Sooronov 1981, pp. 105-110.

original author, and that in fact there were two of them. Two other circumstances are clear as well. First, Maldıbay must have copied the text instead of dictating it (as poems he had learned) to himself or to a mulla. Second, he was probably not an accomplished oral poet. These conclusions proceed from the fact that the two constituent poems [both entitled *Qissah-i Sımātāy bū turūr* in the original and here referred to as *SMB(1)* and *SMB(2)*] display clear differences in orthography, epithets, and other diction. Thus they originated from two different poets/bards. If Maldıbay had been a literate oral epic bard (i.e., an oral epic bard who also could read and write) and was compiling written sources, he would have manifested a firmer hand in leveling the differences in these texts to his own usage. The faithful copying of textual differences is a distinctly literate skill, one that identifies Maldıbay as a connoisseur-compiler rather than a practitioner. The similarity of handwriting in *SMB(1)* and *SMB(2)* confirms that Maldıbay worked alone to create his little codex.

Thus almost imperceptibly we have crept out onto a startlingly new and slender limb of interpretation. With all previous texts that we have examined, despite the almost universally lamentable lack of information about recording circumstances and bards' identities, it was possible to take as a given that the poems came down through a finite and fairly small number of transmission stages, let us say, at the greatest probable degree of removal: from the bard's lips, to a field record, to a fair copy, to perhaps another copy, to an edited and collated copy, to a printer's galley, to a corrected page proof, to a published edition, to a re-edition. With *SMB*, however, we have no way of knowing how many copies the texts went through on their way to Maldıbay's hands. For this reason and in view of the facts deduced above, we speak of the *Semetey* of Maldıbay Borzu uulu as a

work of literature.⁴⁶⁸ This is not to say that it does not embody oral poetry. It probably has a better claim to the label "oral" than the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, *Beowulf*, or the *Nibelungenlied*, and in some ways it appears more "oral" than parts of the genuinely dictated epics of the twentieth-century bards Sagımbay and Sayakbay. It would also be a mistake to assume that, because the texts could be quite old, they probably are quite old. Indeed, the plot structures of the two poems justify separating them from the Older Period and grouping them in the Twilight Age.

The longer poem in the work, *SMB*(2), concerns a prevailingly popular episode of the Twilight Age and after, Semetey's journey to Ay-čürök. It affords a good notion, despite truncations at the beginning and end, of how the formal distance between the telegraphic treatment in I,7) and the later, even fuller versions was actually bridged in a moment in time when the story was still conceived of as an exuberant extension of the heroic cosmos. *SMB* begins with a telling of the early Semetey story, *SMB*(1), which conjures up an even more distinct impression of the still-remembered heroic cosmos. Because of the general unavailability of the original source, numeric text citations in the

⁴⁶⁸ On nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Kirghiz literature, see Aitmambetov 1967; Iunusaliev 1970; Hu & Imart 1989, pp. 38-42, 70-78; Moldo Kılıč 1991; Mollo Niyaz 1993; Jacquesson 1998; *Kirgiz poeziyasının antologiyası*, vol. 1. Our Kirghiz colleagues have been hard at work, since independence, demonstrating the vanity of the Soviet notion that the Kirghiz gained writing and literature on a significant scale only after the October Revolution. We will be in their debt when they are able to turn to the task of making readily accessible the details and dates of the manuscript records of such important poets as Moldo Kılıč Šamırkan uulu (1867?-1917), Moldo Niyaz Ernazar uulu (1820?-1896), Nurmoldo Narkul uulu (1838-1920), and Togolok Moldo (1860-1942). It would then be possible, as well as highly desirable, to give monographic treatment to Kirghiz literary history and to the relationships between the written and oral formats (cf. Finnegan 1992a; Finnegan 1992b; Béller-Hann 2000) of Kirghiz poetry, with attention to the tendency toward written transmission of the works of nineteenth-century oral *akıns* such as Kalıgul Bay uulu (1785-1855; cf. Musayev & Akmatalliev 2000, p. 41, n. 1). The approximate date of *SMB*, 1899, would seem to place it among the oldest surviving manuscripts of a modern Kirghiz literary tradition that had been developing, albeit not strongly, for half a century or so.

following discussion refer to line numbers in the synopses of *SMB*(1) and *SMB*(2) found in Appendix 2.

The plot of *SMB*(1) corresponds to the last forty percent of I,6), Semetey's revenge on Abuke, Köböš, and Jakıp and recovery of his patrimony.⁴⁶⁹ By the ingenious use of flashbacks and other embedded details, the poem manages to impart the substance of the foregoing action quite satisfactorily, and usually in a manner more circumstantial than in I,6). "Kanikey's Tale" is the name that has attached in modern times to Kanikey's large-scale recapitulation of the Manas story for Semetey. The premise is that he must understand his origins and destiny before he sets out to reclaim his patrimony.⁴⁷⁰ The subsuming of *Manas*-material into the storyline of *Semetey* by means of flashbacks was one of the main structural transformations that occurred in the Twilight Age, and it is chiefly on the evidence of *SMB*(1) that this is confirmed. Later we will see how the transformation is reflected in Later Period epics.

One could say that I,6) and *SMB*(1) are largely similar in their action—that their main difference is that they are totally unlike. How else to characterize the structural differences in *SMB*(1), which follows I,6) remarkably closely throughout except for the fact that (a) Kanikey condones and blesses Semetey's mission, and (b) Manas's *arbak* settle resoundingly upon Semetey after he performs a ritual at Manas's tomb? *SMB*(1) is thus an excellent example of how in the Twilight Age, everything and nothing was the same as it had once been. What stayed the same was immanent art; what changed was ethos.

⁴⁶⁹ From approximately line I,6) 666 to 1078.

⁴⁷⁰ *SMB*(1) 9-16; 35f.

It will be apparent from examination of the synopsis that the plot of *SMB*(1) represents the plot that the unhappy Semetey might have dreamt of in the Older Period to replace I,6). He has no troubles with his mother and gets more direct aid from Bakay, with the prospective bonus that he is to be spared the miseries of I,7) by the happy descent of Manas's *arbak*.

It seems that all is well... but let us look under some of the polished places and see what emerges. Kanikey blesses Semetey upon his departure for Keŋ-kol, Manas's old headquarters in the Talas basin. Accordingly, she also describes Manas's eight heirlooms in detail and tells him to take them back.⁴⁷¹ The essence of the Bakay episode in I,6) was that Kanikey was forced to set Semetey on his way while she would not or could not help him directly. Something of the old state of affairs has been carried forward, for Kanikey enjoins Semetey, "You shall find Bakay, you shall give him my greeting!"⁴⁷² Her blessing should obviate the need for Bakay's support, but this colorful figure was not so easy to jettison from the tradition.

Logically, we find no embroidered ladies' neck-purse in *SMB*(1), because the motivation for going to Bakay is blinded. However, the poet may have worked under unconscious pressure from the earlier, remembered state of affairs, because in *SMB*(1), Kanikey's final words to Semetey concern courtship. Since he will not be returning (so she believes), he and the Nogoy *jigits*⁴⁷³ should choose brides from among the lovely daughters of Sayın Khan who strew their hair-baubles.⁴⁷⁴ The injunction is never followed up, and nothing more is said of these enticing girls.

⁴⁷¹ *SMB*(1) 58f.

⁴⁷² *SMB*(1) 29f.; MS p. 8, ll. 15f. *Khan Bakaydı tapkaysıj/ menden salam aytkaysıj*. The future-optative suffix *-kay* is rare in Kirghiz and may be a trace of literary Turki (Chaghatay) diction.

⁴⁷³ The ones Semetey will find in Talas, we are to understand; none accompany him.

⁴⁷⁴ *SMB*(1) 56f.; MS p. 18, ll.21ff.

With Kanikey denied her clairvoyance and manipulations and essentially reduced to the condition of an ordinary mother watching her son leave home (she weeps, another innovation), it falls to Čıyçır, Manas's mother as she is named in this text, to say something interesting: as the curtain falls on scene 1, she says to Kanikey, "Though Semetey is a hero, he leaves unready and will be back soon."⁴⁷⁵

The meeting with Bakay on the Keñ-kol⁴⁷⁶ and the run-in with Jakıp, Abuke and Köböš come to pass as one would expect of the new, happy Semetey. He vows to Bakay that he will recover the heirlooms, and receives his father's *arbak* after reciting the entire Koran and praying at his tomb. Also at the tomb, Semetey inspects the drawings of Manas, his companions, and their exploits which Kanikey had drawn on the inside walls of the tomb and which she reviewed to him upon parting. The attempted poisoning scene is engagingly recounted. Once Abuke and Köböš are drunk (Bakay joins them for company), Semetey wrests the eight heirlooms from the twins' possession in a struggle. It is a very fine narrative touch in this version that Semetey can prove his identity to the twins, as it were, by recounting Manas's exploits in detail—as he has just learned them by seeing the pictures in the tomb.

Bakay, far from the silenced has-been he was at this point in I,6), utters a long and colorful description-praise of the *tulpar*-qualities of the heirloom steed Tay-buurul as Semetey leaves to return to Kanikey. He also urges Semetey to come back and make an end of the usurpers. It is Bakay's last scene in the poem. By this we can see that the Bakay-episode of the era of I,6) has truly been cobbled into the plot of *SMB*(1), for if Bakay lives at Talas in the same neighborhood as the usurpers, why would he not figure

⁴⁷⁵ *SMB*(1) 61f.; MS p. 20, ll. 15f. *er de bolso Semetey, / erte barıp bat keler.*

⁴⁷⁶ N.B.: Bakay now camps in the same gorge as Jakıp, since the motivation for localizing him at Üč-košoy as in I,6) has been blinded.

in the final revenge-taking when Semetey returns? When Kanikey and Čıyçır bid Semetey farewell for the second time, they tell him, "Keep well, find your realm, protect your people, *and treat Bakay, your father's better, like a father.*"⁴⁷⁷ But Bakay does not appear again.

Clearly it remained imperative that Kanikey not be duped by Semetey's return with the heirlooms. However, denied the topographical nuance by which she discovered the deception in I,6), the poet resorts to extreme measures. Semetey is in a hurry to return to Talas as soon as he arrives back to her. Why? Kanikey turns to Tay-buurul and asks him a direct question: "Did Semetey take back his father's possessions?" And the animal answers her directly in a human voice, "He took them by force."⁴⁷⁸ Talking horses in Kirghiz epic are exceedingly rare,⁴⁷⁹ and a more typical occasion for their speaking would be their master's death, to utter a lament. Tay-buurul was the horse of Manas that was fraught with the heavy fate of the *stirps* in I,7). For the poet to exploit this animal for a momentary device betrays a poetic milieu in which not only themes but also narrative structure were viewed in a new and looser way.

With the deception discovered before departure, how does Semetey manage to bring Kanikey and Manas's mother (now called Baktı-döölöt⁴⁸⁰) along with him on the second mission—for they will be needed in the final scene? The answer is that he does not bring them. Kanikey sulks for a year, but then the two women give Semetey another parting blessing and extinguish his fire before sending him on his way. Only when

⁴⁷⁷ SMB(1) 124f.; MS p. 43, ll. 39f.: *ataıdın durusku Bakaydı/ata kılıp algın dep (d.r.s.t.gh.ī. - durusku* 'on the right side (of), more correct (than)', not Iudakhin, *Slovar*', but regularly if atypically formed from the adjective *durus* plus the suffix which derives, e.g., *tömöŋkü* 'located below' from *tömön* 'down, below'.

⁴⁷⁸ SMB(1)115ff.

⁴⁷⁹ They have been discussed above as regards *MK* and *Joloy Khan*.

⁴⁸⁰ See n. 644 in Appendix 2, below.

Semetey is arrived on the Talas and surrounded by Abuke and Köböš's army do Kanikey and Baktı-döölöt "run in,"⁴⁸¹ as if teleported, and take up their positions for the final revenge. We have been discussing aspects of the disappearance of heroic structure, but it must be stressed at once that post-heroic or other than heroic structure is not being equated with bad structure. Instances of bad structure such as the example given here are to be referred to the immense technical difficulties inherent in a poet's attempt to unpack and repackage a plot as rigorously structured as a heroic epic will of its nature tend to be. *SMB*(1) was clearly one of the earliest attempts at repackaging, and the effort resulted in a bold new kind of epic narrative with some understandable rough spots.

The only contract that is fulfilled in the poem is Semetey's vow to drive out Abuke and Köböš and recover his patrimony. Copiousness and immanence are the characteristic features of the narrative. Bakay's description of Tay-buurul is one example. The Talas valley came in for affectionate lyrical portraits during the Twilight Age, and this text which originated from the Talas valley is among the forefront of this poetic trend.⁴⁸² Cyclic allusions abound. Kanikey's description of the drawings on the tomb walls elevate the cyclic allusion to a new level of structural significance in this poem, as was apparent when Semetey proves his identity to the usurpers by recounting the information he has absorbed in the tomb.

The catalog of heroes that Kanikey describes having drawn on the inner walls of Manas's tomb also constitutes the longest list of "forty" companions known in the tradition to date, though it is not an invocation. The list comes out very near 40,⁴⁸³ depending upon how some epithets and personalities are construed. This would be an

⁴⁸¹ *SMB*(1) 130.

⁴⁸² *SMB*(1) 30ff.

⁴⁸³ *SMB*(1) 40-47.

astonishing achievement for an oral bard, but of course in a written text with no certain antecedent in performance, it is more likely to be a compulsion of the author. This catalog is the lead segment in a string of three catalogs, the other two recounting the possessions Semetey must recover⁴⁸⁴ and the steeds pictured on the tomb walls.⁴⁸⁵ These three catalogs together run for almost six pages in the manuscript—approximately 300 lines, or more than ten percent of the poem. Compare, for instance, the narrative presence of the heirlooms in the Older Period, in I,6): Bakay points them out and names them for Semetey where they lie and hang around Abeke and Köböš's yurt—in a handful of lines.

In its treatment of geography, *SMB*(1) is in some ways not much distinguished from I,6) and I,7), which are also geographically indifferent. Within the compass of Talas, Keŋ-kol, and Čatkal, of Anjıyan, Kokon, and Oš, of Kašgar and Kıtay, the poet is on safe ground. One wonders whether the regular and reasonably accurate attention to the Talas/Čatkal area reflects the text's localization among Talas Kirghiz living a more settled existence under Czarist rule. Poetic itineraries are absent.

Three geographical matters in the text attract particular attention. First, the name of the city or place where Kanıkey and Semetey reside, and where her khan-father has his seat, is *Ürgönč*.⁴⁸⁶ This is clearly non-traditional, and indeed is puzzling. It is in discord with the situation in *SMB*(2), which has *Ürgönč*, traditionally, as the seat of Akin Khan, Ay-čürök's father. Second, a new feature of the plot of *SMB*(1) is the scene of the raging spirit-river which Semetey must cross on the way to Talas. It is not named, but its description is like that of the raging *Ürgönč* in numerous Ay-čürök-episodes. This hardly means an identification, for the third point of geography that emerges from *SMB*(1) is that

⁴⁸⁴ *SMB*(1) 48-52.

⁴⁸⁵ *SMB*(1) 53ff.

⁴⁸⁶ *SMB*(1) 111.

descriptions of landscape features in the Twilight Age took on a scale and lyrical quality entirely unprecedented in the Older Period. The two principal features so developed are the Talas valley and the river Ürgönč, but the same formulas were used in typical descriptions of other places. Thus the river Semetey must cross in *SMB*(1) represents a new type of landscape feature in Kirghiz epic—a nameless one. It is scenic only, immanent as far as diction goes, but not referential in the manner that the gazetteer-like itineraries had been in the Older Period.

Kanikey's detailed instructions to Semetey on how to utilize and neutralize the entities he will meet on the raging river's edge display a precise and differentiated concern with three types of spiritual personality. First, there are khojas and dervishes, who apparently mean death.⁴⁸⁷ Second, Manas and his companions⁴⁸⁸ (who are simply named, but who must be understood as those heroes' *arbak*) appear as a sort of target for directing Semetey's effort, but they are illusory and will vanish at the moment of truth.⁴⁸⁹ Third, there are the Muslim saints Bahauadin, Šah-merden, and Khoja Ahmad, who will help him fend off Manas and the companions and get safely across the stream.⁴⁹⁰ The weird combination was apparently vexing to the poet and his audiences, because Semetey is instructed to down a draft of an extremely potent drug (literally, a "poison-drug") and recite the Koran in order to cleanse himself before moving on.⁴⁹¹

Later, Kanikey's final blessing before Semetey rides away calls upon a robust triangle of protectors: the Twelve Imams, the 40 *čilten*, and "world-conquering braves"

⁴⁸⁷ *SMB*(1) 19f.

⁴⁸⁸ Weakly, *jigitter* instead of the usual *čorolor*.

⁴⁸⁹ *SMB*(1) 20-26.

⁴⁹⁰ *SMB*(1) 23ff.

⁴⁹¹ *SMB*(1) 26f.

(undoubtedly the *arbak* of departed "good" heroes).⁴⁹² Arrived at last at Manas's tomb, Semetey reads the Koran with Bakay and, in a high scene unprecedented in the Older Period *Semetey*-texts, Manas's *arbak* roar approval and bestow their protection on Semetey. One may even have imagined such a scene reaching the existential pitch of an epic moment in other hands, yet in the text we see an advancing timidity regarding *arbak*: the bard prefaces the occurrence with a Disclaimer, *Khuday bilet čin bolso* 'God knows whether it is true'.⁴⁹³

Before concluding this discussion of *SMB*(1), it will be worthwhile to consider two telling points of diction, seemingly minor matters that speak volumes. The first example illustrates the continuity of the epic tradition as expressed in a reflected and half-remembered circumstance. At the end of the poem, Semetey asks his mother and grandmother to bring in the three bound malingerers, Jakıp, Abuke, and Köböš, while he undoes his mail-coat and before he tortures them. The women go out drawing knives, and when they come back in, they tell him, "Eat!"⁴⁹⁴ (They have already killed them.) To this, compare Kanikey's words in I,6) as she stands over the three spread-eagled heroes with drawn dagger: "Give my lord's Feast! May the shame fall from my head!"⁴⁹⁵ Hatto has suggested that at least an ingredient of the motivation for revenge was that these three had not given a memorial feast for the deceased Manas. He writes: "[T]he ritual slaughter of the offending kinsmen (severed hands, feet, death) might substitute for the omitted feast."⁴⁹⁶ In *SMB*(1) *tamak iç* 'Eat!', we find further evidence that the slaughter of the three

⁴⁹² *sāhīb qirān yerenler*; *SMB*(1) 58f.

⁴⁹³ *SMB*(1) 74-77. On disclaimers, see Prior 1998b, pp. 136-139.

⁴⁹⁴ *SMB*(1) 133-136.

⁴⁹⁵ I,6) 1047f.

⁴⁹⁶ *MWR*, Commentary, n. to ll. 1047-1050

indeed had satisfied, at some time in the obscure past, a symbolic need beyond ridding the arena of rivals to Semetey.

The careful reader will have noted above that Kanıkey and Baktı-döölöt "extinguish Semetey's fire." Throughout Northern Asia, and notably in Older Period Kirghiz epic, to "extinguish someone's fire" meant to extirpate someone's line. Hatto observes: "Each [Older Period *Semetey* epic, I,6) and I,7)] is an elaboration of a plot found sporadically between the Samoyeds in the west and the Oroch in the east in which an attempt to 'put out a man's fire'—the camp-fire stands for the *stirps*—is frustrated by his womenfolk and sometimes a loyal retainer."⁴⁹⁷ In the traditional *Semetey*, those womenfolk were Manas's widow and mother, but these are the very two women who "put out Semetey's fire" in *SMB*(1) as he is leaving on his second journey.⁴⁹⁸ We are left to conclude that the poet of the original *SMB*(1)* envisioned the scene taking place in Semetey's staging-camp on the steppe, and that the extinguishing of the fire was practical. For the poet to display or even transmit such ignorance in the use of this pithy formula, the immanent existential force of the words must have been a thing of the past. It is thus reasonable to speculate that the theme of extinguishing Semetey's fire in the sense of killing off his line had entered obsolescence soon after 1862, and that the poet, picking up the formula from an older bard, continued to use it in a concrete sense. Thus on the level of individual poetic competence with one line (in this literary work, one cannot speak

⁴⁹⁷ Hatto 1980c: p. 323; discussion and examples of Siberian plots in Hatto 1973/74, pp. 157-160.

⁴⁹⁸ *SMB*(1) 125f. Where *SMB*(1) has *yakkan otun öčürdii* 'they put out his fire that had been lit' (MS p. 43, l. 42), cf. I,6) 797 *jakkan otun öčürüp* (of Jakıp scheming with Abıke and Köböş to do away with Semetey). The twentieth-century bard Sayakbay likewise knew the formula in the concrete sense as preparatory to departure on a trek (*Seytek*, p. 105), which supports the chronology deduced here.

with sureness of performance competence) we vividly see the effects of the breakdown of the heroic cosmos.

SMB(2) narrates Semetey's journey to Ay-čürök and their union. This episode corresponds to I,7) 271-348, though with significant differences in circumstance.⁴⁹⁹ I,7) had Semetey lure Ay-čürök out of her betrothal to Ümütöy. The Twilight Age variant, which *SMB*(2) partially attests for the first time, runs on an entirely different motivation. Semetey and Ay-čürök have been promised to each other from before birth by their fathers, Manas and Akhun Khan. When the unwanted suitor Čın-kojo invests Akhun Khan's city with Er Toltoy to demand Ay-čürök, she changes into her swan-form and flies over the earth in search of her intended mate. Ay-čürök's purpose puts her in conflict with Semetey's wedded wife, Čačikey, whose opposition she circumvents by cunning. In swan-form, she steals Semetey's gyrfalcon, Ak-šumkar, while he is out hunting...

SMB(2) begins at this point. Semetey and his companions make ready and ride off campaign-style to retrieve Ak-šumkar. Ay-čürök has a dream, which is interpreted to mean that Semetey and his companions are approaching and will conquer Čın-kojo and Toltoy, and Semetey will take Ay-čürök. Ay-čürök goes out with her ladies and maids and pitches her blue tent on the banks of the Ürgönč river to wait for Semetey's arrival. Reconnoitering with his telescope from a mountain pass, Semetey sees the encampment and the girl, and Kül-čoro agrees to ride out and see who they are, after he has been seated on Semetey's horse Tay-buurul and outfitted with Semetey's arms and armor. Kül-čoro bravely crosses the fearsome river Ürgönč and reaches the girls. He has a spirited exchange with Ay-čürök and her ladies over his status and validity as a go-between, and

⁴⁹⁹ Cf. Reichl 1992, pp. 223-235, on different bards' techniques in varying and expanding this episode.

over Semetey's worthiness as a mate for Ay-čürök (she is playing hard to get). Then Semetey and Kan-čoro ride down together. Semetey bravely plunges into the river astride Kak-telki and is helped across by (the *arbak* of) Manas and the Forty Companions. Semetey and Ay-čürök size each other up in a sharp exchange, with Semetey threatening to take back his bird and Ay-čürök upbraiding Semetey for making her seek him out. The standoff is defused, and Semetey and Ay-čürök go to bed. Semetey utters an oath that he will always cleave to Ay-čürök, not Čačıkey (his senior wife). At this point the text breaks off. The *Semetey* of Tımbek, which we will consider next, contains more of the story at both the beginning and the end, so some general and comparative discussion of these two similar variants will be reserved for that section.

The romantic plot of *SMB(2)* features narrative and scenic high points of the kinds which are familiar by now, such as oaths, a dream and its interpretation, catalogs, and cyclic allusions. It also manifests a tendency toward lengthy, lyrical, virtuoso descriptive passages, a type of narrative element that became more prominent in epic texts of the Twilight Age and the Later Period. In terms of narrative structure, there is less of a contract than a pretext. Semetey and Ay-čürök are destined to be together. This predestination lends interest to the two characters' serial adventures in search of one another. It is entertaining when Kül-čoro and Ay-čürök and then Semetey and Ay-čürök spar with each other using elements of the language of heroes, but in the end, tempers are cooled and the bed is laid.

The high scenes reinforce the pretext. Ay-čürök's dream (described at such length that the poet ends by saying, "I could go on, there is more like it to say, leave it there"⁵⁰⁰) and its interpretation confirm that her plan to attract Semetey has been successful. Kül-

⁵⁰⁰ *SMB(2)* 51f.

čoro's brave crossing of the Ürgönč river and mediation on behalf of Semetey underscore Semetey's relatively minor agency in the whole affair. This is a major reversal of Semetey's character with regard to I,7).

The poet takes delight in descriptions, as those he lavishes on Tay-buurul's outfit, on the Ürgönč river in torrent, and on Ay-čürök's person and adornments. He is an accomplished cataloger, naming the 14 horses in Semetey's train and their previous owners, his eight heirlooms inherited from Manas, and a bevy of ladies and maids in Ay-čürök's retinue. The use of geography in the poem is quite similar to that in *SMB*(1). The main topographic feature, as in the latter poem, is a raging river. One passage displays the poet's highly original technique for integrating cyclic allusions into the narrative. Ay-čürök challenges Kül-čoro over the drubbing that Semetey should expect to get from Čınkojo and Toltoy, saying that she knows Semetey and how Abıke and Köböš usurped his inheritance, and how his mother and grandmother fled with him to Kara Khan's city, and how the smoke-hole cover of Manas's yurt was opened with a lance thrust, and how Semetey was just a boy when his dominion was reduced, so "What praise have you for him?"⁵⁰¹ Kül-čoro utters a challenge and warning in return.

One narrative detail of *SMB*(2) raises a question that applies equally to the *Semetey* of Tınıbek (*STJ*), which we will consider next. When Semetey reconnoiters through his telescope from the mountains, he clearly recognizes Ay-čürök among her ladies and maids. Yet when it is time to exhort Kül-čoro to ride down and gather intelligence, he speaks on the pretext that he does not know who the strangers are. Could they be enemies wearing corselets? Kashghari caravaneers? Girls riding ambler? "*Şahardan çıktı bir top jan,/ tanıy albay boldum tan!*" 'A group of people came out of the

⁵⁰¹ *SMB*(2) 129-132.

city; I was amazed I couldn't make them out!⁵⁰² As in other versions, it is not clear whether Semetey is intentionally hiding the identity of the people from Kül-čoro in order to evince his cooperation in riding on the go-between's journey. In favor of intentionality, it is reasonable to assume that if the mission of the heroic go-between required that he dress in the suitor's arms and armor and ride his horse—the better to impress the girl—then some tactful pretense about possible hostilities will have been needed, at the very least as an open secret between suitor and go-between. Riding anywhere in full armor could be taken as an expression of apprehensiveness, and so could come in for satire from a high-spirited Kirghiz maiden. Thus the pretense would tend to sharpen the opening exchange between go-between and girl, as we find in *SMB*(2) and *STJ*. Kül-čoro's "performance" of this role is realized differently by Tımbek and Maldıbay's poet, though with success for Kül-čoro in both cases as tradition required.⁵⁰³

The *Semetey* of Tımbek Japıy uulu

In 1898, the Narın district police chief⁵⁰⁴ ordered Tımbek (1846-1902) to commit his epic repertoire to paper. This apparently should have included all three parts of the cycle, *Manas*, *Semetey*, and *Seytek*. Tımbek later said that he did not understand the reason for the order, so he put down only a few excerpts from *Semetey*.⁵⁰⁵ It is not clear whether he was literate or had the help of a scribe. It is presumed that one of these texts formed the basis for the chapbook edition of 1925, "A Section From Semetey," which

⁵⁰² MS p. 79, ll. 9f.

⁵⁰³ Cf. I,7) 331-343, where Kül-čoro rides his own mount and succeeds even in fetching Ay-čürök away to Semetey merely by whispering in her ear at twilight.

⁵⁰⁴ Kirg. *Narın uçastkovoyu*.

⁵⁰⁵ *Manas entsiklopediya*, vol. 2, pp. 302f., citing an unnamed manuscript memoir in the Manuscript Archives of the Kirghiz Academy of Sciences.

concerns Semetey's journey to Ay-čürök and which we will refer to as *STJ*. Though abbreviated from the standpoint of plot, *STJ* is full of detailed narration and description, and covers more of the traditional story than its co-variant *SMB(2)*. Events develop naturally from the stated premise of Ay-čürök's impending forced marriage to Čın-kojo "and Toltoy,"⁵⁰⁶ and the unstated precondition of Semetey's and Ay-čürök's betrothal before birth, both of which are traditional in the post-Older Period. But the text breaks off seemingly in mid-speech when, after Semetey and Ay-čürök have consummated their union, Ay-čürök rejects his second advance. The plot of *STJ* is briefly summarized below; see also the synopsis in Appendix 3 and the notes there.

With Čın-kojo and Toltoy planning to starve Akun Khan into giving up his daughter Ay-čürök, she dons her swan-habit, flies off, and finds Semetey's encampment, where she meets his spoilt wife Čačikey.⁵⁰⁷ Ay-čürök asks her whether Semetey will go and break the siege and save her, his intended mate. Čačikey scolds Ay-čürök, who, as she is leaving, vows to lure Semetey to her by stealing his white gyrfalcon, Ak-šunġar, when he goes hunting. Čačikey warns Semetey's companion Kül-čoro and tells him to prevent Semetey from casting Ak-šunġar. On the hunting trip, Ay-čürök's magical powers prevail, and she makes off with Ak-šunġar in her swan-form. Kül-čoro and Kan-čoro go to Čačikey and force her to tell them who took the bird; she tells them, and curses them and Semetey. The heroes prepare to ride to Ay-čürök. From here the poem

⁵⁰⁶ The existence of the two suitors working in cooperation is a universal feature of the post-Older Period Ay-čürök story, but the reason that there are two is not addressed in the texts nor, to my knowledge, has it been critically examined. Čın-kojo is more often the main suitor who stands to win Ay-čürök; Toltoy is an ally close enough to be collapsed with Čın-kojo in formulaic diction. Tımbek displays the latter tendency; the poet of *SMB(2)* conceives of Čın-kojo as the real suitor.

⁵⁰⁷ In I,7), Čačikey, daughter of Kari-čal, was the wife of Kül-čoro, though without a role, personality or attributes besides her having been given to Kül-čoro as booty by Semetey; later in the epic she is seized and given to Kan-čoro.

coincides substantially with *SMB*(2), only the exchange between Kül-čoro and Ay-čürök is more acrimonious, and Semetey's lackluster performance braving the current on an inferior horse (Kül-čoro has Tay-buurul) causes extreme hilarity among the ladies and maids. In *SMB*(2), the hero and heroine consummate their union while still out on the steppe; in *STJ*, Semetey and his heroes are welcomed with refreshments, then Semetey and Ay-čürök decide to press on by night to Akun Khan's city and there to fulfil their desires. This is done in the guest tent within the city. Then Ay-čürök rises and goes to sleep at her father's. Semetey and the companions, finding her missing, go after her to take her away. Semetey makes a sexual advance on the sleeping Ay-čürök, and she rebuffs him angrily, telling him to go back to his spouse.

(The cliff-hanger ending is the work of the editor, Arabayev, who offered this published excerpt in advance of a full version,⁵⁰⁸ which never saw the light of day.)

The high point in terms of human interactions is the intensely antagonistic exchange between Kül-čoro on the one hand and Ay-čürök and her second, Akılay, on the other, punctuated by Kül-čoro's outrage on the person of one of the girls. The drama consists in the characters' pressing need to ascertain their relative status even as substantive communication is getting under way. Semetey and Ay-čürök have a heated exchange later, yet Kül-čoro has taken the edge off of their meeting, and all that remains for the purposes of the plot is for Semetey to be told that his presence is fated. Likewise, since Kül-čoro is the go-between rather than the actual suitor, his grandiose manner and terrible threats are diminished: the ladies and maids laugh when he says to Ay-čürök, "May Semetey not raid your people; may Semetey not seize you from Akun Khan's seat of honor and put you on the hard back (of a horse) and make you a cook in my spoilt lady

⁵⁰⁸ *STJ*, p. 3 (Sarıpbekov 1994, p. 92).

Čačıkey's kitchen!" In the two scenically super-charged passages where Kül-čoro and Semetey (the latter with Kan-čoro) cross the river Ürg onč, Kul-čoro makes the better showing, thanks to Semetey's mount and equipment. Semetey's crossing, in which he is assisted in the nick of time by a spirit-helper, is immediately made the subject of a burlesque scene in which the ladies and maids laugh at him. Kül-čoro also ranks more favorably than Semetey for invoking Manas's *arbak*, who support Tay-buurul and make him negotiate the rapids "like a swallow, like a boat, like a fish"; Semetey, chastened, is helped from the river by Iliyaz hauling on his horse's lead-rope. When a hero is comically upstaged by his companion, we are no longer in the narrative realm where "Fate's demands upon the hero press in upon him with a particular immediacy, exposing the narrative's central concerns with stark directness,"⁵⁰⁹ and we are not dealing with a heroic epic. Indeed, when the heroine's ladies and maids wet their pants in laughter at the sight of the hero, we are in the vicinity of mock-epic as so well exemplified by *Joloy Khan*. *SMB(2)* displays nicer attitudes. Ay-čürök's exchange with Kül-čoro is not so acidic, more challenging than threatening. Kül-čoro acts with decency; only Semetey from afar mistakenly thinks he sees him misbehaving, and the imagined offense is a kiss—hardly to be compared with Kül-čoro's assault on Ay-čürök's maid in *STJ*. In *SMB(2)*, when Semetey arrives, Ay-čürök addresses him at once as "my lord" and pours him *arak*.⁵¹⁰

Ay-čürök's vow to steal Semetey's Ak-šunkar, and later her dream and its interpretation, certainly resonate with the central concerns of *STJ* in the manner of the high scenes and epic moments of the Older Period. On the other hand, there are similar scenes in which the existential charge has been partially or totally defused by a novelistic

⁵⁰⁹ Smith 1989, p. 32.

⁵¹⁰ *SMB(2)* 160f.

reorientation of the plot. Čačikey's curse on Semetey, through his companions, would be a foreshadowing much like the curses we have encountered before, were it not the curse of a spurned wife, not a clairvoyant seer. And it is not accurate: although the present text ends before the crucial action, we know from Ay-čürök's dream that this epic will have the traditional outcome, in which Semetey and his companions succeed in killing Čınkojo and Er Toltoy, not the other way around as according to Čačikey's curse.

What this 3,600-line epic text lacks in rigor or seriousness of plot it makes up for in a pleasant immanence and copiousness. Tınıbek was obviously a master at all the traditional forms of epic dilation and decoration. Whether describing Semetey's campaigning-breeches (25 lines⁵¹¹), his heirloom telescope (63 lines⁵¹²), the raging river Ürgönč (92 lines⁵¹³), or Ay-čürök's person and adornments (28 lines⁵¹⁴), Tınıbek displays fine artistry and fully exploits the lyric potential of the parallelistic epic diction. Here is his description of the breaking dawn, an image treated only cursorily in the Older Period texts⁵¹⁵:

Taraza jıldız bölünüp,
talaada šamal arkırap,
asmandagı jıldızdar
Kıbıla közdöy bıkırıp,
kamıştın başı šuudurap,
kara kaš torgoy čuldurap,
terektin başı bırpırıp,
jandın baarı kıbırıp,

⁵¹¹ Sarıpbekov 1994, pp. 115f.

⁵¹² Sarıpbekov 1994, pp. 128f.

⁵¹³ Sarıpbekov 1994, pp. 142ff.

⁵¹⁴ Sarıpbekov 1994, pp. 149f.

⁵¹⁵ E.g., I,7), *passim*.

tañ sargayıp atkanda,
taraza jıldız batkanda⁵¹⁶

When the Scales dissolved [from view], and the wind on the steppe roared,
and the stars in the sky dispersed westward, and the reed-tops murmured,
and the horned larks⁵¹⁷ twittered, and the tops of the poplars rustled, and
every soul stirred, and dawn darted yellow rays, and the Scales set.

Timbek similarly excelled in the formulation of catalogs, such as that of Semetey's accoutrements and steed, Tay-buurul (144 lines⁵¹⁸), and the less circumstantial but allusively dense "run" naming the horses in his string (25 lines⁵¹⁹). Timbek builds up some cyclic allusions to the scale of interpolated scenes or flashbacks, a development that is in concord with narrative trends in other poems of the Twilight age and Later Period, but was observed only on a much smaller, condensed scale in the Older Period. The most extensive flashbacks center around Ay-čürök. In the scene where she flies over the earth inspecting heroes, the sight that brings her down at last to alight at Semetey's headquarters is the tomb of Manas. She recalls what she has heard of Manas's death and funeral and Kanikey's rearing of his tomb (44 lines⁵²⁰), and resolves not to fly over her (future late) father-in-law's *arbak* without paying respects. Later, when Semetey and Ay-čürök meet, he either feigns or displays true ignorance about their betrothal⁵²¹ to such an exasperating degree that Ay-čürök is compelled to recapitulate the story of Manas's

⁵¹⁶ *STJ*, p. 81 (Sarıpbekov 1994, p. 126; with erroneous *batkanda* for *STJ bölünüp; barkırap* for *STJ birkırap*).

⁵¹⁷ *kara kaş torgoy* = *Eremophila alpestris*.

⁵¹⁸ Sarıpbekov 1994, pp. 134-137.

⁵¹⁹ *STJ*, pp. 64f.; Sarıpbekov 1994, p. 119.

⁵²⁰ Sarıpbekov 1994, pp. 97f.

⁵²¹ *bel kuda*, prospectively arranged by the fathers of the boy and girl either when they are children or before they are born, or even before they are conceived, as here.

meeting with her father Akun Khan, their agreement to pledge their children to one another, and the reason for the two predestined youths' long separation (40 lines⁵²²).

We may briefly note that *STJ* contains epic itineraries, some of which preserve interesting though unresolved place names. The itineraries that are more or less clearly understood, however, display a loosening of coherence and thus a diminished realism in comparison with mid-nineteenth century itineraries. Ay-čürök's swan-flight is a good example. From a starting point in Akun Khan's city of Ürgönč (Urgench, legendarily situated by the river Ürgönč, viz., the Amu Darya⁵²³), she flies *west*, but (!) next passes Anjıyan, Kulun (unidentified), Almatı, Talas, and Čet Beejin, in that order—a giant zig-zag lying to the east of the Amu Darya. On a more realistic path, really to the west, she then passes Ürümčü (Urumch'i), Manas (the locality in East Turkistan), Kara-šaar and Kambıl, Kašgar, Čoŋ-opol (traditionally conceived somewhere in the front range dividing the Kirghiz mountain homeland from Kashgharia) and Sarı-kol (the mountain range); then the Alay range, Anjıyan (Andijan), Tašken, the Kara-buura and Čatkal rivers, and thence to Semetey's camp, situated as usual at Keŋ-kol, a right tributary of the Talas. The confused order of Ay-čürök's outbound leg is truly exceptional from the standpoint of mid-nineteenth century epics. On the other hand, her inbound flight follows a more or less realistic westbound trend, though pairs of associated toponyms may be placed in reverse order, such as Kara-šaar and Kambıl (Komul, or Hami), which lie west and east of each other. This was undoubtedly a matter of poetics.⁵²⁴ The end of the itinerary describes a grand, clockwise arc, seemingly zeroing in on Semetey's abode. Thus the

⁵²² Sarıpbekov 1994, pp. 164f.

⁵²³ On the river Ürgönč, see Prior 1998b, p. 94.

⁵²⁴ On similar reversals of poetically paired toponyms in an Older Period epic, see Prior 1998a, pp. 263-266.

itinerary consists almost entirely of real place names, if we allow for a few enigmas and the well-known-in-epic but apparently unreal mountain (Čoŋ-)opol, and two very different styles of arrangement: one flagrantly unrealistic and the other fairly realistic if not clearly integrated into the design of the plot.

Signs of religious cultivation, particularly the vocabulary of Muslim piety, are rather more prominent in *STJ* than in any epic we have considered before. One may even say that the bard showcases both Semetey's and Ay-čürök's punctilious Muslim observances within the means of the poetic framework. Semetey and Ay-čürök both begin their mornings with ablutions, prayers, and beads.⁵²⁵ Tımbek's crowded Islamic references in these scenes feature such terms, rare or nonexistent in the Older Period, as *sünnöt* 'sunnat; Sunna', *parız* 'farz; obligation', *karız* 'qarz; recompense', *reket bagımdat* 'rak'at-i bāmdād; morning prostrations', and the orthographically only barely assimilated *qul-huwa'llā* 'He is the One', the first words of Sūra CXII.⁵²⁶ Tımbek's narrative lends itself to the inevitable comparison with spiritual themes in the Older Period epics, and particularly in Radloff's *Semetey*. We recall that a crucial existential concern in that poem was Semetey's loss of the protection and support of his father's *arbak* through his misdeeds, a calamity which was portentously told via sacrificial divination.⁵²⁷ In that reverberating epic moment, the bard and audience share the knowledge, which is lost to Semetey, that piety towards one's ancestor-spirits simply cannot be fudged. Tımbek, on the other hand, waffles over Semetey's favor with Manas's *arbak* in a manner which clearly shows that the issue, for his audience, was essentially moot. As he readies for his

⁵²⁵ Sarıpbekov 1994, pp. 122f.; 126f.

⁵²⁶ *STJ*, pp. 82f.; Sarıpbekov 1994, p. 127.

⁵²⁷ I,7) 994-1052; cf. Hatto 1973/74, II, pp. 113ff.

journey to retrieve Ak-šunġar from Ay-čürök, Semetey calls on Manas's *arbak*.⁵²⁸ Later he commends Tay-buurul to his father's *arbak* on behalf of Kül-čoro, to whom he lends the steed for the wooing-mission.⁵²⁹ Yet in neither of these passages is a response indicated. The reason that this is so becomes clearer when we consider the other instances of Manas's *arbak* in this poem. At the conclusion of the rituals that the bard fulsomely described above, Semetey spreads his hands and says *āmīn* to—Manas!—but in response he receives blessings from a teeming assortment of Muslim protectors:

Oomiyn dep kol jayıp,
 atası ötkön Manaska
 tört jar⁵³⁰ menen Baygambar,
 otuz üç miñ askaptar,⁵³¹
 murun ötkön köp jarlar
 bata kılıp aldı emi.⁵³²

Spreading his hands he said Amen to his departed father Manas; and the Prophet with his four Companions, the 33,000 Companions, and the teeming departed Friends, were pleased to bless him.

Whereas Semetey's calls to Manas's *arbak* result in silence or a din of other voices, one hero who makes an appeal gets an immediate and crucial response. When Kül-čoro finds himself and his mount Tay-buurul in dire straits amid the swirling waters of the Ürgönč, he frantically rattles off the names of Baabedin, Iliyaz, Kunday, and Šaamerden⁵³³—but only when he invokes Manas does Tay-buurul finally flit from the water to safety. Ay-čürök also expresses piety toward Manas's *arbak* on more than one occasion. It was noted above how she paid her respects at Manas's tomb after her swan-flight, and in her first

⁵²⁸ Sarıpbekov 1994, p. 115.

⁵²⁹ Sarıpbekov 1994, p. 137.

⁵³⁰ *STJ*: čar.

⁵³¹ *STJ*: āshābdār; askap, etc. not in Iudakhin, *Slovar*'.

⁵³² *STJ*, p. 83 (Sarıpbekov 1994, p. 127; with jar for *STJ* čar; atčandar for *STJ* āshābdār).

⁵³³ *STJ*, p. 126; Sarıpbekov 1994, p. 146.

confrontation with Semetey she hands him the shaming retort that it is *she* who has honored Manas's *arbak* all these years.⁵³⁴ Manas has another devotee in this poem: Tımbek himself calls on Manas's *arbak* for aid in a disclaimer-topos as he launches into the narration of Semetey's journey.⁵³⁵ Thus, it seems, in this Twilight Age epic, the paramount hero's *arbak* were up for grabs among a generation of indifferent followers. That goes for the characters themselves (save perhaps for Ay-čürök) and, we are compelled to conclude, for the audience. We may speak with justification of a heroic cosmos that has had one of its main spiritual moorings cast off. In epic poetry composed under these conditions, creative intersections between narrative structure and ethos, however conceived, will be less secure.

The *Manas* collected by György Almásy (MGA)

This brief text (72 lines) was collected from a Bugu bard around Narın-kol by the Hungarian ethnographer and explorer György Almásy in 1900, and published in Latin transcription with a German translation in 1911-12.⁵³⁶ The text is too short to have much bearing on discussion of narrative structure, especially in view of the possibility that it is a fragment chosen by the scholar for publication. If it is not a fragment but a complete record of an epic recitation, then it tallies well with the other Twilight Age mini-text, *The Birth of Manas*, in being biographically determined and cyclically allusive.

MGA narrates Manas's departure on campaign to Bejin. Manas is moving off with his companion Čubak and their eighty men, when Kanikey overtakes him to show him

⁵³⁴ *STJ*, p. 169; Sarıpbekov 1994, p. 165.

⁵³⁵ Sarıpbekov 1994, p. 116; on epic disclaimers, see Prior 1998b, pp. 136-139.

⁵³⁶ Almásy 1911/12 (reissued in *Manas* 1968); Almásy 1903.

the two-month-old babe Semetey, whom he has not yet seen or known about. Manas tenderly hugs and nuzzles the babe until he laughs, then utters a farewell. It is then two months' journeying to the Irtysh river on the border with Bejin (i.e., China). This is the only surviving Twilight Age text that treats a nominally *Manas*-epic,⁵³⁷ though Semetey's presence is obviously felt.

Almásy sheds interesting light on some aspects of the tradition. His article is the earliest dated textual evidence available for the existence of an epic of the Great Campaign to China, as witnessed not only by the text itself but also by the Kirghiz title *Čoŋ kazat*, which he cites. This is the epic that came to dominate the *Manas*-repertoire of Later Period bards. Also, Almásy gives an account of the general extent of the epics at the time. His remarks are based on his own knowledge of Kirghiz, which apparently was quite good, and the field work he conducted with bards in 1900:

Beide Teile des Epos [*Manas* and *Semetey*] sind sehr umfangreich, tatsächlich von 'epischer Breite', und enthalten unzählige ermüdende Wiederholungen. *Manasdin k'sasi* umfasst etwa 20,000 Verse, *Semetej*, und ein dritter, weniger verbreiteter Gesang, *Zajtek* (der Sohn des Semetej), je etwa 30,000 Verse—allerdings vielfach Wiederholungen aus dem *Manasdin k'sasi*.⁵³⁸

In terms of the delivery rate roughly calculated before, the total verse count estimated by Almásy works out to about 96 hours of performance—perhaps between a fortnight and a month of repetitive epic narration. In the Twilight Age, copiousness and immanence reigned.

⁵³⁷ With the possible exception of the *Saykal* text; see n. 421 above.

⁵³⁸ Almásy 1903, p. 217.

The *Semetey* of Kenje Kara

This wax-cylinder phonogram preserving 240 sung epic lines in about 18 minutes was recorded sometime between January and March 1904 in the district seat of Pishpek (now Bishkek, the capital of independent Kirghizstan). The bard was Kenje Kara (1859-1929) of the Solto tribe. The collectors were the members of a Russian amateur scientific expedition. The renowned Kenje Kara was primarily an *akın* (improvisational songster) and player of the *kıyak*, a two-stringed upright fiddle. Little is known of his bardic contacts, but he probably had relations with the *manap* Šabdan.

The subject of the poem is Semetey's journey to Ay-čürök. The aural performance record *SKK* (words and music) was transcribed, edited, translated, and analyzed for the first time in a "performance edition" by the present writer.⁵³⁹ Appendix 4 of the present work reproduces the edited text and line-by-line English translation of *SKK* from the performance edition. Numerical references to the text in the notes below refer to line numbers in the Appendix.

It emerged from my earlier work on *SKK* that the performance was the work of "a good bard on a bad day." Kenje Kara performed under unique pressures, not least the unfamiliar physical requirements of recording to the phonograph. These pressures are apparent in the technical weaknesses in the text. Transitions and dialog are sometimes choppy; speeches are unasccribed as to the speakers; the recurring halts to change the three-minute recording cylinders sometimes caused the bard to repeat narration when beginning again. From the point of view of the fulsome *SMB(2)* and *STJ*, *SKK* is a mere vestige of the Semetey–Ay-čürök story. To his credit, however, Kenje Kara chose three

⁵³⁹ Prior 1998b; the siglum used there was *SK*. Cf. B. Smirnov 1914; Aydarkulov 1989.

key scenes and narrated them in an integrated sequence. These scenes were Semetey's reconnaissance by telescope and exhortation to his companions to ride and bring news of the strangers, Kül-čoro's ride and his crossing of the fearsome river Ürgönč, and Ay-čürök's dream and its auspicious interpretation. Given the limitations of the situation in which he performed, Kenje Kara did an admirable job imparting the gist of the epic by means of these three dramatic scenes.

I have characterized these scenes in Kenje Kara's performance as "epic moments." In the context of the theoretical developments with which this essay is concerned, the former conception should be revised. These scenes certainly could have figured in a heroic epic plot built on high scenes and epic moments, but there is no evidence from other Twilight Age sources that they ever did. They were rather *scenic set-pieces*. Although in the context of such a deficient plot the three scenes cannot really be called scenes where "Fate's demands press in upon the hero with a particular immediacy, exposing the narrative's central concerns with stark directness," in Kenje Kara's hands they do preserve a considerable charge of characterization and drama. Note that each of the three main characters gets a scenic set-piece: Semetey, Kül-čoro, and Ay-čürök. The centerpiece of the performance is the description of the river Ürgönč. Projecting back and forth across the grand scene are dramatic shifts in view—Semetey's, directed across the river; to Kül-čoro's, directed at the river; to Ay-čürök's, directed through her inward gaze at Semetey and the future. The symmetry has obvious charm. It also involves some unusual stage directions: Ay-čürök is already out by the banks of the Čoň Ürgönč (where she must be for Semetey to observe her from the mountains) when she has her portentous dream. In *SMB* and *STJ*, the dream's interpretation is what brought her out beside the Ürgönč to wait for Semetey.

SKK has nothing in the way of epithets or other cyclic allusions to compare with earlier poems. The entire inventory of epithets in *SKK* falls under Hatto's category of "simple" epithets.⁵⁴⁰ The reason is surely not only that Kenje Kara had little time to unfold more elaborate epithets in performing *SK*. The audiences to whom the bard sang ca. 1904 had generally lost the connoisseur's taste for the built-up, cyclically allusive epithet.⁵⁴¹ But these same audiences had become more demanding of visual-verbal artistry involving space and scene. The extended, lyrical depiction of the violence and grandeur of the Ürgönc is an example.

It is clear that although *SKK* is not an epic poem, it was performed in the style and tradition of epic. Hatto observed, "In the background one senses the epic, which everyone knew by heart."⁵⁴² In the Conclusion, we will consider the importance of such performances for understanding creative intersections between structure and ethos, and propose a new, performance-centered conception of the epic genre.

A brief summary of the characteristics of the Twilight Age will prepare the stage for the opening of the Later Period. The epic poetry attested from the Twilight Age was rich in the copious and immanent elements of epic narrative that had been shaped and inherited by long tradition. Such elements point to a performance milieu in which bards were called on to perform, usually at length, on standard plots whose internal linkages of characterization and ethos had been cleared substantially and remodeled to make convenient settings for descriptions, catalogs, cyclic allusions, and scenic set-pieces.

⁵⁴⁰Hatto 1989a, p. 80 (*SKK*: 5, 53, 119, 123 *astındagı Tay-buurul*; 44 *astımdagı Tay-buurul*; 104, 110 *on ekide Kül-čoro*; 152 *Akın Kan kızı Ay-čürök*; 212 *Šıgaydın uulu Čın-kojo*; 214 *Jedigerdin Er Toltoy*; 222 *Semeteydin Kan-čoro menen Kül-čoro*; 237 *Manastın uulu Semetey*).

⁵⁴¹Cf. Hatto 1989a, *passim* for epithets in diachronic analysis of the tradition.

⁵⁴²A.T. Hatto, personal communication, August 17, 1997.

High scenes and epic moments, and the narrative contracts and moral-algebraic expressions they encapsulated, had been traded for a wealth of traditionally immanent narrative currency. In these conditions, another phenomenon was observed for the first time: the very short epic performance, concentrating on one or more scenic set-pieces or a biographically determined, cyclically allusive narrative node. Suggestive correlations are found between these structural changes in epic narrative and the social and cultural changes that were taking place among the Northern Kirghiz. For all these reasons, it is appropriate to view the Twilight Age as a post-heroic or other than heroic phase in the Kirghiz epic tradition.

Regarding culture, it is worth emphasizing the little-recognized fact that native Kirghiz literary transmission of epic poetry continued throughout this period. The living bard Jusup Mamay, himself literate, is the inheritor of his much older brother Balbay's (1893- ?) talents in both verbal and written form. Balbay taught Jusup to recite *Manas*, and he also presented Jusup with a manuscript library he had amassed of Kirghiz epic poetry. The collection work had begun following the 1916 Turkistan Rebellion. Jusup records Balbay's memory:

I heard [*Manas*] from the people who came in the Great Flight of 1916, and whoever said they knew some of "*Manas*," I wrote down that much. A few of them turned out to possess a manuscript, and I bought them. I had many that I wrote down myself and that I bought from others, such as [of the epics of] Čoyuke, Šapak, Taabaldı, Dıykanbay, the father and son Balık and Naymanbay, and the Sarıbağış Mamırkan Moldo. Much of what they recited was quite similar.⁵⁴³

Other literati, such as Toktogazı Jusup uulu (1864-1933) in Talas and İbrayım Abdırakhmanov (1888-1967) in Issyk Kul and Narın, also collected and preserved

⁵⁴³ Mamay 1994, p. 9. On Jusup Mamay, see also Reichl 1992, pp. 85f., 223.

Kirghiz oral narrative poetry in written form.⁵⁴⁴ For want of any more information, we must assume that Maldıbay's text, *SMB*, and its written antecedents probably took form in such a literary milieu.⁵⁴⁵

It is reasonable to consider whether *SMB*, as a work of literature, may be distinguished *by virtue of its written format* from the other texts we have examined so far, all of which we characterize as oral. Did the mode in which *SMB* was composed affect its content or structure?. As has already been suggested, the fact that the list of Forty Companions comes out very near to forty appears to be the result of a composition process that allowed for counting out names on paper. There are other considerations. *SMB(2)* gives the impression of a literary or *dāstān*-like structure with its regular shifts of scene depicting simultaneous or nearly simultaneous actions by different characters, marked off by the formula, "leave him/her just like that; let's hear news from so-and-so." The Older Period epics also contained simultaneous actions and "meanwhile" scenes, though not to the extent found in *SMB(2)*. One feature unique to *SMB* are the prefaces (in modern terminology, *jomok başı*) that head both of the poems in the work. Interestingly, another more recent *Semetey* that features a *jomok başı* is that of the literate bard Jusup Mamay.⁵⁴⁶ An important element found in the prefaces, which also occurs in other parts of the poems, is the formulaic disclaimer of veracity and associated adversion to the

⁵⁴⁴ *Manas entsiklopediya*, vol. 2, p. 284; Ibraimov 1987, p. 12.

⁵⁴⁵ See also n. 468, above. An awareness of literacy is discernible in epic texts going back to the Older Period, as when eleven-year-old Bok-murun "went to school at the mullah's," and when he enjoins Ay-kojo to write a note to attach to the horse Maniker, apparently as a charm for speed in the race (*KO* 239f.; 802-805; 1185f.). Later, the gargantuan mock-hero Joloy Khan is able to read a letter that figures in his reunion with his two wives. This is not the only instance of written communication in *Joloy Khan* (*J* 4255, etc.; see Appendix 1, below), and *SMB* and *STJ* both show that as the Twilight Age progressed, references to heroes using writing became a matter of course (see Appendix 2 and Appendix 3, below).

⁵⁴⁶ *SJM*.

Deity, such as *Khuday bilet ċin bolso/ köbü tögün köbü ċin/ körüp kelgen pende jok* 'God knows whether it's true! There is no one now who saw [and could tell whether] the greater part is lies or truth'.⁵⁴⁷ The occurrence of such disclaimers has been referred to the pressure of modernization and literacy on oral bards.⁵⁴⁸ Yet neither the "meanwhile" structure nor the disclaimers are distinctive features of *SMB* in the tradition to date. The former structure is shared by *STJ*, and indeed by later attested versions of the *Semetey*/*Ay-čürök* epic. Such a structure would seem to have no intrinsic claim to "literariness" apart from the requirements of the romantic premise, in which hero and heroine approach one another through serial adventures. And the disclaimer topos is found with particular frequency in the most patently oral record under examination here, Kenje Kara's *Semetey*. The notion that "literary" features exist in *SMB*(2) has merit, but accepting this, one is immediately confronted by the realization that such features are not distinctive to this one "literary" text. The implication is neither implausible nor unappealing: that the comparable Twilight Age records express interplay over time between written and oral forms of epic.

Kirghiz of the Twilight Age were actively engaged in preserving their people's epic poetry for their own use. The Twilight Age is the only one of the three periods of the tradition for which this is known to be true. In the Older Period, we have reports that the epics were entirely oral. It is best to believe them, on the basis of what is known about literacy among the Kirghiz of the times. In the Later Period, the Kirghiz intellectual elite was inundated by a new corps of Soviet-trained cultural workers. Even if they happened to be Kirghiz, as many of them were, the sociopolitical agendas available to them⁵⁴⁹ did

⁵⁴⁷ *SMB*(1) ll. 23ff.

⁵⁴⁸ Bowra 1952, p. 41. Cf. "On epic disclaimers," in Prior 1998b, pp. 136-139.

⁵⁴⁹ Prior 2000.

not allow continuation of the manuscript tradition so admirably witnessed by *SMB* and the reminiscences of Jusup.

During the Twilight Age, the *Manas*-epics were performed for days on end before great crowds of people, sometimes with luminaries as elected judges. Hardy herdsman found relief from their routine by "playing *Manas*" in the snow and ice of the mountains. Legends of *Manas* were on the lips of the old men. But in the written Kirghiz poem of the late Twilight Age that was discussed at the beginning of this chapter, "The Epic of Šabdan," *Manas* is rated surprisingly low: "Šabdan is no less than *Manas*; *Manas* was no greater man than Šabdan!" So much for *Manas* in relation to the most powerful Northern Kirghiz of the Czarist generation. It will also be remembered that Bakay is called *Manas*'s "better" in a poem [*SMB* (1)] which heralds the absorption of large tracts of *Manas*-plot into the structure of *Semetey* by means of flashbacks. As the Twilight Age drew to a close, the dissolving creative intersections between narrative structure and ethos reacted upon the nature of the hero, oxidizing his hardness which was formerly always to be proved. The steel rusted; the Kirghiz no longer needed a paramount hero. They needed a figure with a name, rendered numinous by legend, to fulfil a set of functions that was changing along with their society. But no one yet imagined the powerful office that old *Manas* of the Nogoy would soon be called on to assume, nor could they conceive of the vastness of the workshop, nor the cunning of the smiths, who would refurbish him.

Figure 3. İbray Toyčinov and Sagımbay Orozbak uulu, 1922.

Chapter 3. The Later Period

The *Manas* of Sagımbay Orozbek uulu

Tarıkh bolor bilgenge
dalay jerden tababız.
Jazgan akın Sagımbay,
koş bolsoñuz bularga
kol kötörgün dubaga.

(History lives for those who know it; we will find it everywhere. This was written by Sagımbay the poet; if you approve, raise hands in prayer!)⁵⁵⁰

With these words, the famous but hitherto unrecorded Twilight Age bard

Sagımbay addressed his posterity near the end of his first manuscript of nearly 11,000 lines, narrating Manas's genealogy, birth, childhood, and youth, up to his elevation as khan of the Kirghiz. Sagımbay had not really written the text, but rather dictated it in the summer of 1922 to a team of folklore collectors who wrote it down in Arabic script. The process of capturing Sagımbay's *Manas* on paper was the seminal event in the cultural history of the Kirghiz epic tradition in the twentieth century. Because of the systematic nature of the collecting work, the qualitative and quantitative differences of the resulting texts from what had been recorded before, and the deep and lasting influence that Sagımbay's *Manas* has had throughout the Soviet era and down to the present day, the Sagımbay sessions of 1922-26 mark the beginning of the Later Period of the tradition. Sagımbay's imposing position at precisely this point in time permits us to focus on him and his epics as representations of the cultural and narrative transformations that brought the legacy of the Kirghiz epic tradition into modern times.

⁵⁵⁰ *MBSo*, p. 399.

The early Twilight Age had been marked by the pacification of the Northern Kirghiz tribes and their submission to Russia. Political and social changes resulting from the Kirghiz' new status were shown in the previous chapter to be closely connected with the cultural characteristics of the Twilight Age of Kirghiz epic poetry. It is ironic, however, that the incalculably more profound social and political changes attending the establishment of Soviet power in Kirghizia in 1918 were not the direct triggers of Later Period cultural conditions. The Soviet regime exerted a shaping influence on the Kirghiz epic tradition, but this truly began only after the Sagımbay sessions had ended.⁵⁵¹ The real preconditions of the Later Period arose from the arrival in Semirech'e in the first two decades of the twentieth century of a new kind of intellectual: the new Turk. One of these men initiated the process of taking Sagımbay's *Manas* down on paper.

Kayum (Abdikayım) Miftakov (1882-1948 or '49), a Bashkir, was born near Ufa and educated in a Jadid school at Troitsk. Between 1911 and 1919 he worked as a teacher and collected folklore in various places in the Kazakh steppes. He arrived in Kirghizia to take the post of school inspector in Talas *rayon* in 1920. From there he traveled throughout the Kirghiz territories collecting oral material of all kinds. In 1921 he worked as a school headmaster on the south shore of Issyk Kul and directed an amateur "Folk Literature Collecting Club." A conscientious scholar, apparently on behalf of this group Miftakov drafted a guide to field collecting, which included the first attempt to classify Kirghiz folklore into genres. It was in this setting that Miftakov became acquainted with Sagımbay, when the latter visited Issyk Kul in November 1921.⁵⁵²

⁵⁵¹ Prior 2000.

⁵⁵² *Manas entsiklopediya*, vol. 2, p. 108; *MBSO*, vol. 1, pp. 35f.; Tokombaeva 1991; Miftakov, *Jynoo joldoru*.

We have already met Sagımbay Orozbek uulu (1867-1930), for he was a celebrated epic bard and folk poet in the Twilight Age. His association with Miftakov's circle assured his reputation as the first of the two great master bards of the twentieth century.⁵⁵³ He was well versed in a wide range of folklore genres, demonstrative of his Muslim piety, and highly inquisitive. He also had at least rudimentary skill reading Arabic letters. Sagımbay was not from a rich or powerful family, and his professional career as an epic bard and *akın* had passed, in the usual way, under the patronage of various Kirghiz chieftains, mostly of the Sarıbagış tribe. His father, who died when Sagımbay was three years old, had been a musician in the retinue of the Sarıbagış *manap* Ormon. Sagımbay began to sing epic poetry at the age of 16 after being commanded in a dream by an apparition of Semetey. His teachers included Tımbek, Balık, Naymanbay, his own elder brother Alışer, and old Keldibek, to whom he was related on his mother's side. Keldibek took care to teach Sagımbay the musical and gestural aspects of performance. Tımbek is remembered to have instructed the younger bard on "the importance of singing the epic purely, without adding anything."⁵⁵⁴ The talent for invention stayed with Sagımbay his whole life, however, and greatly affected the form of his recorded *Manas* (for example, his trip to the Tashkent Zoo in 1924 was thought to be the inspiration for his epic description of the menagerie in the pleasure-garden of Alooqe Khan⁵⁵⁵). Alışer was especially known for his version of Semetey's journey to Ay-čürök, and it was primarily as a *Semetey*-singer that Sagımbay was famous also. Sagımbay

⁵⁵³ The second was Sayakbay Karalayev (1894-1971). See Kydyrbaeva 1994, pp. 26-30; *Manas entsiklopediya*, vol. 2, pp. 184-190.

⁵⁵⁴ *MBSO*, p. 30f. Cf. Soltonoyev's opinion that Tımbek sang the "pure" *Manas* (Soltonoyev, *Kırgız tarıkhı*, vol. 2, p. 164; cf. p. 191, above)

⁵⁵⁵ Ibraimov 1987, p. 12.

traveled widely in Kirghizia, and in 1916 he joined in the post-rebellion exodus to China. He returned home the following year.

In Sagımbay, Miftakov appears not to have been expecting to find a practitioner of the (to use his term) *erlik čon ırlar*⁵⁵⁶ 'heroic epics' of Manas and Semetey.⁵⁵⁷ It was getting on towards winter when they met near Issyk Kul in 1921, and although Sagımbay agreed to sing *Manas* for Miftakov, he was in a hurry to get back home over the mountains to Narın and return his borrowed horse. So the work was put off until the following year. In May 1922, Miftakov set off from the village of Toñ on a six-month expedition to the Narın region in the company of the young Kirghiz collector Saparbay Sooronbayev. With help from the local Soviet government (*ispolkom*) director in Narın, İbrayım Toyçinov, the word was spread that folklore collectors were in the area, and the team stayed busy working with other people until Sagımbay could be found and summoned from the summer pastures. During this interval, Miftakov met the literate bard Togolok Moldo, and recorded from him about 2,000 lines of the epic of Semetey's journey to Ay-čürök.⁵⁵⁸ Miftakov had earlier admonished the collectors in his club not to

⁵⁵⁶ Miftakov, *Jıynoo joldoru*, p. 11.

⁵⁵⁷ Miftakov's guide to collecting Kirghiz folklore, dated Autumn 1921, mentions Sagımbay's talents in numerous other genres and alludes to texts Miftakov collected from Sagımbay, evidently during this first meeting. None of them were epics (Miftakov, *Jıynoo joldoru*, pp. 12f.). This fact does not quite hang with another recollection by Miftakov, cited by Musaev (*MBSO*, vol. 1, pp. 35f., from an archive document not examined by the present writer), that Sagımbay was in the Issyk Kul area singing *Manas* among the people when Miftakov met him in late 1921.

⁵⁵⁸ *MBSO*, vol. 1, p. 36. This text, *SBA* [MS KF 68(262)], according to the periodization adopted in this study, is the last Kirghiz epic recorded in the Twilight Age. The present writer closely examined the MS, and concluded that while the poem is interesting for matters of diction and theme, the close resemblance of its plot to *STJ* and *SMB(2)* renders it surplus evidence in evaluating the general structural character of the Twilight Age epics. The approximately 2,050-line text begins with a short introduction, followed by Semetey's departure in search of Ak-şunkar, as in *SMB(2)*; it ends as Ay-čürök scolds Semetey for attempting a tryst in her father's house, as in *STJ*. The ending of *SBA* suggests how the confused and abrupt ending of *STJ* should have proceeded: Semetey goes in search of Ay-čürök in her father's house because (*contra STJ*) the two *did not* consummate their union earlier in the evening; she rebukes him for trying to have

record material performed by "people who have memorized from books, teachers, and schoolchildren," since these will mostly recite book-learning.⁵⁵⁹ Perhaps he viewed his session with the literate Togolok Moldo as a trial run for recording from Sagımbay.

They looked for Sagımbay at his home, but he was away. They came upon him at last at K  k-torpok,⁵⁶⁰ where people had gathered to hear him sing *Manas*. Miftakov wrote:

We have found Sagımbay. They had slaughtered a sheep for him at one house,⁵⁶¹ and he was singing "The Memorial Feast for K  k  t  y Khan." We had also come to hear "Manas," so we told him to continue singing. Everyone sat listening without making a sound. The audience were like ants all around the house. The profound content of "Manas," along with his pleasing voice and music drew everyone to him like iron filings to a magnet.⁵⁶²

Miftakov and Sooronbayev stayed with Sagımbay for about a week, and listened to *The Memorial Feast for K  k  t  y Khan* and *The Great Campaign*. They were then joined by two other Kirghiz collectors,   aki Kaptagayev and   ırayım Abdırakhmanov. After Miftakov instructed the collectors how to carry out the work of recording, the sessions were begun in June or July at      at. Abdırakhmanov (1888-1967), a schoolteacher, was a developing *Manas*-performer himself, having learned from hearing Akılbek, Dıykanbay, Jandake, and other bards. He was also a talented scribe. Miftakov wrote:

the wedding night before the wedding. Further examination of this interesting *Semetey* created by a well-known pupil of Tımbek and Sagımbay awaits later opportunities. Sooronov (1981, pp. 76-117) discusses the MS *Semetey* that Togolok Moldo executed in his own hand in 1936 as part of a full *Manas*-trilogy filling 11 MS volumes. This complete *Semetey* resembles the present *SBA* in the parts where the two storylines coincide. On the versatile "akın-demokrat" Togolok Moldo, see Togolok Moldo 1970; Sooronov 1981, pp. 3-16.

⁵⁵⁹ Miftakov, *Jıynoo joldoru*, p. 7.

⁵⁶⁰ Location uncertain.

⁵⁶¹   y, probably 'yurt'.

⁵⁶² *MBSO*, vol. 1, p. 36.

After slaughtering a sheep to Manas's *arbak* according to the people's custom, I had İbray, Saparbay, and Čaki Kaptagayev sit around me in front of the gathered people, and setting a pillow on my legs and a tray on top of that, we began to write. After writing a few pages, I passed the pillow and tray to İbray, and watched him write a few pages. I very much liked his cursive hand.⁵⁶³

Sooronbaev recalled:

One of İbrayım's advantages is that he writes Arabic script extremely fast. Because Sagımbay was not accustomed to reciting for dictation, we could not keep up with his recitation. Only İbrayım was able to keep up as he wrote down what he recited. This ability of İbrayım's amazed us.⁵⁶⁴

Miftakov almost immediately deputed the work of recording Sagımbay to Abdırakhmanov. Thus the minimal conditions were in place for an unprecedented field effort to put down on paper the "entire" Manas epic. Nothing is known about the genesis of this precise idea, but it is clear from the way the work progressed that Sagımbay and his scribe worked methodically toward this goal from the outset.

Other conditions were not favorable.⁵⁶⁵ Financial support and organization for the project were insufficient. The recordings occurred in different locations around the Tian Shan, wherever the participants could find help. Sagımbay suffered from pain due to a progressive nervous disorder, which caused occasional halts to the work. He often had to return to his family, who lived in poverty. The first six months' work in 1922 produced some 18,000 lines of text, which gives an indication of the slow rate of progress that was made.⁵⁶⁶ Miftakov (who stayed indirectly involved) and Abdırakhmanov were unable to compensate Sagımbay appropriately, but he kept at the work out of an apparent

⁵⁶³ İbraimov 1987, p. 12.

⁵⁶⁴ İbraimov 1987, pp. 12f.

⁵⁶⁵ On the Sagımbay sessions, see the Preface to *MBSO*, vol. 1, pp. 24-75; and İbraimov 1987, pp. 9-21.

⁵⁶⁶ *MBSO*, vol. 1, p. 38.

friendship with Abdirakhmanov, and no doubt because the project seemed worth his time in immaterial ways.

The infant Soviet government exuded some paperwork on the project but offered neither material nor moral support. Abdirakhmanov and Sagımbay were called to Tashkent in 1924 to present themselves and their work-in-progress to the newly formed Scientific Committee. A young Kirghiz official, Khusain Karasayev (1902-1997) received the pair coldly and did nothing to help them.⁵⁶⁷ Sagımbay's willingness for the work, as well as his powers of memory, gradually declined until the cessation of recordings in August 1926. He died in Kočkor in 1930 at the age of 63, having dictated the largest single *Manas*-version to date, totaling over 180,000 lines.⁵⁶⁸ His *Semetey*, for which he was particularly famous and which he himself said he enjoyed singing most of all, was never recorded.

We now turn to a consideration of narrative structure in Sagımbay's *Manas*. A complete critical edition of the Sagımbay performance recordings is at this time only a hoped-for goal,⁵⁶⁹ and proper understanding of this immense narrative from the standpoint of verbal art performance must remain that much farther in the future, if it can ever be achieved. The present purpose is to illuminate certain aspects of Sagımbay's composition strategy which hark back to the values of copiousness and immanence already examined in the Older Period and Twilight Age. The viewing mechanism employed here is necessarily coarse-grained. Let us first consider the general outline of Sagımbay's *Manas*. According to scholars familiar with the Sagımbay corpus in the Kirghiz manuscript archives, "Sagımbay Orozbekov's variant is made up of a number of independent plot

⁵⁶⁷ Ibraimov 1987, p. 16. Karasayev later became a prominent literary figure, *Manas* scholar, and linguist in Kirghizia.

⁵⁶⁸ *Obzor zapisei*, pp. 445f.

⁵⁶⁹ The *MBSO* unabridged series of critical editions headed by Samar Musayev, which has appeared in four volumes comprising some 57,000 lines so far (1995-97), was halted for financial reasons (Musayev, personal communication, July 2001).

lines which unify a group of complete episodes. These are the so-called cycles,⁵⁷⁰ which are organically connected with each other and which, by their respective logical distribution, consecutively reveal the epic biography of the hero Manas."⁵⁷¹ The authors then identify ten "cycles" in Sagımbay's version:

- I. The birth and childhood of Manas. Young Manas's first clashes with enemies. Election of Manas as khan.
- II. Manas's battle with the Katagan hero Koşoy against enemies.
- III. Manas's campaign to the Ala-too to liberate the land of his ancestors.
- IV. Migration of the Kirghiz, led by Manas, from the Altay to the Ala-too.
Victory over Alook Khan; battle and victory over Šooruk.
- V. The story of Almambet, companion of Manas.
- VI. Manas's marriage to Kanıkey.
- VII. The intrigue of Manas's kinsmen, the Kōz-kamans.
- VIII. The memorial feast for Kōkötöy, one of Manas's elder brothers-in-arms.
- IX. The great campaign of Manas to Beijin.
- X. The little campaign of Manas against Koñur-bay. Death of Manas.

The salient characteristic of Sagımbay's narrative plan is the biographical arrangement and completeness of these "cycles." This did not come about by chance. The first episode Sagımbay narrated to the Miftakov team at the commencement of the sessions in 1922 was the "Birth and Childhood of Manas."⁵⁷² Recording proceeded

⁵⁷⁰ *tsikly*, denoting the parts of what would be called in English a cycle.

⁵⁷¹ *Obzor zapisei*, p. 446.

⁵⁷² *Obzor zapisei*, p. 445. The "Birth" episode has been examined in relation to I,1) by Hatto; see Hatto 1969b. See also Hatto's general comments about Sagımbay's *Manas* in *MWR*, pp. xiv f.

largely in the order of the "cycles" shown above for the next four years. Thus already from the start the bard's intention to narrate the story of Manas's life was clear. Sagımbay deserves recognition for this. There is no evidence that any bard in the past had ever conceived of or attempted to narrate the *Manas*-epics as a complete biography of the hero. In this the influence of his patrons, especially Miftakov, cannot be ruled out. It is worthwhile to consider the apparent interest with which Miftakov sought out Sagımbay for recording *Manas*. There were other capable bards available to Miftakov—Togolok Moldo was immediately at hand that summer—but Miftakov single-mindedly waited for and then pursued Sagımbay over the course of nearly a year. One is led to wonder whether this was because Miftakov had intimated at their first meeting that he was looking for someone to narrate the whole *Manas* (including *Semetey*, which was also "on the table" at that time), and Sagımbay had replied that he could do it. There was a distinct tendency in the progress of recording *Manas* from other bards, later in the Later Period, to narrate either "Manas's Birth/Childhood" or the "Great Campaign" first, and if the "Great Campaign," then the "Birth/Childhood" second. Some bards never recorded more than these two episodes.⁵⁷³ This points to a growing bookish conception of the *Manas* story, and to a notion no doubt reinforced by bards and collectors in cooperation, that to tell the whole story one must begin at the beginning, allowances being made for the "Great Campaign," most bards' best episode. No few bards seem to have given up the work of dictation at a point far short of Sagımbay's benchmark. (Notable exceptions include Sayakbay Karalay uulu, Moldobasan Musulmankul uulu, and Šapak Rısmende uulu, whose versions were rather full.)

⁵⁷³ *Obzor zapisei*, pp. 457-486.

Three characteristics of Sagımbay's *Manas* are especially interesting from the point of view of the Twilight Age. First, the epics taken down from Sagımbay are the first to substitute *Kırgız* for *Nogoy* as the name of the paramount tribe of heroes. This befits the nation-building atmosphere of the early Soviet period which could not have failed to penetrate even into the Tian Shan, if at first, perhaps, only in the person of the pan-Turkist Miftakov. Second, Sagımbay resisted the trend among contemporary bards to narrate "The Memorial Feast for Kökötöy Khan" as part of *Semetey*, where this colorful and beloved episode was coming to lodge, as a flashback, as the rest of the *Manas*-poems apparently declined in popularity.⁵⁷⁴ Third, Sagımbay narrated the earliest recorded example of the well-known *Čoŋ kazat* ("Great Campaign"). This was the story that Sagımbay and Jüsübakun had recited in competition in 1916, when Sagımbay was felt to have "hurried" for taking only an entire winter's night to get the heroes to Beijin. Judging by the program of the first Sagımbay-performances the Miftakov team witnessed but did not record, the Kökötöy episode and the *Čoŋ kazat* were among the favorite *Manas*-episodes of the late Twilight Age.

For purposes of diachronic analysis, it will be useful to compare the plot of one of Sagımbay's *Manas*- "cycles" with an earlier counterpart. *Köz-kaman* is a good example, since it was shown that the Older Period version of this epic, Radloff's I,5), was tightly constructed using high scenes, epic moments, and narrative contracts. Following is a full translation of the synopsis of Sagımbay's *Köz-kaman* episode ("Cycle VII") from the "Survey of Recordings" in the Kirghiz Manuscript Archives.⁵⁷⁵ According to the

⁵⁷⁴ See Mamırov 1963, pp. 20, 34f.; Sooronov 1981, pp. 105-110.

⁵⁷⁵ *Obzor zapisei*, pp. 452ff. The text of Sagımbay's *Köz-kaman* has never been published, and may not be for a long time. It is found in heavily abridged form in *MSSYu*. See the prose synopsis in Kirghiz in Musaev 1986, pp. 124-138; and the résumé in Russian in Žirmunskii 1961, pp. 108f.

"Survey," the text occupies one codex along with the episode of Manas's marriage to Kanikey, the two episodes together totaling 23,950 lines.⁵⁷⁶

1. Manas's meeting with the nomadizing camp of the Kōz-kamans (Kōz-kaman is the nickname of Üsön, Manas's paternal uncle).
2. Manas's campaign against the Afghan khan Tülkü:
 - News from the Teit and Katagan of Tülkü's encroachment. Manas's decision to go campaigning against Tülkü.
 - Capture from among the troops of Manas of the boy Bok-murun, son of Kōkötöy, by one of Tülkü's magicians. The love between Bok-murun (who is about to be executed) and Kanišay, daughter of Tülkü.
 - Capture by Manas's magicians of Akun, younger brother of Tülkü, and other Afghan heroes.
 - Battle between the troops of Manas and Tülkü. Single combat of the heroes.
 - Halt of hostilities by Tülkü on the request of Akun, whom the Kirghiz have sent home honorably. Peace between the Kirghiz and the Afghans.
 - Agreement of Manas and Akun to betrothe their children to each other.
 - Agreement of Manas and Tülkü to betrothe Kanišay to Bok-murun when they come of age.
 - Manas's return home with his troops.
3. Arrival in Kirghiz territory of the nomadizing camp of the Kōz-kamans, who have long been living among the Kalmaks:
 - Manas's and Kanikey's honorable welcome of Kōz-kaman and his sons

⁵⁷⁶ *Obzor zapisei*, p. 445.

with the holding of a great feast.⁵⁷⁷

- The discontent of the Kōz-kamans because Manas received them by Muslim, not Kalmak custom. Decision of the Kōz-kamans to kill Manas and take over his power.

- Allotment to Kōz-kaman's son Kōkčö-köz, by his request, of Suusamır for a nomadizing ground.

4. Manas's campaign to the west:

- Meeting of Manas and the Forty Companions with the Aryan (?) people (*aari*). Battle, and Manas's victory.

- Return to the mountain Aziret—Kara-too. Manas's preparations for migration to the Talas and Chu rivers. Apportionment of lands in At-başı to the Kōz-kamans.

5. The Kōz-kamans' action against Manas.

- Holding of a feast by Bay-jigit before migration to the Altay:

- Decision of Japak (son of Manas's uncle Šıgay) to take revenge on Manas during the feast and take over his rule. Instigation by Japak.

- Attack on Manas by Japak and his brothers, who have come from their *aul*. Help given to Manas by his heroes.

6. Campaign of Manas against the Kenjut ruler Aygan Khan:

- Departure on campaign at the suggestion of Almambet.

- Death of Marduba, magician of Aygan Khan, at the hands of Almambet, who has come on reconnaissance.

⁵⁷⁷ Žirmunskii (1961, p. 108) supplies the salient detail that in this version Bakay converts the Kōz-kamans to Islam, which they only pretend to accept.

- Almambet's infiltration of Aygan Khan's city disguised as Marduba. His arrival at the wedding of Aygan Khan's daughter, Altınay.
 - Manas' capture of Aygan Khan's palace.
 - Manas's marriage to Altınay, and Almambet's marriage to Dilaram.
7. The Kōz-kamans' plot against Manas.
- The Kōz-kamans' invitation to Manas to visit them in their *aul*.
 - Attempt by the Kōz-kamans to poison Manas and his companions.
- Manas's rescue by Boz-uul, who manages to get him out of Kōkčö-köz' house. Rescue of the Forty Companions by *čilten*.⁵⁷⁸
- Wounding of Manas by Kōkčö-köz.
 - Kanıkey's dream portending evil.
 - Kōkčö-köz' proclamation of himself as khan, and his demand that Kanıkey become his wife. Kanıkey's request for a seven-month reprieve.
 - Manas's arrival at the feast held by Kōkčö-köz before his wedding to Kanıkey.
 - Quarrels of the Kōz-kamans, who then kill each other.

It will be remembered on the basis of what is now known about the technical aspects of Twilight Age epic narrative that high scenes, epic moments, and narrative contracts were a thing of the past. It remains to consider what different techniques Sagımbay used in constructing his immensely long narrative. At this coarse resolution, we first note that there are obvious digressions. Episodes 2, 4, and 5 have no relation to the Kōz-kaman plot. Tınıbek's admonition to his voluble protégé to narrate Manas

⁵⁷⁸ On the forty *čilten*, see n. 372, above.

"purely, without adding anything" comes to mind. Yet regarding episode 2, Sagımbay's intentions are plain, and reveal his shrewdness. That digression contains two facts essential to the overall development of his story: Manas's agreement with Akun to betrothe their children, and with Tülkü to betrothe his daughter to Bok-murun. The first incident refers forward to the story of Semetey and Ay-čürök. The second helps to set up Sagımbay's version of the Kökötöy-episode, where Kökötöy gives his testament and dies while Bok-murun is away on the journey to woo Tülkü's daughter.⁵⁷⁹

Sagımbay's *Manas* is a valuable resource for the investigation of narrative structure in the Twilight Age of the tradition, because his composition emphasizes the copious and immanent modes. A.T. Hatto's ideas on Sagımbay, though sharply worded, provide a useful point of departure:

[. . .] the outpourings of singers like Sagımbay and Sayakbay are in some ways clearly sub-literary, even at times sub-theatrical, with innovations in style, content and characterization too massive for the traditional elements embedded in them to support. There is an intellectualist vein running through their compositions, recorded sometimes at inordinate length in the laboratory, which encouraged them to introduce a plethora of names of heroes, tribes and places, a veritable rag-bag of zealous compilation, one might almost say of lay-minded folklore-collecting.⁵⁸⁰

On the basis of first-hand field work in India, L. Honko provides a concrete, performance-oriented picture of bardic "innovations" in lengthy epic compositions:

In larger compositions the contribution of one singer's creativity often plays a decisive role: songs sung separately by other singers may be knit together by a talented and ambitious bard[.] Thus the individuality of great epic formations grows in the hands of a fairly limited number of performers. This process of composition may be purely oral, yet it possesses some similarity with the editing process codified in writing into

⁵⁷⁹ *MMSO*, vol. 3, ll. 85ff.

⁵⁸⁰ *MWR*, p. xv.

a linear text. In other words, the best singers have been good editors,
too.⁵⁸¹

Sagımbay was very good at planning an overarching narrative, as is witnessed by the foreshadowings of both *The Memorial Feast for Kökötöy Khan* and *Semetey* which he inserted into his *Köz-kaman*. His loss to Jüsübakun in 1916 over the issue of who narrated *The Great Campaign* more fulsomely even suggests that it was his expeditiousness, not expansiveness, that suited him so well to getting a complete *Manas* down on paper. Next to the copious potentialities vaunted in Jüsübakun's performance, Sagımbay's four years off-and-on singing 180,000 lines appears economical.

It well befits Honko's challenging phrase "the enigma of the long epic"⁵⁸² that Sagımbay's enormously long *Manas* was the work of an oral editor who was relatively skilled by the standards of his times. He neither sang heroic poetry nor was he, or had he ever been, a heroic poet in our sense. His purview was another oral form to which his vast knowledge of folklore also made him eminently suited. This is a mode of composition which we call "epopee," following Hatto:

I suggest we revive the obsolete English word 'epopee' for large-scale, amorphous compilations of heroic and sub-heroic narrative material, like the [Persian] *Shahname*. Such are mostly literary works, but the vast assemblages of already full-scale epics in the laboratory recordings of the twentieth-century wholesaling Kirghiz bards Sagymbay and Sayakbay, [. . .] offer examples of technically oral 'epopees'.⁵⁸³

Sagımbay's *Manas* shows us that Honko and Hatto are really describing the same thing. Both authors refer to the compilative nature of long epic production, Honko even envisaging an element of "editing." The epigraph to this chapter presented Sagımbay's

⁵⁸¹ Honko 1995, pp. 29f.

⁵⁸² Honko 1998a, p. 54.

⁵⁸³ Hatto 1994, p. 123.

own words on the subject of composition: "This was written by Sagımbay the poet; if you approve, raise hands in prayer!" Sagımbay was proud to be in association with a scribe, and his *Manas* is a gesture toward literature, an "oral book."

The oral composition of epopee must be viewed as a set of active techniques, not merely as a bard's quantitative capacity to fill the available volume in a collector's notebook or tape. An epopee is a compilation of epic narrative and other material done in a self-conscious attempt to capitalize on various formal, stylistic, and metatextual possibilities that attend great length. In the epopee *Joloy Khan*, one formal possibility the bard exploited was to mimic a generational hero-cycle in one pass. On the level of style, the bard of the epopee I,3) *Manas's Duel with Er Kökçö; The Marriage, Death and Return to Life of Manas* returns to the theme of Manas's relationship with the Czar, as to a leitmotif, at every shift in the strange plot. The metatextual sphere is the one in which Sagımbay obliged the collectors with a notionally "complete" *Manas* fashioned onto an all-encompassing super-plot. The compilative quality of the epopee's construction thus blurs distinctions between single-session and multiple-session performances. Achievements in epopee composition embody both copiousness and immanence, and will accrue kudos for the bard in the right setting.

For Sagımbay, the dawn of Kirghiz national consciousness was just this setting. The ultimate cultural correlation of the Kirghiz epic tradition with Kirghiz national identity was a slow process that really began after Sagımbay died. Being a part of the early history of the Soviet Union, it was a painful transformation under the powerful and temperamental auspices of the state, which loomed heavily over the traditional league of bards, patrons, and audiences.⁵⁸⁴ Yet Sagımbay's phenomenal *Manas* lay readily to hand

⁵⁸⁴ Prior 2000.

as each generation of Kirghiz attempted to come to terms with its past as a nation.

Sagimbay's *Manas* not only set the artistic template for ambitious oral epic bards such as Sayakbay, but it also helped to define for population and state alike the possibilities and limitations of Kirghiz nationhood. In short, it became a Kirghiz classic.

The *Kanikey's Tale* of Šaabay Aziz uulu (KTŠA)

I never imagined, when I patronized and recorded an epic performance by the bard Šaabay Aziz uulu in June 1996, that the material I obtained would find its way into my already-planned research on the Twilight Age of the Kirghiz epic tradition. I offer these comments on a late Later Period performance by way of departure, to suggest how specific narrative concerns of a bard of the present day resemble and differ from those of his predecessors a century ago and more. The *Kanikey's Tale* (part of *Semetey*) of Šaabay Aziz uulu, preserved in a 16-minute dual VHS recording (bard and audience) constituting some 400 lines, was recorded on June 26, 1996, at San-taš pass east of Issyk Kul. The bard was Šaabay Aziz uulu (b. 1927), one of the most highly respected living Kirghiz epic bards. The collector was myself, assisted by a professional camera crew from Bishkek. The audience consisted of a few dozen rural Kirghiz. The occasion was "San-taš–140," a festival commemorating the 140th anniversary of Čokan Valikhanov's encounter with his bard at San-taš pass in 1856. The festival was attended by a total of about 250 people. My personal involvement in the occasion was seminal;⁵⁸⁵ full details

⁵⁸⁵ See Prior 1996. In 1995, the Kirghiz government had celebrated the so-called "Manas Millennium" anniversary, fueling an intense renewal of popular interest in the epic. The people I persuaded to organize San-taš–140 were well aware of my own skeptical opinion of the recent ideological turn in the epic's cultural history. I feel deeply grateful for the open-mindedness and trust with which the people of Kirghizstan have permitted me to participate in the national discussion of their traditions.

on the context of the performance await publication along with an edition and discussion of the text, now in preparation. Šaabay was present on my initiative, and I awarded him a traditional honorarium after the performance.

Since the Kirghiz republic gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, the epic of *Manas* has become the symbol of the Kirghiz people's political revival. It is even promoted as official state ideology, a perhaps unique status for an epic poem anywhere in the world at the present time.⁵⁸⁶ Epic bards today such as Šaabay Aziz uulu are respected bearers of the cultural and spiritual patrimony of the Kirghiz nation. The San-taš–140 festival was in theory a favorable venue for the performance of Kirghiz epic poetry. At the heart of the festival program was a return to the place where Čokan Valikhanov had been camped in 1856 when he met his anonymous *Manas* bard.⁵⁸⁷ The yurts for the festival were pitched along the banks of the Tüp river on the exact spot where Valikhanov had drawn the yurts of his campsite in a sketch. This place had been

Major support for San-taš–140 was provided by the Kirghiz National Academy of Sciences, the Kazakh National Academy of Sciences, the Kirghiz Geographical Society, the Tüp District Administration, the Kirghiz Ministry of Culture, the Kirghiz Government Ideological Department, the Embassy of the Netherlands, the Embassy of Kazakhstan, the Kirghiz National Commission on UNESCO, the German Technical Cooperation Agency, and Mr. Max Haberstroh. The monument was designed by People's Artist of the Kirghiz Republic Theodor Herzen and produced under his and my joint supervision by the Northern Kirghiz Geological Expedition; the inscription text was drafted by Sadıbakas Ömürzakov and Samar Musayev; installation of the monument at San-taš pass was completed by the Issyk-Kul Geological Expedition under my supervision. The videofilm was produced by the Epos International Film and Video Center. The people of San-taš Village and environs were universally hospitable and helpful. Special mention must also be made of the crucial personal contributions which Rasul Sopiev, Kubat Düšaliev, and Šaabay Azizov made to the occasion.

⁵⁸⁶ Prior 2000.

⁵⁸⁷ At the time of the occasion, I had not yet entered into the confident opinion I now share with others in Kirghizia that Nazar Bolot was Valikhanov's bard. I record my satisfaction and appreciation that the San-taš–140 scholarly conference held in Bishkek prior to the festival became the venue for Omor Erketanov's paper that reports on the relevant oral history text preserved in the Kirghiz Archives (Erketanov 1996).

rediscovered by me in 1994.⁵⁸⁸ A stone monument was unveiled on a nearby spot that gives a view of the location.

Šaabay Aziz uulu⁵⁸⁹ was born in 1927 and lives in the Issyk-Kul oblast of Kirghizstan, not far from San-taš pass. A Bugu of the Arik clan, he is the nephew and indirect inheritor of the bardic tradition of the famous Twilight Age bard Čoyuke, whose work was never recorded. Šaabay learned to sing *Manas* from his father Aziz, Čoyuke's brother, but his artistic development was also greatly influenced by Sayakbay Karalayev, who brought the recitation of Kirghiz epic poetry into the mass media age on radio, film, and television. Many of Šaabay's musical and vocal traits, as well as mannerisms, reflect the powerful influence Sayakbay has had on the popular image of the *manasčı*, or *Manas*-bard. Šaabay knows all three parts of the *Manas* generational cycle—*Manas*, *Semetey*, and *Seytek*, as well as epics about the son, grandson, and great-grandson of Seytek. His work has been recorded in writing and stored in the Archives of the Kirghiz Academy of Sciences. He is one of two bards today who are commonly styled Čoŋ (great) *manasčı*.

The performance situation was fully "induced" by the camera crew. Šaabay, dressed in national costume, was seated cross-legged on a cushion placed on the grass about 20 meters in front of one of the yurts. About five meters in front of him, a crescent-shaped group of 45 to 50 sitting and standing people faced Šaabay; the cameramen were positioned in the audience and behind him. A microphone lay in the grass in the middle.

Certain aspects of the performance circumstances appear to have been unfavorable for the production of a fully realized oral epic poem. Around and behind us, people went to and fro and took almost no notice of the performance. Others, including

⁵⁸⁸ Prior 1996; Prior 1998a.

⁵⁸⁹ See *Manas entsiklopediya*, vol. 2, pp. 343f.

young men on horseback, came and went around the fringes of the group and took a passing interest. People talked, and children ran around and played. Besides my wife and me, the audience consisted almost entirely of local Kirghiz. Not one member of the Bishkek festival contingent—nor any other V.I.P.—stopped to listen. This fact is striking when one considers that the dignitaries included the head of the government ideological department (a high-ranking official steward of the epic tradition) and the director of the quasi-governmental “Manas Millennium” office. Numerous eminent *Manas* scholars were at the feast, yet none of them paid any attention to the performance. But organization that day was almost nonexistent; one possible explanation for the absence of the chief guests from the performance is that these people were being given hospitality by local hosts in the different yurts and may not have known or felt free to go outside when the performance began. The uninvited hangers-on at the feast, outside the yurts, thus made up most of the audience. Šaabay's performance of *Kanikey's Tale* resembles the Twilight Age *Semetey* of Kenje Kara in being the work of "a good bard on a bad day."⁵⁹⁰

The subject of the popular *Kanikey's Tale* is an exchange between Semetey and Kanikey [cf. I,6) and *SMB* (1)]. Manas has been murdered at home in Talas and his realm usurped, leaving his widow Kanikey and infant son Semetey in danger. Kanikey fled and hid with her son, never revealing Semetey's identity to him until he reached the age of twelve. Now Kanikey explains to Semetey his origins and destiny. The grand set-piece of the poem is Kanikey's description of the pictures she drew on the inner walls of Manas's tomb.⁵⁹¹ Manas and all the main heroes are portrayed, and their attributes and exploits are recounted. It is thus common for contemporary bards to embed cyclically allusive

⁵⁹⁰ Prior 1998b.

⁵⁹¹ Cf. *SMB*(1).

epithets and narrative material from *Manas* into *Kanikey's Tale*. The episode presents a bard with almost unlimited opportunities to reproduce—rapidly, in a form that is compressed but still nominally epic—the broad sweep of the venerable *Manas* epics. This may be the reason for its great popularity at the present time.

It is highly probable that Šaabay was taking advantage of just this opportunity for metonymic communication when he sang *Kanikey's Tale*. The hubbub surrounding the performance and the audience's uncertain attention put Šaabay in a position something like a sideshow. But epic poetry is the revered national patrimony of the Kirghiz, and the listeners would desire a clear impression that they were experiencing and participating in their epic tradition, even if they could not follow it completely. In such a situation, plot could be sacrificed and the poem could be crowded instead with runs of easily recognizable names, epithets and events.

Not taking into account the embedded events that Kanikey narrates, the action of the poem consists of:

- (1) a speech by Kanikey (over half the length of the poem)
- (2) a short reply by Semetey; he is skeptical of the truth of (1)
- (3) Kanikey's reply and speech (the rest of the poem)

Within (1), the speech is broken down as:

- (1a) Kanikey's narration of Manas's Great Campaign to China, his death, the reduction of his realm, and Kanikey's flight to safety with Semetey
- (1b) Kanikey's command to Semetey to visit Manas's tomb, and a description of its contents, including spirit-guardians
- (1c) Kanikey's further narration of events from Manas's career, in four main parts: his conquests and conversion of peoples to Islam, his fateful encounter with the warrior-maiden Kız Saykal, his good qualities as a ruler, and his successes in displacing the Kalmaks.

Within (3), the speech is broken down as:

- (3a) Kanikey's retort to Semetey
- (3b) Kanikey's description of how she built Manas's tomb
- (3c) Kanikey's enumeration of the heroes and heroines she drew on the inner walls of the tomb: Manas, Almambet, Čubak, Kırın-čal, Šuutu-čal, Bakay, Košoy, Čıyırđı, and herself.

In the context of its overall structure, it is not surprising that *KTŠA* lacks epic moments. Šaabay's central narrative concern in the performance has been moved outside the narrative, onto the pragmatic level. It would not be over-bold to say that the central concern is the bard's own effort to impart meaning in the face of the challenging performance circumstances. Substantial cyclic allusions occur throughout the poem, but they are especially rich in (3c), the description of the tomb-pictures, where the allusions take the form of heroes' epithets. Through cyclic allusions and catalogs, Šaabay was able at one and the same time to induce his audience to pay respects to the breadth of the *Manas*-cycle, to suggest his own mastery over the subject matter, and to honor his audience's genuine need to have a first-rate cultural experience. Šaabay thus skilfully exploited the audience's attitude and expectations to elevate the event as best he could.

Analysis of the text of *KTŠA* reveals the gratifying knowledge that a venerable compound of Kirghiz epic diction, Košoy's "king-epithet,"⁵⁹² proved to be quite stable during the 140 years since Nazar sang *MKNB*. It will be recalled that Šaabay learned from Aziz, who learned from Čoyuke, who had heard Nazar sing, and that all of these bards originated from the Arık Bugu east of Issyk Kul. Compare Nazar's version in *MKNB* with Šaabay's version in *KTŠA*:

⁵⁹² Hatto 1981.

(Nazar, 1856)

Uluu da Taudu jaylagan
altınduu közdüü Madyan
başınan üzböy baylagan
el agası Er Koşoy,
ton jakası Er Koşoy,
at takası Er Koşoy—
bekip kalgan Bešetin
jüzün ačkan Er Koşoy,
turup kalgan Turpanın
jolun ačkan Er Koşoy
baylanıp kalgan bazardıñ
bağın ačkan Er Koşoy!⁵⁹³

one that summers on Ulu-tau, that keeps golden-eyed Madyan always
tethered by the head, the elder of the people, as a collar is to its robe, as a
shoe is to a steed—Er Koşoy, who revealed the face of Beshet⁵⁹⁴ that had
been shut in, who opened the way to Uch-turfan that had lain dormant,
who restored prosperity to markets grown stagnant—Er Koşoy!

(Šaabay, 1996)

At-başını jaylagan,
Čeč-döbönün üstündö,
kırk karaboz külüktü,
külüktü türkün baylagan
Katagandın Er Koşoy—
Bekip kalgan Beyiştin
beşigin ačkan Er Koşoy,
tügönüp kalgan Kokandın
jolun ačkan Er Koşoy,
baylanıp turgan bazardıñ
baasın bıčkan Er Koşoy!⁵⁹⁵

the one who ranged in At-başı at the head of Čeč-döbö, who kept forty
dark-grey racers tethered all together: Er Koşoy of the Katagan, Er Koşoy
who opened the cradle of Paradise⁵⁹⁶ that was shut, Er Koşoy who opened

⁵⁹³ *KO* 532-543.

⁵⁹⁴ Hatto's note on this line says "Presumably the great trading city of Mashhad"; while the sound-correspondence is apt, the most likely Mashhad is not the city in Khorasan but the town of the same name, a suburb of Artuš north of Kashghar, the site of the tomb-shrines of Abū'n-Nasr Sāmānī and Satūq Bughrā Khān. See Jarring 1980, pp. 86 (esp. n. 10), 99; Grénard 1900. p. 10.

⁵⁹⁵ *KTŠA*, II. 378-388.

⁵⁹⁶ On the philology and historical background of this unstable formula, cf. Hatto's note at *KO*, pp. 139f., n. to l. 538. Cf. also the lament for Čokčoloy in Radloff, *Obraztsy*, p. 595, l. 36: *Mekädin beš ešigi açılsın* 'may the five doors of Mecca be opened!'. Assuming that *beš ešigi* 'its

the way to Kokand that had been obstructed, Er Košoy, who set to rights the prices in the markets!

In 1994, when I discovered the location by the Tüp river where Valikhanov had met his *Manas*-bard, I found myself wishing for a listening-into-the-past machine to hear the bard in performance. It was not foreseeable at that time that my subsequent efforts would result in the airing once again of an identification of that bard, and of plausible confirmation that Valikahnov's *Kökötöy*-manuscript originated from him there. Nor was it knowable that an artistic descendant of that bard would be brought to the same spot and would sing a vestige of the same tale. It was deeply satisfying to have inadvertently contrived this listening-into-the-past machine out of an epic bard and his audience. However, I must admit that my satisfaction glows at a certain remove from the hearth-fire of the tradition; what do Kirghiz epic audiences today need with the written-down words of Nazar, when they have their Šaabay to sing to them?

five doors' was the original form, *bešigi* 'its cradle' would be a natural corruption (though semantically disappointing), and may have occurred long before Šaabay learned the passage. The last six lines clearly reflect Košoy's eminent status as a mountaineer *ghāzī* facilitating the achievement of Kokandian designs on Kashghar in the early nineteenth century; cf. *KO* 544-547; Saguchi 1965.

Figure 4. Šaabay Aziz uulu at San-taš pass, June 26, 1996.

In medias res: Conclusions and Departures

While arguing to differing ends, Aristotle and Horace expressed similar opinions about epic action. Aristotle placed higher value on epics treating of a single action than those that narrate the biography of a hero; Horace advised epic poets to begin narrating an action not at the beginning, but *in medias res*, in the thick of things. Let us consider how these two ideas, so well-known in literary studies, relate to the theory of oral composition presented in the preceding chapters. The creative intersection between epic narrative structure and heroic ethos, as discussed above, essentially puts the poet and the hero on stage together. The poet assumes responsibility in performance for a display of narrative competence; his success is in a sense parallel to the hero's display of competence in the action of the story. In the scene of Almambet's trial against Er Kökčö, for example, Almambet and the epic bard can both be perceived as giving complex and exacting performances, and they succeed in their performances through each other. This notion may not seem particularly riveting, appearing as it does to apply to almost any story with a protagonist. However, we have been able to show in the analyses above that this creative intersection in the Kirghiz epic tradition was highly distinctive and characteristic of—here we narrow the meaning of a common word—*heroic* epic poetry. Aristotle's and Horace's ideas on epic action hover nearby: an epic dealing with a single action will naturally invite evaluations of action,⁵⁹⁷ and an epic beginning *in medias res* forces one to build one's appreciation of the story on the basis of what the hero *does* from the very beginning. Either scenario is automatically fraught with questions like, "How is the hero going to get out of that spot?" An epic tradition where the requirements and

⁵⁹⁷ Cf. the epigraph to the Introduction, above.

implications of heroes' actions have been developed and have acquired some regularity may display the structural characteristics of epic plots which we have examined in some depth in the preceding chapters.

High scenes, epic moments, and narrative contracts are the structures used by epic bards in the process of oral composition-in-performance of heroic epic poetry. The Kirghiz oral heroic epic tradition provides excellent material for illustrating the theory and methods that have been proposed for investigating these structures. The bonus in the Kirghiz case is that the cultural history of the tradition lends itself to a diachronic approach. This type of analysis, attempted in this essay for the first time, shows how creative intersections between structure and ethos changed over time. The present research has resulted in the addition of the concept of the "high scene" to the basic terminology of the theory. High scenes are structural boundary-markers generally conceived, among which epic moments are distinguished as a special class with a particularly powerful gestural-scenic ingredient. High scenes and epic moments delineate narrative contracts in most Older Period Kirghiz epics, as exemplified with particular density and integration by the plot of I,5) *Köz-kaman*. Another type of structure-ethos formulation is illustrated by the plot of I,2) *Almambet, Er Kökčö and Ak-erkeç; How Almambet Came to Manas*, where the high scenes and epic moments constitute terms in a sort of algebraic expression of character. Other epics are mixed and contain both types of structures.

The creative intersections between structure and ethos found in the Older Period poems are the hallmark of heroic epic poetry. The rigorous narrative arcs of these epics are components of the mental text of a bard performing in a heroic cosmos. Bards compose other than heroic epic poetry in a less rigorous performance milieu, in which the

values of copiousness and immanence, though far from absent in the heroic cosmos, come freely to the fore in giving structure to epic narration. These values find expression in catalogs, descriptions, cyclic allusions and epithets, and other thematic elements. The performance conditions observed among the Kirghiz in the last one and a half centuries favored the development of two epic modes: lengthy epopees and brief, virtuosic vignettes.

Differences in narrative systems within a genre are not peculiar to oral epic poetry, or even to poetry. Dell Hymes has conceived of oral prose narratives in terms that are highly conformable and relevant to our observations on epic. In answering the question "When is oral narrative poetry?", Hymes writes, "I have stressed the need to recognize the presence of patterned relations. It is also important to recognize variation in their presence. Narrations differ in the degree to which patterning is present, and what its role is." He then enumerates ways of "modulating action" in a Wishram Chinook tale including "*itemization, extraposition, catalog, inset, and lyric moment*" (his italics). It is important to recognize these ways of modulating action in the tale, because "It would be a mistake to recognize motives only in what happens, not also in how it happens."⁵⁹⁸ Hymes's last term in his list of ways of modulating action, *lyric moment*, "a moment in which time is not marching,"⁵⁹⁹ is especially serendipitous with regard to the present research. We saw that long, lyric descriptions, as it were *lyric moments*, sprouted and flourished in Kirghiz epic bards' narrations in the Twilight Age.

Another example from Hymes's interests demonstrates the versatility and potentially wide application of the narrative concept underlying the theory of epic

⁵⁹⁸ Hymes 1998, pp. 490f.

⁵⁹⁹ Hymes 1998, p. 491.

moments. Hymes analyzes the following Clackamas story that seemingly relates a myth. The daughter of Seal notices that her uncle's (mother's brother's) wife makes a sound like a man when she urinates. She tells her mother, but is shushed. In bed at night, she feels something dripping on her face and hears noises coming from the bed above her shared by her uncle and his wife, but when she tells her mother she is silenced again, "Shush. Your uncle, they are 'going'." The girl makes a light, and discovers blood—her uncle's throat has been slit (by the wife). The mother weeps and laments, and the girl says, "In vain I tried to tell you." Hymes notes that the Clackamas story looks like an articulation of the figure "youngest smartest," and even alludes to a possible pedagogical interpretation among the story's tellers, "the girl's remarks being responsible for the death of her uncle." But looking further, he points to a historical interpretation based on comparative analysis of a wide range of Northwest Coast narrative traditions: "In these stories the 'wife' is disguised as a woman in order to revenge a relative whom the man to be killed has slain. The Coos in fact have a story in the full form in which there is precisely an incident in which a young child notices something strange about the 'wife', reports it, is shushed, and later has the consequences of the slaying drip upon it." The phrase "In vain I tried to tell you," rendered famous in folklore studies through Hymes's research, is the frozen point of a dramatic scene in which a narrative contract of revenge is fulfilled—a high scene. "As for Seal and her daughter, the dramatic realization of their expressive isolation from each other in the final scene is complete"⁶⁰⁰—the scenic set-piece is given new life in myth-tale.

⁶⁰⁰ Hymes 1981, pp. 310-316. To the set of Northwest Coast data on this theme should be added for comparative purposes, from the other side of the Pacific, the Oroch revenge-tale "The Hero Dëlonukanu" (Avrorin & Lebedeva 1966, pp. 151-160, 217): in the beginning of the story, the long-sleeping hero awakens alone to the sound of a voice in his head that tells him to get out in the world, and rising, he finds his pillow and bedding stuck to him with dripping blood. (Later he

As was said earlier, high scenes, epic moments and narrative contracts constitute a mode of performance both for the bard in composition and for the characters in the story. The heroic ethos is a performance ethos: just as the bard assumes responsibility for a display of communicative competence within a pattern of narrative-structural expectations, so the best heroes and heroines are bound to act effectively within the narration. The poetry is heroic inasmuch as the bard in performance creates a symbolic conduit of expectations linking his own work with the actions of the characters. The bard co-signs all contracts and, for the sake of his own kudos as much as for the heroes', announces the status and fulfilment of each obligation in a high scene or epic moment, by dramatically arraying compositional resources inherent in the epic tradition. Hatto has envisioned epic moments as amenable to somatic interpretation in dance-drama,⁶⁰¹ and the epic moments we have examined in this study—Almambet facing Kōkčö down with cup after cup of *arak*, Bok-murun leading Manas away quietly at the end of Kōkötöy's memorial feast, Kankey signaling to Bakay the plight of the Manas-*stirps* with the gift of an embroidered neck-purse—all possess the quality of stageworthiness.

Epic moments and high scenes are verbally expressed within a bard's mental text, but they are by nature neither verbal nor textual. They are the verbal expressions of emotional currents within the mental text, and are thus the trace of the potential for identification with the heroes which was characteristic of all participants in the heroic cosmos—bards, patrons, and audiences alike. Their emotional charge is the reason they

learns that his parents have been killed long ago, and he avenges the murder.) Although no people, alive or dead, are in the house with the hero, the dripping blood would seem to be a blinded motif from a version in which the murder victims are at home—a fossilized high scene (cf. the Coos tale) enacting the hero's contract to take revenge.

⁶⁰¹ Hatto 1980a, pp. 4.

so often coalesce into striking images. Lauri Honko reports in detail on the explanation of narrative strategy he received from Gopala Naika, the bard of the Tulu *Siri Epic*:

[T]he description of structure is converted into a description of pragmatic ends by the singer. The "whole" story relates in his mind not to the maximal length of the telling but to the "power" of the story which is present and ready to be used only if certain minimal and obligatory "nodes" are linked to each other. This takes place by following the "path" [...] a pragmatic, not structural term [...] Gopala Naika seemingly makes an attempt to comply with the "structural" thinking of the inquisitive scholar. Yet what he describes are "meaningful events" ("delights"), i.e. units of meaning rather than structure.⁶⁰²

It follows from Honko's point that what we have been discussing all along under the term narrative structure is essentially a pragmatic system. Heroic structure in epic poetry is pragmatically conditioned structure.

The cultural history of the Kirghiz epic tradition illustrates how social transition was accompanied by structural changes in the oral composition of epic poetry. High scenes, epic moments, and narrative contracts lost their pragmatic relevance, and were either transformed into virtuoso passages such as scenic set-pieces or supplanted by traditional narrative elements such as catalogs, descriptions, and cyclic allusions. Tradition accommodated the persistence of some epic moments as thematic elements, but the conditions of their presence and positioning in the narrative changed. They no longer held together the creative intersections between structure and ethos that had predominated in the heroic cosmos.

High scenes and epic moments have been shown to display a stylistic dualism, and this provides a clue to their susceptibility to reinterpretation and reuse over time. Arthur Hatto has commented on the duality of the gestural versus the scenic in epic moments:

⁶⁰² Honko 1998a, pp. 130f.

[The] outstandingly visual passages [of the *Nibelungenlied*] can be apportioned to two contrasting styles of different date, the later (the property of the literate 'Last Poet'), in which *scenes* with implied visual and aural space with décor provide a setting for the enactment of whole episodes; and the earlier (shared more or less by the whole oral epic tradition), in which tense dialogue culminates in *gestures* of great symbolic power. Both techniques are associated with epic moments [...]⁶⁰³

Manas studies have not yet progressed so far as to allow the relative dating of the chief scenes in the tradition, as Hatto's predecessor Hugo Kuhn proposed for the *Nibelungenlied*. However, we may confront certain pairs of scenes, and note that the older, gestural moment fell away and was replaced by a scenic realization. In the Older Period Semetey-epic I,6), Kanıkey, in an affecting gesture, hands the departing Semetey a small gift to deliver to Bakay, a gift which proclaims that Kanıkey cannot or will not bless her son's undertaking. At the same moment in the epics of the Twilight Age [*SMB* (1)] and the Later Period (*KTŠA*), Kanıkey blesses Semetey and describes for him the images she drew on the inner walls of Manas's tomb—images the knowledge of which will empower Semetey to wrest authority from the usurpers Abeke and Köböš. The "visual and aural space with décor" of this scenic set-piece are literally provided not only by the images on the dome which Kanıkey brings to life in an extended, cyclically allusive catalog of heroes, but also, later, by the voice of Manas, which booms out in approval of Semetey when the son appeals for the protection of the father's *arbak*.

The clearest alternation between gestural and scenic realizations of dramatic moments in Kirghiz epic is found in the treatment of landscape and geography. In the mid nineteenth century,⁶⁰⁴ bards excelled at producing highly detailed, circumstantial, realistic

⁶⁰³ Hatto 1980a, pp. 4f; cf. Kuhn 1959.

⁶⁰⁴ It would be incorrect to speak exclusively of the Older Period, since the early Twilight Age poem I,1) *The Birth of Manas* falls into the Older Period insofar as its realization of geographical information is concerned.

epic itineraries. These were purely gestural. Description of the real places enumerated in these itineraries was restricted to a few terse epithets (such as *sarı özön Čüy* 'the tawny-bedded Chu'). The reality of the places named in the poems was based on their economic features and their involvement in the delineation of the characters' actions. The cardinal example of this tendency was Bok-murun's great boasting itinerary in *The Memorial Feast for Kökötöy Khan*, an epic moment. In the Twilight Age, geographical space changed from an immanent context for heroic gesture into a scene in and of itself. Travel became less an occasion for an interesting, realistic itinerary than for the picturesque description of preparations, including rich equipment and provisions and cyclically allusive catalogs of steeds and arms. Most significantly, the Twilight Age saw the appearance of important places with no names at all, such as the raging river Semetey must cross to reach Talas in *SMB*(1).

The fragmentation and rearrangement of themes that attended the dissolution of the heroic cosmos led to lapses in diction and theme. Kanıkey and Čıyçır "put out Semetey's fire" in *SMB*(1), thus nonsensically seeming to assume responsibility for the one act (extirpation of the line) against which all their efforts were directed. Such gradual thematic impoverishment is common in oral epic traditions. John D. Smith even finds analogs in the blinding of the visual "diction" of the painted backdrop or *par* before which the *Pābūjī* epic is performed.⁶⁰⁵ With the provision in this essay of a degree of empirical consistency to the concept of heroic poetry, it is worthwhile to consider these remarks of Honko's on "epic" as applying also to the term "heroic":

What epic means in its function and ethos is at least as important as what epic is in its content and form.

⁶⁰⁵ Smith 1991, p. 24

This means, in essence, that the term epic must be defined in relation to its cultural function as a source of "enlarged" human exemplars and moral codes. This again presumes the existence of a tradition community within which the function is valid. The same narrative may survive in some form in other functions in other communities; it may constitute material for comparison of content and motifs but it need not necessarily be classified everywhere as epic.⁶⁰⁶

We may speak of variation and change occurring over time, in which case the idea of the post-heroic becomes meaningful in relation to a heroic phase. Otherwise, the ungainly term "other than heroic" epic poetry at least preserves a useful distinction—whether viewed as structural, pragmatic, or functional—while begging no questions regarding diachronic variation.

The questions asked early in the Introduction above ("What plans and contingencies above the level of the formula or theme does a bard anticipate for an epic recitation, and how does he implement them? What cultural expectations and patterns shape the poet's plans and implementation? What role do the audience and the actual performance event play in the structure of the epic?") may all be seen as having immanent art as their subjects. In pragmatic terms appropriate to the heroic cosmos, immanent art simply means a verbal art milieu in which everyone already knows all the stories. The heroic ethos results in the need, felt by some few, to precipitate a hard, crystalline substance from the fluid solution of immanent art. These people must include members of the élite whose uneasy interrogations of the tradition inspire bards to craft stylized "executive summaries," heroic plots, on their behalf. To understand how specialized the aesthetic and pragmatic concerns of the heroic cosmos are, one has only to consider John Foley's explanation of the type of traditional experience available in Muslim South Slavic hero songs:

⁶⁰⁶ Honko 1998a, p. 22.

Given the metonymic nature of the story-pattern, which informs hundreds of songs in the Moslem epic tradition, there can be no "suspense" about the eventual outcome of the narrative. To worry over the motivation of the heroes or the textual logic for their actions is to misread the [plot of *Alagić Alija and Velagić Selim*] and the Return Song in general; whatever the particular circumstances, a Turkish stalwart lamenting in prison *will* escape or be released, *will* find his way home, [...] If the literary suspense we cherish is not a feature of this narrative form, wherein lies the poet's or the tradition's artistry?⁶⁰⁷

Upon that question, and over those "worries," the study of true heroic epic poetry parts ways with that of (unmarked as to ethos) immanent art. Oral heroic epic poetry is immanent art, but it is also something more. Searching for the answers to the questions raised above has brought us to a point where we can see that the "literary" qualities that "we" cherish are nothing more nor less than the successive arcs of arousing and fulfilling expectations that are a basic feature of oral narratives, and which find particular development in the presence of the heroic performance ethos.

When heroic poetry trades its special structural rigors for greater copiousness and more generalized immanence, the epic tradition enters a post-heroic or other than heroic phase. But the transition is not sudden or wholesale, and the period boundaries erected in this study as conveniences must not be understood as diagnostic signposts. Indeed, the question may fairly be asked whether, for example, the Older Period epopee I,3) *Manas's Duel with Er Kōkčö; The Marriage, Death and Return to Life of Manas*, whose copious, serial plot is decidedly loose, is a heroic poem by our definition. The truest answer is no, and yes. The appeal of lengthy narrative performance in a relaxed, discursive mode is nearly universal. Even those who typically sit at the very hearthside of the heroic cosmos will enjoy an epopeic performance if the conditions and mood warrant. When the night draws on, the mead-hall is not always full of edgy, egoist warriors: they are early risers,

⁶⁰⁷ Foley 1991, p. 66.

and have gone to bed. The bard has more liberal and elastic means of entertaining the night-owls.

The Older Period was not a time of pristine heroic epic poetry. It was a time when the heroic performance ethos gave Kirghiz bards the power to shape their immanent art into heroic epic poems by means of distinctively heroic narrative structures. While it is particularly fortunate that we have records of such performances, no less valuable for analysis are the ample texts and portions of texts that bear witness to the matrix of immanent art from which heroic poetry crystallized and into which it dissolved. The periods in the tradition—Older, Twilight Age, and Later—are chronologically manifest, but it would be problematic to conceive of them as eras of development and decadence. A heroic period came before the Twilight Age, for historical reasons, and a classicizing, epopeizing stage came after, also for historical reasons, but there is nothing to demonstrate or suggest that this trend was a developmental characteristic of the epic poetry itself. It is rather more adequate to reason that when the heroic cosmos disintegrated, the immanent art of epic poetry was easily reverted to as a kind of structurally flexible, traditional narrative repository. Of course, what is known of Inner Asian history makes it highly unlikely that any classicizing, epopeizing period such as occurred in the twentieth century could have taken place in earlier times, since its intellectualist impulse was a distinctive feature of the rise of national consciousness and then nation states over the course of the last century and a half. It is also equally (and fortunately) unlikely that the Kirghiz people as conceived today will ever be revisited by the social, political, and cultural conditions that supported the heroic cosmos in the mid nineteenth century. These, broadly delineated, are the bounds of historical interpretation of the tradition. The epic performance by the present-day Kirghiz bard Šaabay Aziz uulu

shows the potential of the tradition to outlive the classicizing, epopeizing tendencies of a nationalist era, and to return, albeit in nationalized form, to the protean conditions of a twilight age. The Twilight Age of the Kirghiz epic tradition (1863-1922) was really a period of time passed in a twilight state, a state of oral epic tradition more typical than the heroic, if not as exemplary.

Much of what is held to be known about traditions of heroic epic poetry besides the Kirghiz consists of sets of more or less secure steps hewn backward in time from records of technically post-heroic poetry. In this context it may reasonably be asked whether our specific findings about Kirghiz heroic and other than heroic epic poetry are amenable to the tasks of analyzing other traditions. It was an empirical and theoretical bonus to discover a correlation between "heroic" social traits and heroic narrative structures in the older Kirghiz tradition, but the possibility of finding such correlations of source information elsewhere appears to be exceedingly small on the whole. For example, the Rajasthani *Pābūjī* ritual epic tradition is carried today by low-caste priest-bards within a modern social milieu in which the deeds and ethos of heroism portrayed in the epic are a thing of the past.⁶⁰⁸ Yet *Pābūjī* has been made in this essay as it were an exemplar of heroic structure (though the distinctively heroic nature of this structure was not envisaged in so many words by Smith in his contract analysis).⁶⁰⁹ How can an epic without a heroic cosmos be a model of heroic structure? In the case of *Pābūjī*, the obvious clue is the existence of the painted backdrop or *par*. In *Pābūjī* the epic themes are not substantially unraveled and rewoven in different performances or by successive generations of bards, as in *Manas*, because the storylines of the entire epic as well as of

⁶⁰⁸ Smith 1991, pp. 4f.

⁶⁰⁹ Smith 1986.

each constituent episode are fixed upon the *par* in an iconographic depiction of epic moments.⁶¹⁰ It is grounds for wonder that the *par* preserves such a perfect plot, but near-perfection of structure occurs in the purely oral setting as well. The plot of the Older Period epic I,7) *Semetey* was given as an example. One imagines that if the Kirghiz in the mid nineteenth century had taken up paint and brush, a *par* of *Semetey* would have been fairly easy to produce. The one episode in that text which lacks its anchor in an epic moment is Semetey's journey to Ay-čürök—and it was around precisely this episode that the most lavish scenic set-pieces accreted in the Twilight Age.

It would be natural to take the theoretical and methodological tools developed here and use them to examine the "lesser" Kirghiz epics such as *Kurmanbek* and *Er Tabildi*, as well as the epic traditions of the Kirghiz' neighbors, such as the Kazakhs, Karakalpaks, and Uzbeks, which are renowned in their own rights.⁶¹¹ Such studies could provide valuable insights into the field of Central Asian folklore, especially in cases such as Kazakh where the chronological cross-section of epic texts is particularly deep; shifts in ethos over time have already been noticed in the Kazakh epic tradition.⁶¹²

Broader comparative and interdisciplinary issues also deserve attention from the perspective of narrative structure and ethos. Research building on Hymes's "organization of expectation," Hamayon's "giving" and "taking," and the methods used in the present study, among others, could offer a useful framework for narrative theory, and reach out to engage myth and drama. A new study of morality in a folktale tradition awaits coordination with such an approach: in *Moral Fictions*, Stuart Blackburn finds in Tamil folktales a pervasive concern with the moral reciprocities of crime and punishment, of

⁶¹⁰ Smith 1991, pp. 14-27; Smith 1986.

⁶¹¹ See Hatto 1965; Chadwick & Žirmunsky 1969, pp. 271-284.

⁶¹² Winner 1958, p. 61.

wrongs committed and their just deserts. Is this the folktale ethos *in nuce*? Blackburn argues in the affirmative.⁶¹³ Furthermore, the performative equivalence of Kirghiz bard and hero highlighted by the present study of heroics hints at possible comparisons with traditions where the bard narrates in the first person (such as Ainu) or is a shaman invoking the hero (as in Ostyak), and thus affords an unusual prospect for relating the so-called shamanistic and heroic strains of oral epic poetry.⁶¹⁴

This essay has been concerned with a wide range of apparently genre-related terminology for epic, such as episode, scenic set-piece, epopee, and others. In concluding this study it will be useful to take the opportunity to address these concepts together and propose a new synthesis. On the level of comparative empirical research, the day when it will be possible to fix a globally consistent definition of primary oral epic appears no nearer today than it did over a decade ago, when Arthur Hatto generously summarized the findings of the London Seminar on Epic while pointing to the need for sustained, intensive scholarly engagement with epic traditions worldwide.⁶¹⁵ It was assumed in this study that in order to interpret the Kirghiz epic tradition, a quite disparate array of sources, all of them more or less harking back to performance events, would have to be consulted. The scope of these sources is both quantitative and qualitative. The sample ranges from reported but untextualized multi-day performances—and their qualitative variant, textualized epopee, which tends to be ideally determined by intellectuals—down to brief performances such as the *Semetey* of Kenje Kara and the *Kanikey's Tale* of Aabay Aziz uulu, on a scale for which it is even possible to qualify individual instances as the work of "a good bard on a bad day." At the core of the sample are located the

⁶¹³ Blackburn 2001, p. 306.

⁶¹⁴ Philippi 1979; Cushing 1980; Hatto 1970.

⁶¹⁵ Hatto 1989b.

rigorously structured, and hence exemplary for our purposes, heroic epic poems of the Older Period in one to two thousand lines. Underlying the methodological assumption that these various records all pertain to the present investigation is the theoretical notion that they all, in a sense, belong to the same genre. In what sense? The answer, "In the sense of performance" affords no sweeping summation, and indeed, it motivates more questioning. This, I believe, is the virtue of the suggestion offered below.

In view of the different varieties of epic structure realized in a single tradition, I propose to use the term *proepic* to denote the common generic space encompassing epic, epopee, scenic set-piece, episode, etc.—in short, any traditional performance or record of performance in the style and spirit of epic, on any scale. A proepic may or may not be an epic. Whether it is a heroic epic, a post-heroic or other than heroic epic, an epopee, a mock-epic, an episode, a scenic set-piece, or even an attempt at one of these by "a good bard on a bad day," its function is to *evoke* epic. *Proepic* ('for-epic', viz., 'standing for epic', 'promoting epic', 'instead of epic', 'consciously epic') foregrounds the active choices made by people on all sides of the performance encounter in creating a culturally valid experience of the epic genre.

If "pro-," then the questions immediately arise, "for" what, and whom? How successful was the realization? What opportunities were taken and missed? What opportunities and limitations are inherent in the style of attempt, and which can be referred to the particular circumstances of the event? *Proepic* recognizes the crucial value of the concept of genre, while at the same time reorienting genre-awareness away from classification and toward pragmatics. Rather than promoting efforts to enclose otherwise knowable things inside black boxes of genre, *proepic* takes the performance approach to what is knowable. A proepic has immanent art for material, mental text for structure, and

performance event for realization. One need only attempt to add the prefix *pro-* to other folklore genre terms—*pro-proverb*, *pro-tale*, *pro-legend*, *pro-riddle*—to get the immediate sense of the significantly greater number and height of the pragmatic hurdles surrounding generically effective oral epic performance. And since many of the hurdles are inherent and tend to persist, they may become perceived in tradition as fences. When they are, generic effectiveness can be dispersed and even compartmentalized, for the *proepic* also-rans are substantial and therefore rather stable from performance event to performance event. Thus, *proepic* draws attention to the ways in which, for example, the *Kankey's Tale* of Šaabay Aziz uulu belongs to the same verbal art genre as the *Manas* of Sagimbay. As Hatto wrote of the best-documented single and entire Kirghiz epic performance on record, "In the background one senses the epic, which everyone knew by heart."⁶¹⁶

Any expressive form with artistic means as cultivated as those of heroic epic poetry will not yield easily to structural research. "The heroic ethos is stylized sentiment."⁶¹⁷ Its distinctive features, epic moments and narrative contracts, are subjective already *in situ*, and they may quickly attain opacity once textualized. "Prospecting" an epic text for high scenes and epic moments in search of the veins of ethos they indicate is more exacting work than analyzing formulas or concatenating themes, even if the heroic bard and audience were living and willing informants in the research. Heroic narrative structures are not as organic as the bulk of narrative verbal art: once again, an apt metaphor is steel. But it is hoped that this essay has proved that such research, for all its inherent challenges, is potentially worthwhile. Having pinpointed a

⁶¹⁶ Hatto, personal communication.

⁶¹⁷ Hatto 1989b, p. 223.

basic technical alternative of composition in a tradition of oral epic poetry, we are in a position to ask how this alternative may be related to that stylistic divide, so deeply felt in Western literature, between the tense, tragic *Iliad* and the discursive, novelistic *Odyssey*.

Appendix 1. *Joloy Khan* (Prose Synopsis)

The original text is II. *Joloi Kan*, in Radloff, *Obraztsy/Proben*, vol. 5 (*Obraztsy*, pp. 369-525; *Proben*, pp. 372-529).

(Joloy)

Mission to recover stolen horses; Joloy comes by Ak-kaniš⁶¹⁸ (1-680)

The poem opens: “Joloy’s father was Nogoy, and his young son who ambled as he went was named Joloy Khan. Joloy was an insatiable glutton: he was not filled by the food he ate, he was not quenched by the water he drank . . .”

As Joloy is amusing himself on the steppes, enemies come by night and steal his father’s numerous herds of horses. His father comes and beseeches Joloy to get up and chase the herds down. Joloy impudently demands a horse to ride and a corselet to wear, and beats his father off with his horse-lash. Next his two elder brothers come and make the same request, and Joloy again demands a horse and corselet. The brothers dismount and tie up their horses (for him), but Joloy beats them, then roasts and eats their horses. Next Joloy’s mother tries to rouse him, but he beats her away with his horse-lash. Lastly, Joloy’s younger sister Kardıgač goes to him. She shames him into action by threatening to go after the horses herself. Joloy stretches himself—but sinks into the ground. Kardıgač orders arms forged for Joloy, and his elder sister reports to him that they are ready. At last Joloy gets up and is outfitted, and departs on his horse Ač-budan, whose points as a magic winged steed are described.

⁶¹⁸ The section subtitles are absent in the original text.

From atop an eminence, Joloy sees a column of dust rising from what appears to be a large herd on the move. Ač-budan begs Joloy to whip him to speed, then he flies Joloy through the air on 40 wings. They alight on a spot where two slaves see them and are terrified. Joloy asks after his horses, and the two slaves, Kara-kul and Sarı-kul, direct Joloy after the thieves, the “three Khans”. Joloy befriends the two slaves. They cook two horses, and Joloy eats them both entire, spitting out the bones. The two slaves beg Joloy to go to the yurt of Kara-döö, and bring (steal) more food from him. Joloy goes, ignores the warnings of Kara-döö’s wife, and eats the enormous amounts of food he finds there. Then he takes Kara-döö’s wife and daughter, bestows them on Kara-kul and Sarı-kul, and rides on after his herds.

Joloy comes to the yurt of Ak Khan, whose wife Ak-kaniš is at home. Joloy bolts two full skins of kumiss, and falls to the ground. Ak-kaniš is accosted by Ač-budan, who speaks to her in a human voice: “Do a kindness, and help my master Joloy back onto me! Do not let him come to harm!” Ak-kaniš does this, but as Ač-budan gallops off, Joloy becomes hungry again and turns back. He eats the remainder of the food in Ak Khan’s yurt, and Ak-kaniš, alarmed, hurries away to fetch her husband Ak Khan. He comes with 60,000 troops. With a prayer to Heaven Joloy makes the army flee, and Ak Khan stands alone. Joloy states his name, lineage, and business, and Ak Khan avers that he is one of the three who has stolen the horses. Calling a fight to the death, Ak Khan invites Joloy to his place for refreshment before they begin. Joloy tries to head off mortal combat by suggesting that the two men divide the horses in question equally between themselves. Ak Khan refuses, but again makes the invitation to refresh themselves. Joloy again demurs, but persuades Ak Khan to join him drinking at a stream before they fight. Joloy

positions himself and Ač-budan upstream of Ak Khan, and together they drink so much water that the stream runs dry.

Then the struggle begins, hand-to-hand. After a fearsome fight, Ak Khan manages to pin Joloy, then looks around and tells his wife Ak-kaniš to bring him a sword to cut off Joloy's head. Joloy begs Ak-kaniš to stand off, and pleads with Ak Khan for his life, promising to forfeit his younger sister the pampered Kardigač, his yurt, and more livestock. Ak Khan again tells his wife to bring a sword. At this, Joloy grabs Ak Khan by the collar, flips him, and pins him to the ground. Ak Khan begs Ak-kaniš, arriving with the sword, to stand off, and pleads with Joloy for his life, offering full restoration of the horses and four choice daughters of khans, as well as money, gold, and silver. Joloy now asks Ak-kaniš for the sword. Ak-kaniš (suddenly unable to decide between the two champions?) hurls the sword from where she stands . . . Joloy jerks Ak Khan up to meet the blade, cutting off his head. He then roasts Ak Khan's horse on a spit and eats it.

Hastening after the remaining two khans and his stolen horses, Joloy comes upon his two slave horse-herds who were abducted in the herds in the original raid. The slaves direct him to the two khans. Joloy kills the two khans, places their realms in the hands of the two slave horse-herds, and, excusing himself for fatigue after a long campaign, lies down and sleeps for a month. When he awakes, Joloy sends the two slaves back driving the spoils and captives. Back home he erects Ak Khan's royal pavilion (as his own) next to his father's, gets a mulla to marry him to Ak-kaniš, and loses himself in pleasure sleeping with her.

Joloy comes by Saykal (681-933)

Ač-budan comes before his master Joloy and speaks in a human voice, describing the beautiful Saykal, daughter of the khan Aŋğıčal. Ač-budan lists her charms in full traditional manner, and exhorts Joloy to arm himself for an expedition to win her. Joloy does this, Ač-budan's points as a magic steed are once more recounted, and the two fly off to Aŋğıčal's city. Joloy waits outside the city, and Ač-budan goes inside having shifted shape into a gray ambler. A slave-woman, Kuytu-kün, finds the gray ambler, and decides to take it to her mistress Saykal, to whom the animal seems well suited.

There is a digression, as Ač-budan (as gray ambler), let out with the local herd, finds his own dam. She recounts his pedigree and his siblings, including some famous steeds of Kirghiz epic tradition. She has been stolen from Joloy by Ak Khan, who in turn gave her and Ač-budan's brother Tor-aygır, in a herd of 100 horses, to Aŋğıčal in a division of the spoils. Tor-aygır was then parted from her in another gift-bestowal. She begs Ač-budan to bring Joloy to take her back.

In the morning, Kuytu-kün comes and takes Ač-budan-gray ambler to her mistress Saykal, who is impressed by the horse. She prepares for an outing, and orders her 40 maids to accompany her on 40 gray ambler. First a race is run, and Saykal on Ač-budan takes the lead; but Ač-budan, whose plot has come to a head, dashes headlong, with Saykal losing control. Ač-budan takes the girl straight to Joloy, who becomes powerfully aroused and rapes her on the spot. Then he takes her home and marries her.

Treachery of Kardıgač and Karača; Saykal's abduction by Urum Khan and her escape (934-2102)

After some time has passed, Kardıgač comes to her brother Joloy and requests Ač-budan and a corselet for a trip into the mountains to pick cherries. Joloy grants her request, adding a hunting-falcon and a hound, but he admonishes her to stay away from the mountain-spur Kök-beläs, for a *jelmoguz*⁶¹⁹ lurks there. Kardıgač spends the day a-hunting, and in the evening comes up onto Kök-beläs. From there she sees an army of 60,000 troops with golden crescent-moon standards approaching, and in their midst, the Kalmak hero Karača seated on a winged black horse. Saying, "Joloy has taken Saykal; shall I not take this one?" she approaches Karača with a fetching look, and the hero is smitten. The two wrestle on horseback, then feast on roast goose and swan and dally together for three days.

On the fourth day Kardıgač raises her head (from the pillow) and says, "Nobly born Karača, my lord, how can you marry me? My brother Joloy will not give me!" Karača replies that he could never defeat Joloy in combat, so Kardıgač should kill him and then he will marry her. Kardıgač agrees, and makes this plan: Karača is to bring his army in three days, and in the meantime Kardıgač will have poisoned Joloy. Karača can then plunder and subjugate Joloy's realm, and the two will marry by drinking *arak*.

When Kardıgač returns home, Joloy reproves her for being late. Kardıgač answers that she is late because Joloy's hound and falcon were useless at the hunt, and Ač-budan would not let her take hold of him for three days. But Ač-budan speaks in a human voice,

⁶¹⁹ Ogre-like magic crone.

and tells Joloy about Kardıgač's and Karača's plan to kill him. In anger, Joloy says to Kardıgač simply, "Thou art shamed!"

At home, Saykal has a clairvoyant vision of Joloy approaching. She welcomes him in the traditional manner of a good wife, then goes out of the yurt and knocks Kardıgač, who has just arrived, to the ground. Joloy, inside, asks what the commotion is about, and Saykal replies that nothing is wrong, "dear Kardıgač has just come down off her horse a little hard."

The next morning, Joloy goes out hunting, and Saykal, at home, sends a man to find out what Kardıgač is doing. He returns with the news that she is making poison. Saykal resolves to go up to Kök-beläs herself, and upon Joloy's return she asks him to let her go hunting. He grants the request, only ordering her to come back the same day, "as it is your turn to lie with me tonight." Saykal goes out on Ač-budan and climbs Kök-beläs, from where she sees an army of 60,000 troops with golden crescent-moon standards approaching, and in their midst, the Kalmak hero Karača seated on a winged black horse. Karača makes a suggestive advance, and Saykal, dissembling as if in collusion with Kardıgač, tells him approvingly that she has come up to make sure that he will be at Joloy's at dawn, for she will have made Joloy drunk then. Karača repeats his sexual proposition, and Saykal coquettishly fends him off as if only to avoid delaying the plans. Karača chases her as she sets off for home, but cannot catch her.

Saykal finds Joloy not at home, and suspiciously goes to Kardıgač's yurt. There she comes in on Kardıgač holding a cup in her hand and serving it to Joloy, who is already drunk. Saykal gently reproves Joloy, saying, "Why is Kardıgač your cup-bearer? You made me your cup-bearer (when you made me your wife); come, I will serve the *arak*." She takes the cup from Kardıgač, mixes the poisoned *arak* with watered *arak*, and

passes it to the maids and youths present, who become stupefied. Then it is Kardigač's turn: she wets her lips, and seeing no one else to pass the cup to, she bolts the whole draught down in fear. Saykal then serves another drink to Joloy, and another to Kardigač, who falls senseless. As Joloy is about to accept yet another drink from Saykal (who is merely testing him), she scolds him and throws the *arak* away. Joloy becomes enraged and is on the point of whipping her with his horse-lash when she runs from the yurt. When the boys are bringing in Joloy's meat, Saykal takes one of the platters in and serves Joloy personally, and his anger is appeased.

Saykal employs a stratagem to get Joloy up to Kök-beläs to see the approaching enemy for himself. She announces that on her outing she found a fledgling falcon on a nest, and suggests that they go take the bird and man it. Tempted by the prospects of the hunting to be had with this bird, Joloy agrees. They mount Ač-budan and Tor-aygır and set off, but Joloy soon falls off his horse, unable to rise from the ground . . .

The next morning, the army of 60,000 troops with golden crescent-moon standards comes and surrounds Joloy's realm, sacks it, and drives off the spoils. Saykal is unable to wake Joloy, so she takes a dagger and stabs him in the heart. He wakes up and asks, "Did a mosquito bite me?" Saykal tells him that the hunting bird has flown away, and that they must mount up and chase it. Joloy at last gets up and mounts. Saykal leads him to Kök-beläs and shows him Karača's army, and explains that that was what the ruse of the falcon was all about. Joloy waffles at the sight of the enemy. Saykal berates him for his cowardice, after which they charge into the enemy army together. Saykal fells a fearsome warrior, takes his lance, and slaughters more. Joloy likewise enters the fray, but Ač-budan is overcome with battle-ardor and falls over. Joloy, on foot, is surrounded by 40 enemy warriors; Saykal kills them all. Karača shoots at Saykal; she evades the shot

and plants her lance in front of him, and he flees. Joloy runs up and demands her horse, but she refuses, chases after more Kalmaks, and returns. She then exhorts Ač-budan to get up, with threats (obscure in meaning). Ač-budan jumps to his feet, Joloy mounts him; and together they fly into the air.

They land near their city, where Joloy dismounts and walks toward the houses. The inhabitants pelt him with manure! Joloy, enraged, grabs the menfolk by the feet and beats them together, killing them; the womenfolk run away screaming. Joloy enters the city, gulps down all the food and drink, and falls down in sated slumber. Saykal runs up to him, looks after the two horses, then starts to eat. While eating, she is approached by a handsome young warrior (Koņur-bay, a Kalmak). Koņur-bay asks her, “What city is this? Word came from Karača that Saykal has got away. I am Koņur-bay, envoy from Urum Khan—have you seen Saykal?” Saykal curses him and says she knows nothing, and Koņur-bay leaves. Saykal perceives her predicament and saddles both horses for her escape. Galloping to a stream (or lake), she plunges her hair into the water and works at undoing her braids (to disguise herself) for the entire day. Finishing her work, she gets up and is immediately accosted by Koņur-bay, who seizes her without a word and brings her before Urum Khan. Urum finds her without flaw, and orders his nine wives brought so that he can compare them with Saykal. Saykal surpasses them all in beauty, and Urum Khan resolves to take her to wife. Saykal complains, “Then you will spend only one night in ten with me, and the rest with the others. If you take me, cut the others’ hair off to the ears (and divorce them).” Urum Khan does this. The nine women run from the yurt in shame, and are snatched up catch-as-catch-can by Urum Khan’s warriors.

Urum Khan gathers the Kalmaks and prepares his wedding feast. Then Saykal, drawing aside the nuptial curtain, says to him, “Though he is a slave, I have a lord (*bay*),

and though he is begotten of a slave, I have a child. Let me go to my lord, and tell him I am a khan's wife; let me go to my child and suckle him. Let me wash my body and pluck my pubic hairs, and return clean." Urum Khan agrees. Koņur-bay outfits Saykal and escorts her on the journey.

On the way, Koņur-bay unties the kumiss-skin from his saddlehorn, drinks three draughts, and offers one to Saykal. Saykal declines, saying there is no such delicacy in her own poor city, so Koņur-bay had better enjoy it. He does this. Once again Koņur-bay drinks three and offers one, and is talked into drinking the last one himself. Finally he drinks eight draughts to Saykal's six, and gets drunk. Saykal proposes to camp just outside the city and enter in the morning. Koņur-bay drinks more kumiss and falls down drunk. Saykal runs for the two horses and gallops away to Joloy, who is still sleeping where she left him. She just manages to get him up onto a horse, and leads him up into icy mountains (*mus too*; a place-name?).

Koņur-bay awakes and realizes Saykal is gone. He goes to Urum Khan and tells him. Urum Khan, left with no wives, flies into a rage and cuts off Koņur-bay's ears. Koņur-bay flees, and Urum Khan is left completely alone.

Up in the icy mountains, Saykal and Joloy dismount, and Ač-budan and Saykal together berate Joloy for not trusting their warnings about Kardigač's perfidy.

Saykal and Joloy ride off and sack Karača's realm. At dawn, after a day of plundering, Saykal's mount Tor-aygır speaks in a human voice, saying that Karača and Kardigač are escaping. Saykal pursues, and grabs the tail of Karača's horse. The horse becomes a gray dove, and flies upward; Tor-aygır becomes a gray peregrine falcon, and brings down the dove. It becomes a white mountain sheep; Tor-aygır becomes a white hound and seizes it. It turns into a red fox and flees to the forest; Tor-aygır turns into a

black vulture⁶²⁰ and seizes it. It becomes a white minnow and dives into the water; Toraygır becomes an otter and seizes it. Then Saykal grabs Karača and Kardıgač, ties them to the necks of their horses, and makes for Joloy. Still slaughtering the Kalmaks, Joloy pauses and demands that Saykal give him Karača and Kardıgač alive and well. Saykal agrees to give Karača, but not Kardıgač. She drags Kardıgač, tied, into the river, and rides over her back. Kardıgač breaks free and runs to Joloy, begging him to spare her. Saykal will not relent, but Joloy forcefully intercedes and spares the lives of both Kardıgač and Karača. Joloy restores the Kalmak realm to them, keeping the Nogoy realm for himself. In time, the old wounds are forgotten, and the two khans live as in-laws.

Joloy comes by Kızıl-kıs; confinement of Joloy (2103-2463)

One day, in his cups, Joloy says, “There is no boat on the black water; in this world there is no one but I!” Saykal responds, “There is a boat on the black water; in this world there is other than you. Urum Khan, who wedded me—there is no one but Urum Khan!” Joloy calls for Karača. He orders him to ride to Urum Khan and raid him, and bring back his daughter Kızıl-kıs. Karača replies that he cannot raid Urum Khan or take Kızıl-kıs, because he is a relative: “Go to Urum Khan yourself!” Karača is beaten and thrown out, and Joloy mounts Ač-budan and rides to Urum Khan.

Urum Khan’s horse-herds are out pasturing the horses. There are 60 herdsmen’s tents with 60 full skins of kumiss, plus a six-skin bladder of *arak*; Joloy sizes it up as “enough for one drink,” drives 60 horses in and cooks them, eats them in two bites, finishes the drinks in two gulps, and falls asleep. A Kalmak horse-herd comes, sees, and

⁶²⁰ 2017 *kara barčim* 'schwarze Geier' (Radloff); *barčim* not located in dictionaries.

reports to Urum Khan. Taking 60,000 troops, Urum Khan approaches Joloy, who kills ten warriors in a pass, and then 40, and lies back down. This happens three times. Urum Khan gathers the Kalmak people, and declares that to whoever can find out who this warrior is, he will give many gifts. A white-haired crone (*kuu-kempir*) comes forth and asks what the gifts will be. Urum Khan replies: he will give his own son and the son of a chieftain (*bek*). The crone asks for 40 maids and the princess Kızıl-kıs, loads gifts on camels, and sets off for Joloy. The crone shows Kızıl-kıs to Joloy, but he still will not get up. To the crone's question, "Are you friend or foe?" Joloy tells her his name and his lineage. The crone orders nuptials prepared for Joloy and Kızıl-kıs, with respect and hospitality for Joloy. Joloy enters Kızıl-kıs's yurt, sits clumsily by the girl, gets drunk, and lies in her embrace.

The crone returns to Urum Khan and reports that the warrior is Joloy. She urges the khan to have him poisoned and bound in irons. Urum Khan agrees. The crone and Kızıl-kıs get Joloy up, and he is served food and *arak*. After three days and nights of eating and drinking, Joloy gets drunk and falls over. The crone binds him in irons, and with exceeding difficulty and numerous beasts of burden he is dragged from the spot. Kızıl-kıs (all this time enamored of Joloy) opposes the crone, and the two threaten each other. Kızıl-kıs draws a dagger and stabs the crone in the leg, but she is able to withdraw limping and still dragging Joloy. Ten thousand Kalmaks throw Joloy into a pit, pour in coal, and pump the bellows. Kızıl-kıs brings Ač-budan and sits at the mouth of the pit singing a lament for her lost Joloy. Urum Khan, hearing the lament, curses the crone and demands that Joloy be released for his love-struck daughter to marry. Joloy lies inert. Kızıl-kıs loyally feeds Ač-budan by day and lies with Joloy by night.

(Bolot)

Reduction of Joloy's realm; birth and boyhood of Bolot (2464-3554)

Meanwhile, with Joloy gone after Kızıl-kıs, Saykal is at home. Joloy's warrior and regent Čečen waits on the border for his lord's return. Karača, believing Joloy to be dead, raises an army and assumes rule over Joloy's realm without Saykal's or Čečen's knowledge. One day Čečen puts on Kalmak disguise and rides for Karača's realm. On the way he sees numerous troops; there is an assembly going on as he arrives. Karača commands that Saykal be taken for his own wife, and that Čečen be captured as well. Hearing this, Čečen mounts and arms himself and goes to Saykal. Čečen says, "My lady, your eyes look droopy and your arms and legs look limp—what is wrong?" Saykal (clairvoyant, and with sympathetic afflictions) replies that Joloy is bound in irons, and exhorts Čečen to go and rescue Joloy. Saykal girds and arms herself, mounts Tor-aygır, and rides off (with Čečen).

From a hilltop she sees 60,000 troops and is about to flee in fear, when Čečen addresses her encouragingly: "I am of the line of Nur Khoja. . . I am Joloy's retainer, and he gave me rule over his land in his absence. . . Take heart, see my prowess!" Čečen and Saykal now charge the Kalmaks, first seizing banners and then slaughtering their forces. In the midst of battle Saykal gets into a scrape with the enemy: she asks Čečen to save himself and leave her to die—and to gather up her bones later—but Čečen resolves to die with Saykal. Seeing Tor-aygır unable to walk, Čečen gives Saykal his mount, but this horse will not lift her. Back astride Tor-aygır, Saykal and the horse rebuke each other. Kalmaks arrive and surround Saykal, and now she sends Čečen away, and faces death. Attempting to flee, she is captured, tied to a willow tree by the trews, and ridden

bareback by all the Kalmaks. She is then led tied to Karača. He puts her with Ak-kaniš, who has been captured from Joloy's realm and made to herd sheep.

After the child inside her (Joloy's) has gestated for a full year, Saykal goes into labor. Saykal sends Ak-kaniš out to tend the sheep, lies-in, and gives birth to a son. Saykal wants to kill the child: she yanks out its umbilical cord, but it will not die. Saykal throws the child into the lake, but Ak-kaniš wades in, brings it out, and starts it breathing. When Saykal refuses to suckle it, Ak-kaniš fetches a ewe and gives it to the child to suck. The child drains the ewe and is not filled. Ak-kaniš, childless, prays for milk in her breasts. Milk flows, and the child sucks, but is not filled. Ak-kaniš pleads with Saykal to finish the feeding; Saykal agrees, and the child sucks. Ak-kaniš slaughters several fat sheep, cooks the meat, and gives it to Saykal to eat. The next morning, the two women shear sheep, swaddle the child in the wool, and cradle him in a large grain-jar. While they work days, they give him a cooked sheep's tail to suck; returning home, they dote on his antics and suckle him together.

Saykal says, "Ak-kaniš, name this child!" Ak-kaniš replies that since Saykal bore him, she should name him. Saykal says that she had a dream in which Kdır came to her and told her to name the boy Bolot: this becomes the child's name.

Saykal and Ak-kaniš go out to tend the flocks, and Bolot, alone, gets up and walks unnoticed into Karača's yurt. There he sits himself down at the head of the fire and leans on Karača's shoulder. Karača becomes angry, and Kardıgač comes and takes Bolot. Kardıgač says, "Our son has fallen from heaven!" but Bolot rejects her and starts to run. Meanwhile, Saykal has returned from the flocks, and finding Bolot missing, seeks him in Karača's yurt. She enters just in time to see the boy knocking over the kettle; he runs and

clings to her shoulder. Kardıgač whips Saykal, ties her to a willow tree, and rides her bareback.

In the evening, Ak-kaniš comes and unties Saykal, who falls limp to the ground. The next morning, Ak-kaniš bewails the loss of Bolot in a lyrical lamentation. Thus wailing, she hears Bolot's cry from inside the yurt. Bolot runs out and comes to Ak-kaniš and Saykal, and in the joyful reunion he suckles both his mothers.

Ak-kaniš says that Bolot must be taken away for his safety, and preparations are made for departure. Saykal sends Ak-kaniš and Bolot away with a large skin (of water, or kumiss) and a large sheep to eat. Saykal directs them to travel by night for three months, then by day for three days, until they arrive at the safety of a khojas' mosque; after observances there they are to round the six corners of the moon and the seven corners of the sun, and at the coming together of land and water they will come to Köčpös-bay, who of late sent a letter to Joloy saying he had nine sons (Tölök, Alikä, Jalikä,⁶²¹ Jam-pos, Tim-pos, Bastal, Aktal, Šajır, and Bajır). Ak-kaniš is to try to marry one of these sons, but not to forget Saykal! And when Bolot turns 13, they should leave there (and return to her). With these words Saykal sends away Ak-kaniš and Bolot, and Ak-kaniš professes her loyalty.

Following the itinerary set by Saykal, the two arrive at the coming together of land and water with only meager provisions left. They eat the last mouthful of meat and fat and lie down to sleep. When they wake, a rider on a winged steed is standing over them (Tölök, Köčpös-bay's eldest son). Ak-kaniš is unable to speak. Tölök pities the two, takes them up, and sets them before a tent. There he serves them a drink; Ak-kaniš is unable to drink her kumiss, but Bolot greedily bolts the milk of 10,000 mares. Tölök

⁶²¹ Later in the text: Janikä.

sends to his father Köčpös-bay for help, and Köčpös-bay comes with provisions. Then he nurses Ak-kaniš with milk dribbled from cotton wadding, finally taking the two travelers to his yurt, where Baybičä ('senior wife') welcomes them. Baybičä's breasts, warmed by Bolot's body in her embrace, flow with milk, and she suckles him.

The next day, Baybičä shows Bolot to Köčpös-bay and declares, "I intend to 'bear' this child myself!" She sends word out that she is in labor and summons her ladies to her side. The ladies arrive and see Baybičä "in labor." Baybičä then summons Kara-bakči, the "mortal women's holy man." Kara-bakči comes and immediately knows that the child she is about to "bear" is not really hers. Baybičä answers his reproofs: he is given a robe and a horse, and goes away. Now Ak-kaniš comes in to Baybičä, and Baybičä "gives birth" to Bolot by pulling him out of her skirts. Ak-kaniš takes the child to Köčpös-bay and announces the birth of a son. Köčpös-bay gathers the people, gives a feast, and orders Ak-kaniš to name the boy. She names him Bolot.

At the age of two Bolot becomes the lead horse-herd, and he continues thus for twelve years. Then Ak-kaniš takes him to her and tells him that this is not his real home or land—that his father is Joloy of the realm of Nogoy. She sets the new moon as the time for their departure for home, and on the appointed night they leave, while all are sleeping, with four horses.

At dawn the two are missed, and Köčpös-bay calls his nine sons and commands them: "Summon 90,000 troops! Block the nine passes (leading out of this realm)! Find Ak-kaniš and Bolot, and treat them well." The nine brothers summon the troops and block the passes, but they do not find Ak-kaniš and Bolot, and they return home grieving. Köčpös-bay personally bears a cup and serves kumiss to the 90,000 troops, and begs

them to bring back Ak-kaniš and Bolot. He vows that he will neither sleep nor lie down until the two come back to him.

Return of Bolot to Joloy's realm (3555-3916)

Ak-kaniš navigates back along the road they came by, and the two face terrible hardships: "Their horses were as thin as honeysuckle-branches; their lice were as fat as larks." Arriving at a dark cave, Ak-kaniš leaves Bolot with the horses and walks in. Most of the day passes before Bolot hears her voice crying out. He enters, and towards evening comes to her. The previous day Saykal came to the very spot, and Ak-kaniš has found her footprints (they have arrived home). Ak-kaniš tells Bolot to bring the four horses; she slaughters them, and they prepare and eat the rectums (a delicacy).

In the morning, Bolot arises and double-loads his (muzzle-loading) gun on top of yesterday's charge. He goes out and sees a doe, shoots it, brings it in, adds its meat to that of the horses, and eats his fill. The next day he hits nine does with nine shots, and again eats his fill. The next day, Ak-kaniš warns Bolot not to shoot the white mountain goat from among the seven goats on yonder mountain. Bolot goes out and shoots the goat anyway, and chases it into the midst of a herd of 10,000 horses. Just as he catches the goat by the hind leg, 40 horse-herds gather around and divide up the goat's meat, leaving Bolot with only the hide. He takes the hide, and is met by the bay stallion Tor-aygir. He loads the hide on the stallion, and as he rides off, three more horses approach him. He chases these, and is suddenly met by Saykal, who in great emotion bids him to stop: "I am your mother who bore you!"

Saykal relates much of the tale thus far for Bolot, explaining that Joloy is dead (so she believes), and how she and Ak-kaniš came into their present unhappy state. Bolot

does not know her, and dismisses her with insults. He returns to Ak-kaniš and recounts what has just happened with the goat and a herdsman who addressed him as Bolot: “What does this mean?” Ak-kaniš tells Bolot that the woman was his own mother, and explains how he came to be raised by both Saykal and Ak-kaniš. Bolot wishes for Ak-kaniš to show Saykal to him, so in the morning they mount their good horses and go. Saykal, tending her flocks, is bewailing yesterday’s painful meeting with Bolot. Bolot hears her and approaches, and Saykal embraces him. Ak-kaniš, overjoyed, comes to them, and the three have a tearful reunion.

Bolot, unable to stand his two mothers’ weeping, rides up on a mountain-spur. There he sees an army of 60,000 troops with golden crescent-moon standards approaching, and in their midst, the hero Karača seated on a winged black horse and speaking Kalmak gibberish.

Bolot goes and tells Saykal. Ak-kaniš brings (and slaughters, sacrifices?) a bay-headed sheep, and Saykal and Ak-kaniš say a blessing. Then the three mount their horses and ride toward the enemy. Just at this moment Čečen rides up. Bolot loads his gun and blasts the neck of Karača’s horse, then takes Karača and gives him to Saykal and Ak-kaniš. While Čečen trounces the army, Bolot wrecks the gates (*sic*) of Karača’s yurt with his sword. From inside he seizes Kardıgač; Saykal takes Karača and Kardıgač, ties their necks together, and has them dragged to death. Then she burns their bodies and scatters the ashes.

The Nogoy people rejoice. Bolot asks, “Who among my father’s (Companions) is minding the realm?” Saykal answers: Čečen. Bolot makes Čečen his own Companion and ruler of the realm: “Dear Čečen, Uncle Čečen: know the horse I ride, know the robe I

wear, know the land and people!” Then Bolot has his being in his father’s yurt, and goes hunting.

Liberation and restoration of Joloy (3917-4264)

For seven days Čečen works at mounting an army of 70,000 men; then he exhorts Bolot to come and conquer Urum Khan and find his father, who was thrown into a pit. Bolot heartily agrees, and they set out. Their attacks are successful, and when Urum Khan hears the news he gathers his whole people and asks whether there is anyone, man or woman, who can defeat this foe. Only the white-haired crone volunteers. She says that Urum Khan must have Joloy pulled out of his pit, then Joloy is to be mounted on Ač-budan and given the girl Kızıl-kıs, and sent back—only in this way will the Kalmak save their lives. Urum Khan does as instructed.

Mounted on Ač-budan, Joloy charges in among Čečen’s army fighting and killing as he goes. Čečen hails him, but Joloy does not recognize Čečen. Then Čečen hails Ač-budan and explains that he has come with Joloy’s son and the army to rescue them, and will Ač-budan please go slowly (not allow Joloy to charge) while he fetches Bolot. Ač-budan halts on the spot. Čečen then goes to Bolot and asks him to help stop Joloy from killing his own people. He arms Bolot, and the two ride off together. Just then Joloy comes at them a-jousting. Čečen tells Bolot to ride at Joloy with his lance set; Čečen will ride around behind and seize Joloy’s lance. Joloy pauses and calls to his son, telling him he’s a comely lad and urging him to joust. Bolot laughs and says, “I will wave (or nod?) my lance at my father.” He hurls (or throws away?) his lance, and Joloy comes on, lance set. Just when the lance is about to strike Bolot, Čečen takes his battle-axe and shatters the lance. Joloy makes for Čečen, who wants to flee but his horse is tired. Then Ač-budan

and (Bolot's mount) Tor-aygır go head-to-head, and Tor-aygır brings his own neck down on top of Ač-budan's neck; Bolot grabs Ač-budan's lead-rope. Joloy recognizes Tor-aygır as the stallion hails Ač-budan, and Čečen approaches and hails Joloy once more. This time Joloy recognizes him, and asks who the lad riding Tor-aygır is. Čečen explains that it is Joloy's own son by Saykal. Joloy praises them both for coming to rescue him, and bestows a maiden on each of them.

Čečen fells the Kalmaks by the tens of thousands, and wrecks and plunders their fortresses of stone and sand. Čečen then drives off Kızıl-kıs and her 40 maids as well as the horses. As they pass by, Joloy demands and receives Kızıl-kıs who fed and cared for him in his confinement. Joloy bestows a horse on Bolot, and has the people of Urum Khan make camp.

Joloy sends a message to Saykal and Ak-kaniš at home that they should be ready for him the next day. Ak-kaniš becomes angry, but Saykal tries to assuage her. Saykal writes a letter explaining Bolot's birth, the flight to Köčpös-bay, the killing of Karača and the butchering of Kardıgač, and gives this letter to Ak-kaniš. Saykal tells her, "When Joloy comes, face away from him and weep; if he tugs at your skirts, gather them up; if he takes this paper, let him weep!" Then if Joloy reads to the part where Karača is killed, Saykal will snatch the letter from him and throw it in the fire, and Ak-kaniš must lie with Joloy.

The next day Joloy comes to the two women. Turning away and weeping, Ak-kaniš berates Joloy for stealing her and then abandoning her: "I will not look on the glutton!" Joloy reads the letter to the point where Karača is killed, and Saykal snatches it away and throws it in the fire. Joloy lies right down and embraces Ak-kaniš.

Bolot's campaign to save Köčpös-bay; Bolot's death and return to life (4265-5322)

Back at home, Köčpös-bay is refusing food and pining for Bolot. Enemies come and attack the realm, and Köčpös-bay's nine sons fight the enemy army of 90,000. Son Janikä⁶²² is wounded and sent home. Köčpös-bay's black beard goes white with care, and he weeps. The shepherdess Koytu-kün writes a prayer on a slip of paper and sends it up into the sky; it flies for six years and lands on the smoke-hole of Ak-kaniš's yurt.

Ak-kaniš reads the message and weeps, lamenting Köčpös-bay's misfortunes. Saykal comes to her, and together they tell Joloy the news. Joloy is roused to anger and summons Čečen: "Where is Bolot?" Čečen fetches Bolot from a hunting-trip, and Joloy scolds him: "You have neglected (my) realm! You have neglected me! You are a dog!" Joloy serves Bolot honeyed kumiss, then gives him the message on paper. Having read this, Bolot utters a heroic request for horse and arms—Ač-budan and the corselet Ak-olpok (to go fight for Köčpös-bay). Joloy refuses Bolot's request, and says, "Take whatever horse and corselet you can find, and good luck." Bolot takes Tor-aygır and goes.

Ak-kaniš then commands Joloy to give Ač-budan and Ak-olpok to Bolot, and Joloy again refuses. Ak-kaniš curses Joloy and Ač-budan. At this, Joloy summons Čečen and saddles Ač-budan. Čečen is about to ride off (to catch up with Bolot and deliver Ač-budan) when Joloy proposes going to *jeŋge* ('elder female relative') to get food to bring to Bolot. *Jeŋge* describes the food she has made, and its wrapping and utensils. Joloy loads

⁶²² The same as Jalikä, above.

it on, and *jeŋge* gives instructions for preparing the food. Joloy departs, catches up with Bolot, and tells him to mount Ač-budan and don Ak-olpok—uttering a praise of the steed.

Bolot mounts Ač-budan and flies off. After landing he sleeps for six days. Upon waking, he recognizes Köčpös-bay's land and goes to his yurt. He opens the door, and looks in upon this scene:

Baybičä is weeping and pining for Bolot's return. Köčpös-bay tells her he has had a dream: His huge yurt was pitched in its place, and in the seat of honor two identical poplar trees sprouted up. Their branches and twigs became silver and gold. From the head of the fire, ten poplars sprouted up waving; among them, one young poplar sprouted up till its top touched the sky. Its branches took (in? gathered?) the men of the earth. Baybičä interprets the dream: the yurt is their own, and the two poplars are they themselves. The ten poplars are their ten sons (nine natural sons and Bolot); the little poplar in the midst is Bolot.

At this moment Bolot enters the yurt and calls to Baybičä. The two embrace, then Baybičä gives Bolot her breast to suck. Köčpös-bay (blind) reports that he hears and smells Bolot; when he learns Bolot is really present all three have a joyful reunion.

Baybičä proposes to celebrate by slaughtering the sheep that Baybičä and Köčpös-bay picked out as a lamb and hand-raised when Bolot left. Bolot goes out to the flock to fetch the sheep. Among the flocks, he hears Koytu-kün crying and longing for Bolot to come. Bolot cries out and falls from his horse. Koytu-kün rushes to him and helps him back onto his horse. Then Bolot asks Koytu-kün for the sheep. She brings it, Bolot takes it to Köčpös-bay, they slaughter and eat the sheep, and Koytu-kün eats the remainder.

Having washed her hands after the meal, Koytu-kün stands up and asks: “Do you know who I am, and my ancestry?” She then narrates a story revealing her true identity:⁶²³ She is the daughter of a spirit father and a mirage mother. Her parents abandoned her, and she wandered the earth. At last she came to the holy man Babädin, and he adopted her. Babädin gathered his people and bestowed the name Karačač-sulu (Black-haired Beauty) on the girl. She grew comely. The infidel khan Mis-kara demanded her three times, and three times her father refused. Mis-kara brought an army of 60,000 men and captured Babädin’s outer rampart. Within the citadel, Babädin became afraid and made peace with Mis-kara. In villainous infidel fashion, Mis-kara took the 11-year-old girl Karačač as she went lamenting and fearing for her father’s life, brought her to his yurt, and sealed the union with *arak*. He spread the nuptial couch; but revulsed by the thought of relations with such a vile creature, Karačač prayed to *divs* and *peris*, was turned into a hawk, and flew into the air.

Karačač (Koytu-kün) narrates how she traveled over the earth in hawk form in search of worthy people, but found none to suit her. She sizes up each hero and heroine she saw in critical and dismissive fashion: Čöykö; Alpay-mamat; Agış and Kojoš; Jügörü; Er Töštük and his wife Kenjäkä; Bok-murun; Košoy; Kökčö; Manas and his wife Kanıkäy; and Koņur-bay. Finally Karačač came to Köčpös-bay, and lost herself in domestic chores.

Karačač then narrates how she wrote the letter summoning Bolot. She announces that she is going home, and departs astride Jel-maya. Bolot mounts Ač-budan, who begs Bolot to whip him to speed, and they rush off in pursuit of Karačač. As they reach her, Karačač warns Bolot that an army of 60,000 infidel troops is approaching. Karačač

⁶²³ See Hatto 1976.

advises him to flee over the pass and prepare himself a lance from a spruce-tree; then he will slaughter the enemy. Karačač will turn into a hawk and attack them.

Bolot charges the enemy. He fights for six days and slays 60,000; he fights for seven days and slays 70,000. As he retreats exhausted before the massing enemy, Karačač as a hawk chases them away.

Köčpös-bay's sons gather. The youngest, Bayır, asks shouldn't they run away from this enemy? Janikä⁶²⁴ retorts that there is no place to run; they should meet the enemy and fight. Janikä takes the rear-guard and Tölök leads the army. Karačač flies to them and begs them to help Bolot fight the infidels, for otherwise he will not bear up. They go to meet Bolot. There is a joyful reunion, but Bolot is bleeding and his strength fails as they greet him; he is on the point of death. Köčpös-bay and Baybičä ride to him, but when they arrive he is dead.

They weep. Karačač says, "Do not weep! I am the child of a mirage and a spirit! I will pray to God!" Karačač tears out the lung of her horse Jel-maya and claps it to Bolot's head, and clasps her hands under his arms. Bolot raises his head, faces the qibla, makes ablutions, and utters a blessing and testament. After giving instructions for his burial and memorial, Bolot tells them to send Ač-budan saddled with stirrups reversed to Joloy with the news of his death in a note pinned to the saddle. Having given greetings to Ak-kanış and Saykal, Bolot falls dead.

Karačač, Köčpös-bay and Baybičä lament and call on God. Baybičä's breasts flow with milk; she puts her breast in Bolot's mouth, and Karačač and Baybičä pray. Bolot returns to life, and they all go home rejoicing.

⁶²⁴ Same as Jalikä, above.

In time, Bolot says, “I have a father and a realm; I wish to return.” Köčpös-bay will not permit him, and asks Karačač how they can make him stay. Karačač advises finding the perfect wife (*teŋ-tuš* 'peer'). She instructs them to wait for her for eight days while she goes and looks for a girl, then to come to her home.

Karačač turns into a hawk and flies in search of a girl. She passes over Kün-jarkın, Ay-jarkın, Jes-biläk, and (another) Ay-jarkın as unsuitable. Coming to a city beyond Medinänin-čöl, she sees a radiant girl, Tötöy, playing with her 40 maids and youths. Karačač alights on the smoke-hole of the yurt for a better look, and the girl, drunk on honeyed kumiss, boasts: “Is there anyone more fair, radiant, artful, etc. than I?” Karačač replies that such a one is Bolot. Tötöy deprecates both Bolot and Joloy and insults Karačač. Karačač curses and threatens Tötöy. Tötöy is frightened and beseeches Karačač, who grabs the girl’s earring and throws it away. Tötöy retrieves the earring, and Karačač flies away, scolding the girl.

Karačač flies home. Köčpös-bay asks whether she has found a bride (peer) for Bolot? Karačač replies gnomically, “Yes and no (appar. ‘though there is such a peer, there is no bride’).”

Köčpös-bay informs Bolot that if he is going away, Köčpös-bay (lit., 'Non-migrating-rich-man') and Baybičä will come too. Karačač makes a cart,⁶²⁵ and Köčpös-bay, Baybičä, and Bolot go and meet Joloy, Čečen, Saykal, and Ak-kanış. They all enjoy themselves, knowing neither night nor day. Köčpös-bay rules the realm.

⁶²⁵ In no other instance of which I am aware do Kirghiz epic heroes or heroines travel by cart. Cf. Soltonoyev on the social changes in the early Czarist era: "Kirghiz children began to call a chair a horse and to ride in carts" (Soltonoyev, *Kirgiz tarıkhı*, vol. 2, p. 60).

Appendix 2. The *Semetey* of Maldibay Borzu uulu (Description and Prose Synopsis)

Manuscript:

MS Archives of the National Center of Manasology and Artistic Culture (Manastaanuu jana Körköm madaniyattın Uluttuk borboru), Kirghiz National Academy of Sciences, No. 252(4071). Examined and microfilmed in Bishkek by D. Prior, July 2001.

Description: 18 cm. h x 11 cm. w.; 117 pp. total; defective in the middle and at the end (see below). Faintly lined, yellowed pulp paper; some thumb-fading at corners; slight moisture damage on lower margin. Written in black ink with a *qalam*. Binding: cardboard covered in dark blue cotton ticking; sewn with twine. Arabic (i.e., Western) page numbers added in red ballpoint pen; some words circled and notes and glosses added in pencil and in purple and blue inks. 1r has very faint writing in pencil; 1v (p. 1 of the text) has 32 lines in quasi-*bayt* format; subsequent pp. have mostly 51 lines in 3 lines across, or sometimes 2 or even 4 lines across. Approx. 6,000 lines total in MS.

There are two poems: (1) Title centered at top of p. 1: *Qissah-i Sīmātāy bū turūr* ('This is the tale of Semetey'; contents: preface [1 p.]; Semetey's revenge on Abuke, Köböš, and Jakıp). P. 45: text ends 2/3 of the way down, then: *ošo Semetey Maldibay Borsu balasining kitebi dur* 'This S is M's book' (this is also transcribed into cyrillic at the bottom); then: *in k.tab ruzi* (or: *uzi*) *j.m^{ca}ah kuni tamam buldi*, which apparently spells (Pers.) *īn kitāb rūz-i* (or Kirg. *özü?*) *jum^{ca}* (then, continuing in Kirg.: *künü tamam boldu* 'This book was finished on Friday'; then: *tammat tammat tammat tammat* 'it is finished'. P. 46: faint pencil writing, upside down. (2) Title centered at top of p. 47: *Qissah-i Sīmātāy bū turūr* (contents: preface [1 p.]; Semetey's journey to retrieve Ak-šumkar and woo Ay-čürök). Starting on Western p. 47, the Persian (i.e., original Oriental)

page numbering starts over at 1. After this the Persian-numbered pp. 12 and 13 (one leaf) are missing; the Western numbering is consecutive (57-58), and thus was added after loss of the leaf. Text ends on bottom of p. 116 in mid-sentence. P. 117: Pencil list of proper names (?) in very hasty, light hand. (1) and (2) were evidently written by the same hand, (2) with a sharper *qalam*.

Language: Kirghiz. Script: post-Chaghatay, pre-reform *nasta'liq*; some ligatures. Suffixes are conventional (little or no vowel harmony expressed), and represent a blend of Chaghataizing suffizes with some clearly Kirghiz forms (e.g., genitive in *-din* instead of *-ning*). Possible dialectal features: *w* is sometimes written as a distinct grapheme (*vav* with three dots); *y* and *j* fluctuate; *s* and *z* tend to fluctuate. (Orthographic examples: *azıldı* [St. Kirg. *asıldı* 'caught hold']; *biröwü* [*biröösü* 'one of them']; *Borsu* [*Borzu*]; *f.t.kah* [*betege* 'feather grass']; *iger* [*eer* 'saddle']; *oghlı* [*uulu* 'son']; *taw* [*too* 'mountain']; ε *.har.t* [*daarat* 'ablution']; *y^cqub* [*Jakıp*]). Possible Chaghataizing hyper-Oghuzisms: *dulpar/dulfar* [*tulpar* 'magic winged steed']; *yurduṇdu* [*jurtuṇdu* 'thy land (acc.)']. Differences in orthography between (1) and (2), as well as differences in epithets and other diction,⁶²⁶ indicate that the MS is a copy compiled from two distinct written sources, (1)* and (2)*.

⁶²⁶ A few examples. Orthography: (1) *khwājah*, (2) *ghwājah* (*ghayn* with two dots); (1) *Talās*, (2) *Tılās* (*-ı* = minim with no dots); (1) *Qānīkāy*, (2) *Qanī-key* (*-e* = *ha*); (1) gen. suff. after *-y* = *-din*, (2) gen. suff. after *-y* = *-nin*; (1) *Bahāwādīn*, (2) *Bābādīn*; (1) *Čıyčır* and (once) *Čıyır*, (2) *Čıyırđı*. Epithets: (2) *Er Semey*, (1) absent; (2) *Khānkhūr* for *Semetey*, (1) absent. The Eight Heirlooms: (1) *Ak-kelte* (gun), *Sır-nayza* (lance), *Ay-balta* (battle-axe), *Doolbos* (drum), *Kurč-kılıč* (sword), *Ak-olpok* (coat of padded armor), *Ak badana torgoy köz* (coat of chain mail), *Ak-kalpak* (hat), *kaldagay* (breeches) = 9; (2) *Ak-olpok*, *?Karapči* (?armor-belt), *Beldemči* (belt), *Čarayna* (mail-coat), *Tuulga* (helmet), *Ay-balta*, *Čoṇ-nayza* (lance), *Joy-bolot* (blade), *Ak-kelte*, *Alma-baš* (gun) = 10. Other diction: (2) has Russian loanwords *samovar*, *sahar* = *sakhar* 'sugar' [cf. (1) p. 6 l. 15 *šeker* 'sugar'], *batınıš* = *podnos* 'tray'.

Inscription in cyrillic Kirghiz, in purple ink, on inside front cover: "This book of 'Semetey' is Maldıbay Borzu uulu's. Maldıbay died in 1944, having lived a little over 80 years. His younger brother Sandıbay now lives in Karakol kolkhoz in Talas *rayon*. He is about 70. According to elderly members of this kolkhoz—Janaalı, Namazaalı, and Sandıbay (all literate), Maldıbay wrote the manuscript 60 years ago. On a scientific expedition to Talas, Š. Ümötaliev, a student, obtained the manuscript from Namazaalı. 3.VIII.1959." Thus the date of the MS is ca. 1899.

Notices:

Aydarkulov & Mokeev 1988 (includes cyrillic transcription by M. Tölömuşev of 656 lines from MS pp. 48-61).

Aydarkulov 1989, pp. 28-35.

(The above notices adduce uncited information to the effect that Ümötaliev obtained the MS in 1957 from a Junuš Moldo in the village of Keŋ-aral in the Talas valley. Cf. the reminiscence by Š. Ümötaliev (Ümötaliev 1988), about a MS of *Semetey* [apparently a different one] obtained in 1957 from an elderly Talas resident.)

Urstanbekov & Čoroyev 1990, p. 107.

MS p. 1 was reproduced in facsimile with Latin transcription, English translation, and comments in Hu & Imart 1989, pp. 44-49; the reading of the verses is out of order and the MS date given is incorrect.

"Tale of Semetey" [(1) Semetey's Revenge on Abike, Köböš, and Jakıp]

MS pp. 1-45; line references in the margins below are provided for orientation within the synopsis.

(The text begins with a Preface:) The people's tales of old happened so long ago—no one alive saw those things, and they are not written down on paper. I shall narrate it for the pleasure of the cognoscenti, for the braves; God knows, half is truth and half is lies ...

5 Semetey hears that his lineage is of the Nogoy. Kanıkey admonishes Semetey before his departure for Talas, and describes the lands and rulers he will pass on the way. "If I tell you not to go, you won't agree ..." (he is a Roughneck). Kanıkey finishes the preparations and outfitting for Semetey's journey. Then she tells him about past events: "After your father died, his companions left me and went over to Köböš, but Bakay
10 (remained loyal). When you seek your homeland, they will call you a prince; let me explain why."

 Kanıkey says that she was married to Manas, and that her father Kara Khan⁶²⁷ had a white goat killed and the blood dripped on Kanıkey (a ritual to conceive a son?). After Manas died, Kanıkey buried him in a tomb. Abuke (Manas's half-brother) was ready to
15 take Kanıkey (and marry her according to the tradition of the levirate), but "preferring to die than stay with Abuke, I went to your grandfather's (my father's) city. Let me explain the route you will have to take. As you go along, keeping your two reins and your lead-rope even⁶²⁸, you will come to a large river" that will be difficult to cross.⁶²⁹ Kanıkey

⁶²⁷ Below in (1), Kanıkey's father is Temir Khan, yet later on, in (2) he is again Kara Khan; and in (2), Kara Khan is Manas's great-grandfather. See Hatto 1990, pp. 611, 614.

⁶²⁸ p. 5 ll. 28f. The "keeping your two reins even" topos is a formula found in *KO* in Bok-murun's instructions to his herald. The lead-rope (*çilbır*) is attached to the horse's bridle and the free end, during riding, is secured around the pommel.

⁶²⁹ p. 5 ll. 30ff. The description of the river recalls the formulaic descriptions of the river Ürgönc in other *Semetey* poems.

warns Semetey that if a dervish⁶³⁰ or khoja suddenly appears out of nowhere behind him,
 20 then Semetey will eat an apple with sugar,⁶³¹ and die. (But rather) Semetey is to look
 straight ahead (across the river), and he will find Manas('s *arbak*) before him riding Ak-
 kula, shouldering Ak-kelte, etc., and accompanied by the Forty Companions. Semetey is
 not to catch Manas's eye; invoking Bahauadin, Šahmerden,⁶³² and Khoja Ahmad, he
 should set (Manas and the companions) to flight, then plunge into the water. Crossing
 25 will be difficult. Once across, he will try in vain to find Manas and the companions, who
 had even waved to him but will have now disappeared. He will take a dose of powerful
 medicine⁶³³ and recite the Koran, and pass on in safety. Going on from there, he will see
 Manas's hound Ak-taygan. Kanikey relates Ak-taygan's points and exploits.

"Then you will (look for and) find Bakay Khan, and you will give him my
 30 greeting!" Going on from there, Semetey should ascend a mountain spur and train his
 telescope on the Talas (valley). There is a lyrical description of the scenery, wildlife, and
 abundant comforts of the Talas valley—"such is the homeland of the Nogoy." (In an
 apparent geographical repetition,) Semetey will ascend the Čatkal and train his telescope
 on the Čoŋ Talas, and there he will catch sight of the top of Manas's tomb "shining like
 35 the moon on the yellow steppe." Kanikey describes the building of the tomb (including
 the traditional making of the bricks with goat fat for durability), then the interior
 decorations.⁶³⁴ There is a lifelike portrait of Manas: "You will look to the place of honor

⁶³⁰ p. 6 l. 11 *dīwānah*.

⁶³¹ p. 6 ll. 15ff. *alma minän šekerdi/ aralaša içersin/ amanat jandın kečersin* (with Chagatay-like abl. *-din* for Kirghiz *-dan*). The significance of this action is obscure.

⁶³² p. 6. 43. A tutelary spirit of Central Asian epic heroes, whose name comes from Shāh-i mardān, an epithet of ʿAlī.

⁶³³ p. 7 l. 27 *uu em*.

⁶³⁴ p. 11 ll. 1ff. The descriptions of Manas's tomb found in the "Kanikey's Tale" sections by Maldıbay, Tımbek, and Šaabay bear striking similarities to a description by Semenov-Tian-Šanskii of the tomb of a Kirghiz *batır* which he found in 1857 near San-taš:

and see your princely father. When you see him, do not let your heart leap out (for his appearance is awesome)!" Kanikey then describes her own portrait and enumerates those
 40 of the Forty Companions: Bakay,⁶³⁵ "Head of the Forty" Kırğın-çal, Kılkan-çal, Čalbay, Ajıbay, Kotonoy, Majike(?), Alike son of Kambar, Jeneke son of Čıbit, Maleke son of Kušbay, Koš-awaz son of Koñurbay, Kul-awaz son of Alım, Majik Khan, Köböš and (?), Agış and Kojoš, Akbay and Mambet, Akköl-koyon and Siltet(?), Eleman, Kalkaman, Tokomon, Ümböt, Kırımbet, Almambet, Bayımbet, Sırdıbay, Turdubay, Um-ay son of
 45 Jeder, Turumbay, Kerim-ay son of Šeñkul, Sarıkbay, Bokombay son of Kıljır, Čonokbay, Setey, Atay son of Abay, Baysengi(?) son of Ümüt, Karakojo (of the) Arğın, Boobek, El Toyu of the Ispender, Tortoy of the Dorbon, and Kara Tülögü(?).⁶³⁶

Kanikey names and describes the eight heirloom possessions of Manas that Semetey should recover from the usurpers Abuke and Köböš and from his grandfather
 50 Jakıp: Ak-kelte (matchlock), Sır-nayza (lance), Ay-balta (battle-axe), Tubalbas (war-

Climbing into the Tasma [mountains], we saw the pretty tomb of a Bugu *batır* by the name of Noghay, who had died in that place in 1842. This monument, the work of highly skilled artisans of Kashghar, cost Noghay's family rather a lot: they paid two ingots of silver, two camels, five horses and 300 sheep. The monument had the shape of a small temple of the Oriental architectural type with a dome and tower. On the front wall a door was visible within a deep embrasure, and the [interior of the?] dome was ornamented with extremely crude frescoes in which Noghay himself was depicted on a horse with a long lance in his hand, and behind him—also on a horse—his son Čon-karač, and behind him all the members of Noghay's family and a train of baggage camels. Fantastic trees and even flowers were depicted amid the groups. All the bricks from which the building was made had been brought from Kashghar [...] (Semenov-Tian-Šanskii 1946, pp. 182f.).

Valikhanov mentioned Noghay's tomb by name as one of but a few "magnificent" Kirghiz tombs (Valikhanov, *Dnevnik*, p. 255); Noghay's son "Karač (čon)" was one of the leading *biys* with whom Valikhanov conferred on his first meeting with the Bugu ca. 24 May 1856 (Valikhanov, *Dnevnik*, p. 247).

⁶³⁵ Bakay perhaps should not be counted among the Forty Companions, since the next named is "Head of the Forty" Kırğın-çal.

⁶³⁶ p. 13 ll. 1-43.

drum), Kurč-kılıč (sword), Ak-olpok (tunic of padded armor), Ak-badana (coat of lark's-eye chain mail), Ak-kalpak (hat), and breeches of mountain goat leather.⁶³⁷

Kanıkey enumerates the steeds whose pictures are on the inner walls of Manas's tomb: Sar'ala, Kar'ala, Kırgın-čal's Boz-aygır, Abuke's Kak-telki, Manas's Ak-kula, and
55 (Tay-)buurul.⁶³⁸ "If (Abuke and Köböš) give you Ak-šumkar, cast him and come home; if they give you Tay-buurul, ride him and come home!"⁶³⁹ She concludes by recommending brides for Semetey and the Nogoy *jigits* from the lovely daughters of Sayın Khan.

Now Semetey is ready to ride to the Keñ-kol. Kanıkey gives her blessing, invoking the Twelve Imams, the 40 *čilten*,⁶⁴⁰ and world-conquering braves as guardians.
60 She goes inside, weeping, to Čıyčır,⁶⁴¹ then comes out again and finds her wretched only son gone. She goes back inside, weeping. Čıyčır has a word: "Though Semetey is a warrior, he is not ready and will be back soon."⁶⁴²

Semetey comes to the fearsome river described by Kanıkey. On the other side he spies Manas riding on Ak-kula, shouldering Ak-kelte, holding Sır-nayza, etc. Semetey
65 plunges into the water, crosses, and prays in order to appease and send away the *arbak* of Manas and Almambet. Going on from there he finds the hound Ak-taygan. Racing on from there for a long way over hilly and uneven ground, at last he comes upon a man. It is Bakay. Semetey identifies himself and says he is searching for his father's dominion. Bakay, astonished, greets him joyfully, then explains the bad situation in Manas's lands.

⁶³⁷ p. 14 l. 40-p. 17 l. 3.

⁶³⁸ p. 17 l. 8-p. 18 l. 7.

⁶³⁹ p. 18 ll. 13ff.

⁶⁴⁰ Tutelary spirits of Manas.

⁶⁴¹ Manas's mother; cf. Čıyrdı-bay/Čıyırçı of mid-nineteenth century tradition (references: *MWR*, p. 609; discussion of names: Hatto 1969b, pp. 221-228.)

⁶⁴² p. 20 ll. 15f.

70 All the other heroes are dead; Abuke and Köböš have taken over. Semetey replies that he will drive them out and recover his patrimony.

Semetey stays some days with Bakay, then the two ride out together towards the Čatkal. They see the scene of the Talas, as Kanikey has already lyrically described it, and make out Manas's tomb. Semetey mourns. At the tomb they pray, read the whole Koran, 75 and utter blessings. Semetey sees the pictures of Manas, his 40 companions, and their steeds. As he looks, "God knows whether it's true," Manas's voice roars out; the protection of Manas's *arbak* settles upon Semetey.⁶⁴³

Bakay suggests that he go ahead to announce Semetey's arrival to his grandfather Jakıp. At Jakıp's, Bakay demands a gift-for-good-news. Jakıp instead beats Bakay on the 80 head, drawing blood. Bakay insists that it is true, "You have not seen him, but I have!" He describes Semetey's person in no uncertain terms as a true prince of the Nogoy, and predicts that after Jakıp dies, Semetey will feast on the blood of Abuke and Köböš. Jakıp immediately back-pedals: "Bakay, I was only joking!" He tells Bakay to take a gift-for-good-news from among the vast herds of horses, camels, etc., washes the blood off his 85 head, and sends him back to bring Semetey. Then he goes inside his yurt, where he orders his senior wife Baktı-döölöt⁶⁴⁴ to pour a cup of honey and give it to Bakay, and a cup of

⁶⁴³ p. 27 ll. 27ff.

⁶⁴⁴ p. 29 l. 28. Since Čıyčır has already been named above as Manas's mother and Semetey's grandmother in the company of Kanikey (see previous note), we have here an extreme example of the vacillation characteristic of the mid-nineteenth century tradition regarding the name of Manas's mother, or more precisely, of Jakıp's wife. Maldıbay, or his source, has deposited two women in different places: Čıyčır, resident at Temir Khan's court with Kanikey; and Baktı-döölöt at Talas with Jakıp, where she lived while Manas was alive and where she once [in I,5)] had a high scene with Jakıp reminiscent of the one being discussed. It has been mentioned (Hatto 1969b, pp. 221-228) that the bard of I,6) mentions both Baktı-döölöt and Čakan [a third name for Manas's mother, as in I,2)]. It is now noted that Baktı-döölöt is mentioned in I,6) for the last time in line 230, figuring only as *baybiče* 'senior wife' (which could mean either name) in subsequent mentions up to l. 457. Čakan, on the other hand, is first mentioned in l. 359 and last at l. 1063, at the close of the poem. Thus the bard of I,6), like Maldıbay, has reserved one name for the early

poison and give it to Semetey, for "won't Semetey bring ruin to his people, and bring ruin to the twin khans?"⁶⁴⁵ Baktı-döölöt rebukes Jakıp: "Do not kill your grandson! Give him his father's realm! Give him his father's tunic! Give him his father's pedigree! Give him
90 his father's horse!"⁶⁴⁶

Jakıp ignores her and prepares the poison. Bakay hears this, and rides out to meet Semetey. He tells Semetey that he must not trust Jakıp, that he will be given a test of faith with a cup of honey, but he should feed it to the dogs. As they arrive at Jakıp's yurt, Jakıp weeps and utters a welcoming speech to Semetey, then offers him the cup. Semetey says,
95 "I will not drink your cup! I will give your dish to the dogs!" and rides off with Bakay. Semetey tells Bakay that Jakıp was about to poison them, and that God saved them. Bakay advises going to Abuke and Köböš. Bakay goes in to them, and after Abuke has drunk six cups of *arak*, and Köböš seven, Bakay announces that Semetey has returned. Abuke and Köböš are nonplussed, and Bakay gets drunk.

100 Semetey demands his birthright: "Have you kept all of my father's heirlooms in good condition for me?" asking about each item in turn. Abuke is silent. Köböš leaves the yurt, then returns majestically and begins to make a speech reminiscing about Manas's

action and another name for the conclusion of his epic. The question naturally arises whether the binary situation in *SMB*(1) is an attempt to give Jakıp's wicked sons Abıke (Abuke) and Köböš a mother, whom they lacked in the Older Period texts. Baktı-döölöt at Talas is called *baybiče* '[Jakıp's] senior wife', but this term would tend to take its meaning from the context of a given man's current household, unlike "first wife/second wife" in English. Nevertheless, while the notion of Baktı-döölöt as the mother of Abuke and Köböš appeals on practical grounds, it collapses under the circumstances of this lady's presence in the plot: first she demands that Jakıp give Semetey's birthright back to him—at the expense of Abuke and Köböš; later she is met, a.k.a. Čıyçır, with Kanıkey. Nor is this binary character the only such slippage in the text, though she is the only one who has a speaking part. In (1), Kanıkey's father is both Kara Khan [as in (2)] and Temir Khan; and in (2), Kül-čoro's father is both Majik and Almambet. These inconsistencies have the scent of uncollated written compilation more than of a "nodding" oral bard.

⁶⁴⁵ *egiz kan*, meaning Abuke and Köböš.

⁶⁴⁶ p. 30 ll. 9ff.

war prowess. Semetey replies, "You fool, Köböš!" and narrates in detail Manas's major military exploits, including campaigns to Kašgar and Kıtay. Semetey dons the sword, Ak-tinte, and Ak-balta (battle axe) and goes to leave. Abuke and Köböš accost him on the way out and say, "Don't take the gun and lance!" Semetey becomes enraged, beats them off, and leaves. He comes to Bakay, who utters an extended praise-epithet of the horse Tay-buurul and describes his *tulpar*-speed and qualities of a war steed. Abuke and Köböš argue whether Semetey was right to take the heirlooms.

110 Bakay exhorts Semetey to ride against Abuke and Köböš after returning to Kanikey. Semetey rides back to Ürgönč⁶⁴⁷ to Kanikey. She praises Semetey's weapons and armor, and compares them favorably with those of Manas. She then exhorts him to make an end of Abuke and Köböš, otherwise "how will you do right by Manas and your elders?" Kanikey tells Semetey to stay with her at home for three days and then set off.

115 Semetey objects: "Bakay told me not to get used to another land; I must return to my own land!" Kanikey asks the horse Tay-buurul a question: "Did Semetey take back his father's possessions?" Tay-buurul answers: "He took them by force."⁶⁴⁸ Kanikey upbraids Semetey for hiding the fact (that his patrimony is not yet restored).

Twelve months pass; a year passes. Kanikey utters not a word. Finally Semetey

120 says he intends to go to Talas (and recover his dominion). Kanikey goes to her father Temir Khan and complains, "He won't listen to a word I say! He says he is going." Temir Khan has a *tulpar* (Ak-tulpar) brought and numerous herds and provisions raised (for

⁶⁴⁷ Ürgönč for Temir Khan's capital is not traditional; in *SMB*(2), Ürgönč will be found in its proper place as Akun Khan's capital and Ay-čürök's home.

⁶⁴⁸ p. 42 l. 50. I.e., he stole them back. It is extremely rare for animals to talk in Kirghiz epic poetry of any period.

Semetey). He has craftsmen build him a seven-wing⁶⁴⁹ iron yurt. Then Kanıkey and Baktı-döölöt come and give Semetey their blessing, saying, "Keep well, find your realm, protect your people, and treat Bakay like a father." They extinguish his fire that had been lit⁶⁵⁰ and see him off. Semetey goes forth, driving night and day; he crosses the fearsome river guarded by the *arbak* of Manas and Almambet, and comes at last to Keŋ-kol on the Talas. He pitches the iron yurt on the broad oxbow where Manas used to camp. Abuke and Köböš, getting news of Semetey's arrival, raise a huge army and surround him.

130 Kanıkey and Baktı-döölöt run in. Semetey dons Ak-olpok and mounts Ak-tulpar, and drives the enemy before him like a falcon chasing geese. He slaughters them, captures Abuke, Köböš, and Jakıp, and ties them up. Semetey goes to Kanıkey and Baktı-döölöt, tells them the three are captured, and asks them to bring them while he undoes his coat of mail; then he can frighten them and shame them (before killing them). Hearing this,

135 Kanıkey and Baktı-döölöt run outside drawing knives out of their clothes. They come back inside and tell Semetey to eat, since they have killed Abuke, Köböš, and Jakıp.

The Nogoy all come in a mass to celebrate, and Semetey claims his realm. Ča-temir Khan gives his knowing daughter Čačıke to Semetey after payment of the bride-price. Semetey rules the teeming (Nogoy) people of the 60 volosts.⁶⁵¹

⁶⁴⁹ The "wings" are the sections of expandable lattice that make up the walls of the yurt. Six wings is average size.

⁶⁵⁰ See discussion on p. 206, above.

⁶⁵¹ p. 45 l. 35 *boluš*.

"Tale of Semetey" [(2) Semetey's Journey to Retrieve Ak-šumkar and Woo
Ay-čürök]

MS pp. 47-116; line references in the margins below are provided for orientation within the synopsis.

(The text begins with a Preface similar to the first one.)

Semetey hears that Ak-šumkar, the gyrfalcon he inherited from Manas, has been taken away by Akhun Khan's daughter Ay-čürök. He resolves to go after the bird, and chooses his troops. His two companions (*čoro*) are standing by: he tells them that the
5 myriad horses of the Nogoy are in Talas; they should (choose among them and) set off for Ürgönč today in search of Ay-čürök and Ak-šumkar. The two lads set off for the herds and drive them in to Semetey, who says he will judge them himself and choose 14 of them for his train. They are named: Kanikey's Kal-telki, *baybiče's* (Bagdı-döölöt's) Boz-čolok, Bakay Kan's Sur-čolok, Čačikey's Ak-tuyak, Kıl-küröñ, Nez-kara's Timgil-
10 sur(?), Ku-čabdar, Kır-taygan(?), Jügörü's⁶⁵² Kara-boz, Taz-baymat's Ker-kulun(?), Khan Töštük's Čal-kuyruk, Añgı-čal's Boz-bıştan, Ağıš and Khojoš's Boorker, Er Ürbü's Karaker, Ay-kojo's Tarkan-boz, Oroñgu's Kula-bee, Kök-ala that Kanikey used to ride on migrations, Sur-ala, Kur-ala, and Sar'ala.⁶⁵³ Now the catalog turns to the names of the Forty Companions' steeds: Almambet's Sar'ala (but none of the other companions' steeds
15 are mentioned).

⁶⁵² p. 50 l. 6. Here is a rare attestation of the name of the hero the collecting of whose epic in 1869 Radloff reported to have begun, after hearing *Joloy Kan* and *Er Töštük* in succession; but the bard fell into repetitiveness and Radloff halted the session (Radloff, *Predislovie*, p. xvii; p. ix: "*Iugöriu, vkhodivšii v snošeniia s mertvymi*"). The text of *Jügörü* has not come down to us, but the hero was mentioned in the jibing catalog of heroes in *Joloy Kan* as "friend to the dead," and on that basis was identified by Hatto as a black shaman figure (Hatto 1976, pp. 243f.) It is fitting and probably traditional that we find Jügörü's horse named Kara-boz 'dark gray' in our text. Not surprisingly, Sagımbay and Sayakbay both recycled the name Jügörü for mention as a hero in minor contexts (*Manas entsiklopediya*, s.vv. *Jügörü*).

⁶⁵³ pp. 49-50.

Semetey orders the two companions to march from the Nogoy of the 12 tribes and 60 volosts taking Tay-burul as a spare mount and Kak-telki as a free mount, and to load on a year's provisions. He sends them to Čačikey's house; Kül-čoro folds up the big tent and loads it onto Sur-bulčuŋ; he folds up the white tent and loads it onto Ak-bulčuŋ; he
20 loads up a samovar and other provisions.

As Semetey sets them all moving, the eight possessions he inherited from Manas are enumerated with long epithets:⁶⁵⁴ Ak-olpok (tunic of padded armor), an armor-belt, a copper hauberk, a golden helmet, Ay-balta (battle axe), a long lance, Joy-bolot (sword?), Ak-kelte (gun), Alma-baš (gun).⁶⁵⁵ The two companions drive the horses, and Semetey
25 prays to the saints and the shaykhs for protection on their journey.

Semetey smokes his pipe; the smoking is lyrically described. The prodigious smoke reaches up to heaven and causes rain and hailstorms throughout the land. The herds of animals disperse and suffer.

(There is a lacuna in the MS here: one leaf is missing.)

30 A fine meal is being served to Semetey; the two companions get drunk on *arak*. Semetey cautions Kül-čoro: "We are beyond our border, in hostile country; you two guard the horses, and I will take a quick nap. Don't fall asleep! Stand guard." Semetey rises soon and finds that the two companions have fallen asleep by the horses.

Dawn is breaking. Semetey takes (Tay-)buurul and decides to reconnoiter. He
35 ascends swiftly to a pass and reins in Tay-buurul; the reins are described in detail. Reaching the summit on foot wearing his soft leather inner-boots, Semetey looks out ahead.

⁶⁵⁴ Some items appear to be named more than once.

⁶⁵⁵ p. 52 l. 43-p. 55 l. 27.

The scene shifts to Ay-čürök, who has had a dream. In her house made of silver, copper, and iron and decorated with gemstones, Ay-čürök assembles her 40 ladies and
40 maids and tells them to interpret her dream: "A race-horse was tied to my post and scratched at the ground; a nightingale perched on my willow tree and my body thrilled as it sang; (the next image is unclear); a tiger seized an ass, and no one prevented it; a black-maned, blue-gray wolf ranged inside the city, but no dogs snapped at it; a dragon (?—); I saw Čin-kojo son of Šıgay, whom I have never seen before, with Toltoy beside him, and
45 they were armed and marched ranks and ranks of troops against the city; braiding their horses' forelocks and tying up their tails, they surrounded my father's (city) Čoŋ Ürgönč and attacked mercilessly for eight days; on the ninth day they counted their innumerable troops, uttered spells, and flew up into the sky; from there, their shots fell like rain and hail; (ours) could not reach them up in the sky; a boy standing by loaded his last round,
50 and shot Čin-kojo's bird of happiness out of the sky! He shot again and killed him!" She asks her ladies and maids, "What does this mean?" The bard inserts a transitional phrase: "I could go on; there is more like it to say; leave it there, and let us recite the pedigrees of the forty maids."⁶⁵⁶

There are: six daughters of Akhun Khan, seven daughters of Alaman, eight
55 daughters of Zehil(?) Kan, nine daughters of Sirgiljan, plus Ün-saykal, Kalıyman, Tayıngan, Begimjan, Kubuljan, Ker-moyun, Ber-moyun, an old maid (*er albagan eski kız*), a shrew (*er tügötkön keski kız*), (?*turuk tömön toltuk kız*), and a deadly markswoman (*jurt kurutkan multık kız*).⁶⁵⁷ None of Ay-čürök's 40 ladies and maids can interpret her dream except for the khan's daughter Kalıyman with the black-currant eyes: "If the dream

⁶⁵⁶ p. 62 l. 14-p. 65 l. 39. Cf. Ay-čürök's dream in *STJ* (Appendix 3, below).

⁶⁵⁷ p. 65 l. 40-p. 66 l. 6.

60 is true, God will grant you favor!" The signs relate first to past action: how Ay-čürök
donned her swan habit and sought the Nogoy on the Talas; how she sized up Semetey's
first wife, Ča-temir's daughter Čačikey; how she took Ak-šumkar when Semetey cast it,
and brought it to Akhun Khan's city—after Manas died it was 12 years with Abike, but it
will come back to roost. "The tiger taking the ass is Kalčoro son of Kambar; the black-
65 maned blue-gray wolf is Kül-čoro son of Majik; if Čın-kojo flies into the sky, it means
that Semetey is coming after his bird; he will take Ay-čürök without bothering to call the
mullas and have a wedding; Kül-čoro will shoot Čın-kojo down from the sky; let Akhun
Khan and the people of the city behold the corpse! If my interpretation is correct, go out
to meet my khan-cousin Semetey, for he will be angry at those who keep away!"

70 Ay-čürök says the interpretation is correct, and orders provisions and supplies
loaded on for her outing to meet Semetey. On the banks of the Ürgönč she pitches her
blue tent out in the open where it can be seen.

The scene switches to Semetey on lookout at the pass.⁶⁵⁸ Bakay had given him a
letter with a description of the route; Semetey takes this out and, being an expert mulla,
75 reads it. The route described leads to Ürgönč. Semetey trains his telescope on the city he
sees ahead: "That must be Ürgönč." He gets a fine view of the strong city and is
impressed. The troops of Čın-kojo and Toltoy are visible, and can be heard roaring in the
distance. Semetey wonders whether he should rush in and attack such a big army alone:
"Let them stay down there!" Training his telescope on the road, he spies Ay-čürök and
80 the girls coming out to meet him, and recognizes Ay-čürök.

Kül-čoro has raised his head and found Tay-buurul missing and Semetey gone
from his tent. He goes to wake up Kalčoro, tells him to stay and light the fire, and goes up

⁶⁵⁸ p. 74 ll. 9ff.

to Semetey. He asks Semetey what he has seen; Semetey reiterates what he has seen through the telescope, but says, "I saw a group of people emerge from the city, but I
85 couldn't make them out"⁶⁵⁹ (he means Ay-čürök and the girls). Saying it might be the troops of Čın-kojo and Toltoy coming against them, Semetey exhorts Kül-čoro to ride down on Kak-telki and reconnoiter. "Let them not be Kashgharis, let them not be caravaneers! ... Are they enemies wearing corselets? Are they girls riding amblers?"⁶⁶⁰

Kül-čoro agrees to go, but pleading inexperience, he asks for (Tay-)buurul, Ak-
90 olpok, Ak-kelte, and Sır-nayza. Semetey refuses, and resolves in his mind to make the reconnaissance himself if Kül-čoro will not go. Then he reconsiders, thinking to himself, "I have no one under me to lead; if I hurt this fool's feelings, I will have no boys behind me; I have no numerous Nogoy with me."⁶⁶¹ He changes his mind and gives (Tay-)buurul. Kül-čoro goes and waters him and prepares to ride. He saddles and outfits Tay-
95 buurul; there is a detailed description of the horse's outfit. Kül-čoro mounts the horse, and Semetey utters a blessing. Kül-čoro is riding away as Semetey waves him down and says another thing: "You never knew this horse's secrets ...," and he launches into a description of the horse's points and *tulpar* qualities. Kül-čoro retorts, "I knew this horse's points before you did, tending your herds in Talas as a nine-year-old!" and again Kül-čoro races
100 off.

After a wild ride he comes to the Čoŋ Ürgönč; he finds neither a ford nor any person to ask the way. The river's fearsome power is lyrically described at length. Kül-čoro utters his soliloquy: "How can I turn back?", etc. As he spies the girls watching him on the other side, he plunges right into the water, defying death. He is helped across by

⁶⁵⁹ p. 79 l. 16.

⁶⁶⁰ See discussion on pp. 209f.

⁶⁶¹ p. 83 ll. 1-10.

105 the *arbak* of Manas and the Forty Companions, the Twelve Imams, and the forty *čilten*.
He emerges from the river streaming water.

Kara-kız in Ay-čürök's retinue spies Kül-čoro and hurries to Ay-čürök to demand a gift-for-good-news: "He is a man suited to you (i.e., he is Semetey)!" Ay-čürök corrects her: "Make no mistake, that one is Kül-čoro riding Semetey's Tay-buurul and shouldering
110 Semetey's Ak-kelte. Semetey waits behind him; he has come to look for Ak-šumkar and slay Čın-kojo. I myself shall answer him!" She bids the forty girls to receive Kül-čoro politely, for he is a tough warrior.

Kül-čoro rides up to the girls but cannot recognize Ay-čürök. He asks the girls who they are and where they have come from. Ay-čürök rises gracefully; her beautiful
115 form and movements are described. She asks Kül-čoro his name and pedigree. "Many like you have come to our city, but none have left! Who is your lord?" Kül-čoro answers that he was amazed by the sight of the maids' fine clothes, then he names his lord, Semetey, and his errand, to retrieve Ak-šumkar. He gives Semetey's pedigree: Böyön Khan, Čoyon Khan, Kara Khan, Bara Khan, Ya'kup Khan, and Manas of the Nogoy.⁶⁶²
120 Then he says, "You call me lowly, you call my father lowly? My father is not lowly, I am not lowly. Before I tell you my father's name, (I will tell you) he was no lowly man; he abandoned the Kıtay and smashed their idols. My father fled to Talas when Manas died; he is not lowly. I am the son of Er Almambet!⁶⁶³ And behind me, dark in the distance, is Manas's son Semetey!"

125 Ay-čürök replies that Semetey has no intended spouse, but her intended spouse is Čın-kojo son of Šıgay, and Toltoy is always at his side; the two are valorous. "Don't let

⁶⁶² p. 98 ll. 9-16. On Manas's pedigree, cf. I,1) 1-9 and Hatto 1969b, pp. 220f.

⁶⁶³ p. 99 l. 6. Earlier in the same poem, Kül-čoro's father was named Majik.

knock-about Semetey get killed by them! When Čin-kojo marches out, Semetey will have no Nogoy to marshal against him! I know your lord; when Toltoy attacks, he will have no Nogoy help nor refuge in Talas! Tell him what I said; he must go back today! I know

130 Semetey; I have heard how Abike and Kōböš usurped his inheritance and how his mother and grandmother fled with him to Kara Khan's city, and how the smoke-hole cover of (Manas's) 60-wing white pavilion was opened with a lance-thrust! Semetey was just a boy when his dominion was reduced; what praise have you for him?"

Kül-čoro replies: "My lord is no less a warrior than Toltoy, I no less than Čin-

135 kojo! Watch that you don't let Semetey hear what you have said (to me)! I know that you were on the banks of Ala-köl at the beginning of last month, and you sized up Semetey while he hunted. You took Ak-šumkar to attract a husband; now I have come, so don't act as if you don't know anything! Choose your words very carefully! There is no tea in your samovar; since you took our bird you will have little room for rest! There is no bread on

140 your tray; you have brought trouble to Talas, and Kül-čoro has come after you; you will find no rest in your father's place of honor! The days of Čin-kojo and Toltoy are numbered ..."

The scene shifts to Semetey. Looking through his telescope he mistakenly believes he sees Kül-čoro kissing Ay-čürök. He bellows in anger at the sight. Kalčoro

145 thinks that an enemy is advancing on Kül-čoro without his knowledge; he immediately rounds up the horses and drives them to Semetey. Semetey addresses him: "Rascal Kalčoro! I gathered horses; none is a racer! I gathered braves; none is well-born!" Then he describes what he believes he has just seen Kül-čoro do.

They ride down to the Ürgönč. Semetey wonders how he will get across on his

150 inferior horse, Kak-telki. He also ponders whether to undress before attempting to cross,

and decides not to give the girls cause to laugh and shame him. Shouting the name of Babadin, he makes Kak-telki leap like a goat and plunges into the river with all 14 horses.⁶⁶⁴

Ay-čürök sees Semetey trying to cross and says he won't make it. Kül-čoro
 155 contradicts her: "My lord Semetey grew to the size of a red willow, massive as an elephant, in the time it takes an elephant to turn around!"⁶⁶⁵ His protectors are the khojas; Ak-išan holds out his hand to him; the One God is his permanent Protector!" Before Ay-čürök's eyes, the Forty Companions (only Almambet is named) and Manas come and help Semetey out of the water; Semetey apostrophizes on the history of his mothers' subjuction under Abuke. Semetey drives one of his horses, Boz-bıştan, toward Manas (as
 160 an offering), leaving thirteen.

Ay-čürök comes to Semetey saying, "My lord!" She brings a cup in her right hand and *arak* in her left. Semetey beholds her beauty, which is described in traditional detail. Semetey addresses Kül-čoro: "Leave off this behavior with the girls! What if an enemy
 165 asked you a question? You would give away your secrets! If you don't leave off this behavior you will die an early death!" Kül-čoro answers: " Be careful what you say around Ay-čürök—don't let her escape! This here is the girl who took your bird, and here

⁶⁶⁴ p. 104 ll. 1-13.

⁶⁶⁵ p. 104 ll. 40f. *bil aylana berginče/ bildey kızıl tal büttü*; cf. I,7) 247f. *Beli ailana berginčä,/ beldäi kızıl tal bütkön* 'As one goes round the mountain-side, red willows have shot up as high as the mountain-side'. Hatto's translation here ignores the fact that *bel* refers to a saddle-shaped mountain pass, not a mountain-side (by the metonymic association of the pass with the constricted "waist" [*bel*] of the mountain ridge). It is quite difficult to accommodate the topographic meaning of *bel* with *ailan-* 'to go round'. The end-marking context in I,7) suggests that the decoratively parallelistic eight-line passage of which this couplet is a part could have harbored some opaque diction; cf. *MWR*, p. 580, n. to l. 251 for similar instances in the Radloff texts. While my reading above is phonetically unobjectionable for this manuscript, it does not solve the ultimate problem of what the cluster represented by I,7) 247f. signified. Cf. I,6) 571f. *Üi ailana berginčä,/ üidöi kızıl tal büssün!*, where *üi* 'house', while articulate, nevertheless suggests a semantic pairing **ui* 'cow' and *bil* 'elephant'.

is the bird! And I am he who got news of this, I am he who got her answer for this! Now should I look for her house and property (to take), and for the enemy (to kill)?"

170 Semetey roars at this: "You say to seize her, but why should we do that? I will leave quietly; she has given me my bird, so let's go. What business have I taking Akhun Khan's daughter?"

 Ay-čürök explains to Semetey that the two of them were betrothed when Manas was still alive. Now Čin-kojo has come to take her to wife; "If I stay here, you will be the
175 famous wretch! I sought you wandering through Kitay and Bejin. I have honored your departed father's *arbak*! I waited for you, wondering if you would stumble upon me; then I went looking for you myself! You say 'Give me my bird'—why should you say this? Let me tell you about your bird. I took it and let it perch among 12 falcons and 10 hawks. I fed and trained it. The Forty Companions came and said they would take it, but I kept it."

180 Semetey derides Ay-čürök for (the unladylike behavior of) coming out to meet him. Ay-čürök retorts: (not only) is there no (girl) among the Kazakhs to come out and meet him such as she; nor does Ürbü have such daughter as she; but Semetey has reduced and devastated the Afghans and the Kalmak: how could she not come out to meet him (as a gesture of submission)?

185 Kalčoro rides up just as Kara-kız, who has been on watch, comes to Ay-čürök and asks whether the newcomers are from the Kalmaks. Kalčoro is angry at this and beats off Kara-kız. Ay-čürök reproves him and Semetey. Semetey replies that they have come a long, hard way, and now they are vulnerable to enemies. "Girls, keep vigilant watch!"

 Ay-čürök tries to mollify him: "You are no sons of slaves; we are no daughters of
190 slaves; this is not a matter for slaves; let us not resort to a place suitable for slaves (i.e., out on the steppe). Čin-kojo will see the watch-people and come. Let him not come and

attack, let him not come and cut off my lord Semetey's head! I will take you to my father's city." They agree on a plan to get into the city. Ay-čürök readies the large tent with fine appointments, then Semetey goes to bed with Ay-čürök.

195 Kül-čoro amd Kalčoro complain. Ay-čürök justifies Semetey, telling him how he should behave toward Čačikey when he has Ay-čürök at home, for Ay-čürök and Čačikey have had an unfriendly exchange. Semetey utters a strong and lengthy oath that if he should leave Ay-čürök for even a day, if he should call Čačikey "Madame" (*sāhīb*), "then let me be shot, and struck with a lance, may Ay-kojo's (outraged) blessing strike me,"
200 etc.⁶⁶⁶ Ay-čürök takes his word, and they set off. Their march and progress are described.

(The text ends in mid-sentence at the bottom of p. 116.)

⁶⁶⁶ p. 115. The love-vow was a traditional element in the free relations between the sexes among the Kirghiz; see Abramzon 1978, p. 107.

Appendix 3. The *Semetey* of Tınıbek Japıy uulu (Prose Synopsis)

Original:

Semeteyden bir bölüm, Tınıbek jomoqčunuqu. Bastıruuçu Qırız bilim kāmāsiyāsi. Jıynayan E. Arabayev. Masku: S.S.S.R. Qalqtarının borbor basma mähkämäsi, 1925. Preface by Arabayev: p. 3. Text: pp. 4-184. Approx. 3,600 lines total in text. Kirghiz language; reformed Arabic script. (Reissued in cyrillic transliteration in Sarıpbekov 1994; that author also determined that there are some lacunae in the printed text.⁶⁶⁷) From a lost original MS presumably dated ca. 1898-1902.

Notices:

Berkov & Sagidova 1961, p. 311, item 63. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 306, item 32: “[Tynybek manasčy. Otryvok iz ‘Semeteia’]. Kazan’, 1898. Napečatano arabskim šriftom.” (Marked as unexamined by the authors, who cite as their source Rakhmatullin 1942, p. 73. But that place says only: “According to some people, that ‘Semetey’ was published in Kazan’ in Arabic script, but no trace of that material has been found up to now.” The supposed Kazan’ edition is unexamined and not known by the present writer from any more authoritative source.)

Sarıpbekov 1994.

Manas entsiklopediya, vol. 2, pp. 302ff. (with a facsimile of the title page).

The *Semetey* of Tınıbek Japıy uulu

An envoy from Akun Kan warns Čın-kojo and Er Toltoy not to meddle with Ay-čürök's intended, *Semetey*. Toltoy readies his troops for war, attacks Akun Kan's army,

⁶⁶⁷ *Manas entsiklopediya*, vol. 2, p. 303.

and gets the upper hand. At a loss, about 60 braves go to Meke (Mecca?), while Čin-kojo also vows to take Semetey's intended. The two allies, Čin-kojo and Toltoy, blend forces and besiege Akun Kan's city of six myriad (souls). Neither sowing nor reaping, they camp and take feed and livestock from the population; their plan is to starve Akun Kan into giving up Ay-čürök.⁶⁶⁸

Ay-čürök decides to seek out Semetey rather than undergo the shame of going as booty (to Čin-kojo). She dons her swan-habit and flies west. (The itinerary is not realistic or coherent: Anjıyan, Kulun[?], Almatı, Talas, Čet Beejin.) Beside Čet Beejin she finds, among the horse-herds of Koñurbay, two horses that Semetey inherited from Manas, Kızıl-buurul and Kara-buurul. Ay-čürök reasons that the horses were stolen by Abike and Köböš after Manas's death. Koñurbay comes out to the horses with six men. He is a handsome figure, but he is 80 years old. Ay-čürök flies on,⁶⁶⁹ past Ürümčü, Manas (the locality in East Turkistan), Kara-šaar and Kambıl, Kašgar, Čoñ-opol, and Sarı-kol, where beside that river she critiques Muz-burčak. He was a well-favored hero in his day, but now he is old and white. Ay-čürök ranges the Alay, Anjıyan and Tašken, the Kara-buura and the Čatkal, and finds Semetey at last in his headquarters by the Keñ-kol. She had heard tell from the elders how when Manas died he was mourned and buried; and how Kanıkey, though a woman, had performed great service. Kızıl Arstan Moldo also had sent (Manas's) friend-for-the-afterlife, Koyonalı, over beyond Kašgar to bring back camels loaded (with goods for the funeral), and they had reared a mausoleum that would last forever. Ay-čürök wonders, How can I fly over my (future) father-in-law's *arbak* without

⁶⁶⁸ Cf. the suitors in the *Odyssey*.

⁶⁶⁹ Evidently the evaluation of Koñur-bay and the following heroes comes from the traditional topos (satirized in *Joloy Kan*) of Ay-čürök searching for her mate while flying over the earth as a swan.

descending (and paying respects)? So she flies down, and sets about looking for Semetey, so that she will not have to go back to Čın-kojo, for "I shall die of Čın-kojo."

Semetey's spoilt wife Čačikey comes out of her yurt wearing rich adornments. Ay-čürök sizes her up, and decides to consult her about the situation woman-to-woman. She assumes the form of a 15-year-old girl and approaches Čačikey, but Čačikey is stunned by the appearance of the girl, who resembles the daughter of a *peri*. Ay-čürök warns Čačikey that Čın-kojo and Toltoy are on their way to attack Semetey with their 12 armies, and describes how they have already besieged her own city. "Will Semetey go and save his intended mate, Ay-čürök?" Čačikey rebukes her, saying that she is Semetey's bespoken mate, no less than Ay-čürök, and that Semetey will not help her. Čačikey turns and leaves, and Ay-čürök "nearly died of shame."

The scene now switches to Semetey's companions Kül-čoro, son of Almambet, and Kan-čoro, son of Kambar (Khan). The two are at the head of the Keŋ-kol with the horse herds, and they decide to call on Semetey. Semetey says he wants to go hunting: it is time to cast Ak-šunċkar, the white gyrfalcon he has inherited from Manas.⁶⁷⁰ He orders Kül-čoro to mount Kök-buudan and return to the herds (to ready the horses). Then he goes to bed with Čačikey.

Early in the morning, Čačikey rises and goes out to see if Ay-čürök is still there or gone. Ay-čürök accosts her and asks, more vehemently than before, if Semetey is man enough to come and win her from Čın-kojo and Toltoy. Čačikey, enraged, grabs her wrist and threatens to take her home and make her a house servant. Ay-čürök breaks free and says, "If Semetey stays home today, he is yours; if, God willing, he goes out and casts

⁶⁷⁰ And which he has (according to other versions) lately recovered after doing away with the usurpers Abike and Koboš.

Ak-šunġar, then he is mine." She vows that she will become a shimmering piece of costly white material (*ak bula*) and snatch Ak-šunġar away while Semetey is picking it up and stowing it—or, if that fails, she will swim away in a pool of the Kara-suu in the form of a white fish and bring ruin to Čačikey's people—or, if that fails, she will lie on the lake in the form of a white swan, and when Semetey casts Ak-šunġar at the swan, she will seize Ak-šunġar and take it to Er Toltoy. Ay-čürök dons her swan habit and flies away; the wind from her wingbeats blows so cold that it freezes eight streams. Čačikey goes inside.

Semetey's steed Tay-buurul is fitted out luxuriously, and he rides off to hunt with Ak-šunġar. His appearance is described: "If you looked at his manliness, it was like his departed father Manas'." [The narrative seems to omit the next action: Čačikey goes to Kül-čoro in camp,⁶⁷¹] warns him about what is about to happen, and commands him to go after Semetey and make sure no harm befalls him. Kül-čoro rides off on Kak-telki and overtakes Semetey on the banks of the Kara-suu.

The *ak bula* (shimmering white cloth) is lying (on the water) before Semetey, but he is unable to reach down and get it. Semetey orders Kül-čoro and Kan-čoro to go down and get it, wondering, Did a merchant from Anġıyan or Namangen come this way? Or was it Kökčö's son Ümütöy—is he richer than I?⁶⁷² Semetey then says he intends to have Čačikey use the *ak bula* to mend his tunic of padded armor, Ak-olpok, which he inherited from Manas and which the usurpers Abike and Köböš left in shabby condition. Kül-čoro advises him not to take the *ak bula*, offering instead to take 60 skewbald pacers and drive them to Anġıyan to trade for a 60-fathom bolt of *ak bula*. Semetey is persuaded, and casts

⁶⁷¹ The 1925 edition shows no break in the verses; Sarıpbekov (1994, p. 106) says that a page has been lost from the MS. This is not unlikely.

⁶⁷² This is an obvious indication of Ümütöy's traditional role in the epic, attested in I,7), as Semetey's rival for the hand of Ay-čürök.

Ak-šunġar. While Semetey and Kan-čoro go after Ak-šunġar, Kül-čoro takes the *ak bula*, wraps it up, and puts a stone the size of a millstone on top of it. Then he follows Semetey and Kan-čoro. They catch many fowl; Tay-buurul is in a sweat and their trousers are muddy. Semetey has them ford a pool of the Kara-suu (to clean off). Just then a white swan flies up right in Semetey's path; he casts Ak-šunġar at it and tells his companions that he intends to take it alive, so that Čačikey can make down (pillows) from it. Unable to refuse, Kül-čoro sets off after the swan, but the swan seizes Ak-šunġar and flies off, freezing eight streams with the wind from its wingbeats. Semetey upbraids Kül-čoro for disobeying him thrice in a day: he saw the *ak bula* and Kül-čoro did not pick it up; he did not cast Ak-šunġar at the white swan; and when Semetey saw a fish Kül-čoro did not strike it.⁶⁷³

Semetey announces that the loss of Ak-šunġar will mean his own death, and he vows to search for the bird. Kül-čoro realizes that he has not obeyed Čačikey's warnings about the white swan. Semetey sends Kül-čoro and Kan-čoro back to Čačikey to tell her to explain what has happened to Ak-šunġar. If she doesn't say, Semetey will cut off her hair and send her back to her father Šaatemir Kan. The companions ride back to Keŋ-kol (and ask Čačikey where the bird is). She scolds them for not heeding her words and refuses to help. Kül-čoro beats Čačikey with his lash, but Torpoktoy's daughter Kanımjan holds him off. Kül-čoro threatens to cut off Čačikey's hair and send her back to Šaatemir. Finally Čačikey has no choice: "If I don't say it I shall die ... Akun Kan's daughter Ay-čürök took the bird." Then she curses (Semetey, through his companions): "May you not return! May Toltoy take your horses, Čin-kojo take your head, and Jediger take your gall—Let me see you no more as long as I live!"

⁶⁷³ These references do not fit well with the past narration.

Kül-čoro replies, "A woman's curse will not reach a man," then rounds up the herds of horses at Keŋ-kol and marshals an army of six myriads of the Arġin plus many Nogoy. There are six mares for provender, four pacers as baggage-horses, and 14 horses in train. Kül-čoro rides Kak-telki.

Kül-čoro comes to Semetey at his flower-garden (thus Semetey has returned home too?). Semetey asks for news of his bird. Kül-čoro replies, "A good-news-gift from you! A ravishing beauty is thine, lord; a smooth-gaited racehorse is mine, lord!", and announces that Ay-čürök has taken his bird. Kül-čoro describes Ay-čürök as beautiful beyond compare; and if God grants, Semetey will take her, his intended, and discomfit Čin-kojo. Semetey calls on Manas's *arbak* and gives Kül-čoro a robe of honor. Then he dresses for the campaign in Ak-olpok and a pair of breeches, the making of which is described—leather from an ibex shot on Opol-too, etc.

With blessings from the teeming Nogoy, Semetey and his companions leave Keŋ-kol and ride off for Ay-čürök with the 14 horses. Then the bard utters a Disclaimer: "If God Himself knows not, and my words prove not to be lies, let me speak a little, if (Manas's) *arbak* will protect me." Semetey first rides out to his maternal grandfather Temir Kan's city. He is fully grown to terrible hero-hood, and sends enemies flying before him. He goes past Tört-kül,⁶⁷⁴ Bar-köl, and Ala-köl. Coming to (Manas's friend) Bakay (at Kanikey's residence in Temir Khan's city), he asks him to tell him the way to go so that he can get Ay-čürök's explanation for taking his bird; if she indeed took it, then he will raid her city. Bakay says, "In Manas's time I saw everything; I endured much

⁶⁷⁴ Cf. Tör-köl and Tur-köl in association with Bar-köl in I,5) (Hatto 1990, pp. 620f.). With Ala-köl, these three places make up an itinerary far to the east, in Kalmak territory, and passing them on the way from Semetey's headquarters on the Keŋ-kol (tributary of the Talas) to Kanikey's residence (not identified here, but traditionally conceived at her father's court in some locality in Mawarannahr) is nonsensical.

under Abıke. I see no fault in you now that you are grown. There is no place I haven't been; I'll tell you the way. If you don't hurry it will take 60 days; if you aren't lazy it will take 50 days. Mind how painful the journey will be—you're an obsessed little wretch!" But Semetey will not heed Bakay; at the very least he takes a letter from him (describing the itinerary). Selecting six racers from among the Argın and four spare mounts from among the Nogoy, and with Bakay's blessing and a cushion of *manat* strapped (to his saddle), he leaves Kanikey's residence.

He tires his horses; he wears out his tunic. The catalog of horses is given: Toktombay's Törmölüü,⁶⁷⁵ Tekeči's Temir-kök, never-sweating Kök-ala, the Kök-ala bestowed by Turum-kız,⁶⁷⁶ Čačikey's Kök-toru, Baybiče's Sur-čolok, Bakay Kan's Boz-jorgo, Sarı Kan's Tuu-čunak, Ajıbay's Kart-küröñ, Almambet's Sarı-ala, Abıke's Kak-telki, Er Köböš's Sar-telki, Ak-borčuk, carrying provisions, and Kök-borčuk, loaded besides; then six mares bearing provisions, then Ayman-boz loaded with six blankets and five down (pillows), then Say-tulpar of the Nogoy.

They travel a hard way, where even wolves do not go, for 14 days without stopping for grass or water, and for 40 days disappearing through the crests of black mountains. Semetey reads Bakay's letter and finds that they are right on course. He drinks red tea from Jarken and eats butter of whitest white, then looks around at the land; it is teeming with unusually large birds, beasts, and plants, which are lyrically described. Semetey says to his companions that they will rest the horses here for six or seven days,

⁶⁷⁵ Cf. *törmä* 'fine woollen material' (Radloff, *Opyt*, p. 1259, citing Zenker, *Dictionnaire Turc-Arab-Persan*, Leipzig 1862-67), *torma* 'costly shawl' (Radloff, *Opyt*, p. 1190, listed as Chaghatay after Pavet de Courteille, *Dictionnaire Turc-oriental*); hence, as if 'cashmere-coated', perhaps more likely here as a common adjective than as the horse's name (cf. *SMB makmal jündüü* 'velvet-coated' *Kar'ala*, p. 17 l. 8). Most of the other horse names in the catalog are also common adjectives, but are known as traditional names.

⁶⁷⁶ These two Kök-ala's are likely two different horses in view of the epithet structure.

then go to Ay-čürök and find out where Ak-šunkar is. If they meet Toltoy and Čin-kojo, they will set their lances mercilessly—"How else can we do but to bring no shame to Manas?" They unpack and set up camp.

Now the scene shifts to Ay-čürök. At dawn (lyrically described), she rises, bathes, reads the scriptures, and goes to her 40 maidens. To Kalyman she says, "Last night I had a dream; who will interpret it? A racehorse was tied to my hitching post; it boldly gnawed the earth and fattened on its hitch. A *buudayık*⁶⁷⁷ landed on my perch and boldly covered up the sun (with its wingspan). A nightingale landed on my willow, and though it did not sing, my body thrilled. A fat-tailed male wolf ranged the inner streets (of the town), and the dogs that saw it squealed. A black-striped tiger⁶⁷⁸ roamed the inside of the city, and snapped relentlessly at the dogs. I saw a dragon, and it roused to the size of a horse.⁶⁷⁹ Our people in the city were stunned to see it [...] Toltoy's teeming troops and 70 pacers were seized, and he abandoned his wife and child to save himself. He fought for about six days, then was flung from the sky; (the dragon) ended his inimical plans. What does this dream mean?" Then Kalyman, among the 30 ladies and 30 maids, among the 40 ladies and 40 maids, says she will interpret the dream: "God has given into your hands the person you love." The racehorse was Taybuurul; the *buudayık* was Ak-šunkar; the nightingale was Semetey. The wolf was Kül-čoro; the tiger was Kan-čoro; the dragon was Semetey. Kalyman has heard that Semetey is a hot-headed warrior, and advises going out to meet him on the banks of the Keŋ Ürgönč. Ay-čürök and her ladies and maids pack a white tent and a blue tent, parasols, and all sorts of provender and

⁶⁷⁷ Fabulous bird of prey.

⁶⁷⁸ *kabılan*, usually 'lion'.

⁶⁷⁹ Or cow (*kara*).

refreshments, and go out to the banks of the Ürgönč to set up tents and a festival swing⁶⁸⁰ and wait for Manas's son.

The scene shifts to Semetey. At dawn (lyrically described), Semetey makes his ablutions, reads his scriptures, and says his rosary, reciting the Koran by heart. Then, as he says *omin* to his *arbak* on the Talas and to Manas, he receives the blessing of the Prophet and his four Companions, the 33,000 Companions, and the teeming departed Friends. He puts away his rosary, takes a horse, puts on a sword and takes a lance, and ascends a mountain spur to reconnoiter while Kül-čoro and Kan-čoro stay in the tent and make breakfast. He sits down on his haunches and surveys the Ürgönč: the view is obscured by clouds and wheeling birds, so he takes out his telescope. About the telescope: when Manas had died and Abike and Köböš were hauling off Manas's wealth, Kanıkey had taken the telescope and hidden it in her girdle for Semetey. The telescope is described in wondrous detail. Semetey takes it out and trains it on the great city (of Akun Kan). He sees dense gardens, and a group of people emerging from the steppe (and entering) one of the gardens, but he cannot make them out. Then he sees Ay-čürök's white headdress and makes out that it is a girl and, overjoyed, he laughs. The two companions hear him laugh, and go up to ask him what about. Semetey answers, "I saw a group of people coming toward us from that great city, but couldn't make them out. Are they iron-clad enemies? Girls in costly dresses? Is it Ay-čürök? Have caravaneers come and alighted? Traders? Kashgharis? Is this my lucky day? If they are traders, find out

⁶⁸⁰ The arrangements resemble *kız oyunu* 'girls' games', a pre-marriage festival; cf. Abramzon 1978, p. 107; on the swing (*selkinček*), see p. 115. Though the premise is not narrated in any versions known to the present writer, it seems that Ay-čürök is waiting for Semetey during *kız oyunu* organized as if in preparation for her own union with Čin-kojo, though with the understanding that these are a cover for her liaison with Semetey. Cf. her anxiety later lest Čin-kojo see the camp and come and take her.

what they say; if it is girls come out waiting for us, bring me their message! I also see, by the banks of the river, a tent with smoke rising, and a girl's horse and tack. Go, whichever of you will go!" Kan-čoro answers that he should stay with Semetey and the horses, because he has no skill for that sort of mission; Kül-čoro is the one who has a way with words when he's in among the ladies and girls.⁶⁸¹ Kül-čoro says he cannot refuse: "I'll go, and face pain and death; but Kak-telki is not up for the mission. If the river current is strong I will die; likewise Sur-telki. Please give me (Tay-)buurul!"

Semetey agrees. They outfit Tay-buurul in rich harness. Semetey tells Kül-čoro he has yet to tire out a horse, or wear out a tunic, or grasp a lance, or attack an enemy with shouts, etc., so Semetey gives him his heirloom equipment to use: Ay-balta (battle axe), the blade Narkesken forged by Bölökbay, Ak-kelte (matchlock), Ak-kalpak (hat), Ak-olpok (padded armor), and Sir-nayza (lance). Then Semetey names Tay-buurul's points, and says he has commended Tay-buurul to his father's *arbak* and that Kızır has blessed his path. He charges Kül-čoro not to reveal his secret to Ay-čürök (that he is looking for Ay-čürök and Ak-şunkar), even though he desires her. Kül-čoro, cutting an impressive figure atop Tay-buurul, speeds off. Kül-čoro tests him on difficult terrain, and gives him his lash. Tay-buurul's exertion and *tulpar*-speed are lyrically described. When they reach the Ürgönç, Kül-čoro wonders at the strength of the river and looks for the girl that Semetey saw.

The scene switches to the 30 maids and 30 ladies with Ay-čürök in their midst; they break up into groups of eight to construct the festival swing (*selkinček*). Alımkan,

⁶⁸¹ The role of the go-between in love was traditional, but usually involved an elder female relative of the girl (typically an elder sister-in-law, *jene*) meeting the interested boy.

Kanımjan, and Burulkan wonder how Kül-čoro will get across the raging river to talk with them.

From Kül-čoro's point of view, the violence and power of the Ürgönč are described in lengthy, lyrical detail. Kül-čoro utters a soliloquy: "How shall I cross the river? How can I go back without shame? If my lord says 'Did you go?' what shall I say in reply?" He spies Ay-čürök and her ladies and maids, and his eyes flash. There are: Tolgonay, Oysalkın, Kanımjan, Alımkan, Kasıke, Akılay, Ak-bermet, Ak-šerbet, Kasımjan, Burulča, Kalıyča, Tınımkan, and Urumkan, and a number of maids. They stand on the edge of the cliff and wonder how Kül-čoro will get across.

Kül-čoro, ashamed to turn back in front of so many girls, plunges into the water. (Tay-buurul) swims desperately, and Kül-čoro calls on Baabedin, Iliyaz, and Manas's *arbak*. Only when he invokes Manas's *arbak* does Tay-buurul flit from the water "like a swallow, like a boat, like a fish"—then there is an aside about how much Tay-buurul cost, which required (Manas) to levy a mighty tax on Bukhara to raise the money.

Man and horse cut a fine, though wet, figure as they emerge on the far bank. The girls hide in their tents as Kül-čoro approaches, asking, "Is it Semetey himself?" They describe Kül-čoro and Tay-buurul to Ay-čürök and say, "If you don't believe us, go out and look!" Ay-čürök scolds them: "Such rumors and gossip! Semetey is not such as he." She says that it is Almambet's son Kül-čoro, and Kan-čoro.⁶⁸² Ay-čürök's exquisite person and adornments are described in fulsome detail. She goes out with Akılay to meet Kül-čoro. Akılay speaks, challenging him and trying to frighten him. "Tell me where you are from, and who you are! If you try to come closer you will die. You have no manners!

⁶⁸² This is a bardic slip: Kan-čoro has stayed with Semetey, and he does not figure in the action on this side of the river until he crosses later with Semetey.

This is Akun Kan's daughter Ay-čürök! No man has ever left the presence of Ay-čürök (alive)! Speak up!" Kül-čoro beats his horse's head and says, "Let it be as you say; I am a wolf among girls; I am an envoy come from a khan!" Then he threatens Akılay, jumps down from his horse, reaches down inside comely Begimjan's gown, and flips her knobby white breast out.⁶⁸³ Ay-čürök nearly dies of shame. Vehemently angry, she says, "What rudeness! You will die by my father Akun Kan's guards—you'll make it hard on yourself—now say, where are you going?" Kül-čoro calls her *jeje*,⁶⁸⁴ and says he has come seeking an explanation why she took his (Semetey's⁶⁸⁵) Ak-şunkar. Ay-čürök says, "Rude boy, what of this bird? Why do you call me *jeje*? Who are you, and who is your father, and what is your lineage? One asks someone's name from custom; one asks a man('s position) from his figure; one asks for a word from respect." Kül-čoro replies, "*Jeje*, do not pretend you have not seen Ak-şunkar: you turned into an *ak bula* on the banks of Ala-köl—you turned into a white swan and escaped. I saw it: this is the hand that cast Ak-şunkar; this is the way we have come in search! You ask my lineage—do you imply that I have no lineage?"—Kül-čoro then gives Semetey's lineage, adding, "and I am Semetey's *ini*."⁶⁸⁶ And if you wish to know *me*, I'll tell you: I am of Almambet's line,

⁶⁸³ *iyiktey* ('spindle-like') *bolgon ak emček/ imere karmap kaldı emi* (*STJ*, p. 137; Sarıpbekov 1994, p. 151 [erroneously with *aynektey* 'mirror-like (bright?)']). "Suave" Kül-čoro's gross act echoes *emček karmoo*, the term for the (at least theoretically still chaperoned and chaste?) meetings with the bride which were the groom's incentive to pay the bride price; see Kisliakov 1969, p. 116; cf. Hatto 1980/82, part I, p. 81.

⁶⁸⁴ Respectful address for a senior female, literally an elder kinswoman; particularly in wedding customs, the wives of the bride's elder bothers. The *jeje*ler were the agents in the premarital liaisons between bride and groom, and this may be why Ay-čürök then asks Kül-čoro, "Why do you call me *jeje*?"

⁶⁸⁵ In the following dialogue Kül-čoro often speaks in Semetey's voice, and Ay-čürök responds as if she were speaking to Semetey.

⁶⁸⁶ Lit., 'younger brother'; a general term for a junior male.

who fled from Beejin. We packed and mounted up and came here to take you; let the enemy suffer."

Ay-čürök says, "Semetey is not my equal; how are you my equal? Čin-kojo is my intended spouse. He is no less than Semetey, and Toltoy is my cousin—Toltoy is no less than you (Kül-čoro)! He is not one to let Ay-čürök be stolen. You will see hardship from Toltoy; you will die at Čin-kojo's hands! You have no teeming troops behind you, no way to take Ay-čürök! Go back and tell Semetey everything (I have said)!"

Kül-čoro says, "May a dog hear your words! Shall Toltoy and Čin-kojo cast Ak-šunkar?! Shall I be left on the steppe after Semetey lets them take you?! Semetey is a crack shot and a hero whose conquests (are so many and great that they) can't be written—can Čin-kojo withstand Ak-kelte's shots? Do they have the mettle for a fight? May Semetey not raid your people; may Semetey not seize you from Akun Kan's seat of honor and put you on the hard back (of a horse) and make you a cook in my spoilt lady Čačikey's kitchen!" Hearing this, all the girls laugh out loud.

The scene shifts to Semetey. He trains his telescope on the distance, sees Kül-čoro ford the river, sees him go in among the ladies and maids, and sees him grab at Begimjan's breast. Then he calls Kan-čoro: "Has Kül-čoro found Ay-čürök? Do they know that I am coming? How can I leave Ay-čürök? Let's go and put shame on Čin-kojo and Toltoy—let's play with the girls!" Semetey mounts Abıke's Kök-telki and has Kan-čoro take the 14 horses in train. They come immediately to the Ürgönč, which is described in long, lyrical fashion as before. When they are unable to find a ford, Kan-čoro suggests staying there for the day, looking around for a ford, and going to Ay-čürök tomorrow—or, if not, they should take off all their clothes and (hang) from the horses' harness in the current. Semetey says, "That young boy can ford the current—you have

taken leave of your senses if you don't want to! This is an auspicious day! Won't Kül-čoro be watching from the other side? If I flee in fear of the river, won't God strike me, won't Ay-čürök laugh? Let's risk death—I wish to see Ay-čürök's gleaming eyes!"

Speaking a word to the Creator, and uttering the name 𐰽𐰺𐰍 aamerden, Semetey beats all the horses into the water; Bakay's Boz-jorgo goes first (springing) like a goat. Kan-čoro is afraid, but Semetey plunges right into the water:

Calling on Baabedin,
his hems and sleeves soaking,
saying, "Protect me, God, protect me!
Father Manas, make good!"
he went along leaning on his side
when Kak-telki went in the water—
"Allah!" came to his lips,
and repentance came to his words.
When had he ever been repentant?
When he saw a khoja he used to beat him!
He had chewed up Jakıp Kan
and gobbled Abike,
had sent Köböš to his grave
and proved his bravery;
his Protector had been with him;
he was the offspring of bold Manas:
though (Manas) was dead,
his root and offspring had increased (in Semetey)!
Atop his saddle of white steel
(Semetey) had mixed *arak* with *bozo*,⁶⁸⁷
he had lived to twenty,
but before this day, your Wretch
had never gone on a long journey,
had never ridden a first-rate racer,
had never dived, risking his life,
into a river in torrent!
If a dervish approached he would not stand up,
if he stood up he would not greet him;
if a khoja came he would not get up,
if he got up he would not greet him!

⁶⁸⁷ A drink from mildly fermented millet mash.

If he saw a khoja he would pick him out,
 he would tie his hands and feet!
 If he saw dervishes or ishans
 he would drive them crashing before him!
 If he saw a dervish he would strike him,
 he would stare at him boldly!
 When had the wicked malefactor
 ever been repentant?!
 With repentance from his mouth,
 and sparks from his eyes,
 he missed his fine horse, and roared,
 complaining to Kül-čoro:
 "I have no (Tay-)buurul beneath me,
 I have no sorrow but for Allah!
 The time has come for me!
 I have no hero by to mourn me,
 I have no sorrow but for Čürök!
 I wasn't thinking when I let you cross;
 your father's grave—shit!
 I drove fourteen horses,
 but not one compared to (Tay-)buurul!
 Kan-čoro here
 cannot compare to Kül-čoro!"
 Now the *pir* of the waters, Iliyaz
 took his lead-rope
 and dragged him out of the water.

The girls standing at the crest of the cliff ask Ay-čürök, "Is this the one called Semetey? That bird you took—is it *his*?! You would be wise to consider marrying Čınkojo!" and they all laugh until they wet their pants.

At that moment Semetey rides up looking formidable, as if two men perched on his two shoulders, his cheeks like two sated beasts. He addresses Kül-čoro: "When will you bring news, when will you strike your foe? You amuse yourself with girls you've just met—when will you bring news (of me) to Akun Kan's city? You wait, playing on the swing with girls—you have no manhood, no honor, no sense! Don't let Akun Kan's daughter get away—let's go!"

Then Kül-čoro says, "Wait here, lord, You have no Nogoy or Kirghiz or Kazakhs under your command. I have found Ay-čürök; here are Čin-kojo whom you wish to shoot and Ay-čürök whom you wish to marry. She is beautiful! If she doesn't measure up in your eyes to Čačikey, then leave her and go, tell Akun Kan that the fiancé who wants her can have her!"

Semetey (mollified) gently upbraids Kül-čoro: "You were to invite Čürök to my pleasant land, but you have troubled her; like a trouble-maker you have not come out to take my hand and greet me!"

Ay-čürök says to Semetey, "You may say I'm your intended, but I have a cousin Toltoy and a man Čin-kojo." Semetey then becomes very angry and says, "Give me back my Ak-šunġar and I'll leave! Why should I marry you? You are old and white-haired and out looking for a husband. You're an old maid; give me my bird and I'll go right now!"

Ay-čürök says, "Old, you say! When Manas Khan was young, he raided the spacious Ürgönč with Bakay in command and, when he perceived my father Akun Kan's lofty dignity, he presented him with much of his booty. Manas and Akun Kan betrothed us then before we were born; I had the sense to (wait and) grow old! If their *arbak* don't bless me, I have my cousins Čin-kojo and Toltoy. I have honored my father-in-law Manas and waited (for you)!" She gives a short recapitulation of Kanıkey's flight to her father Temir Kan's city after Manas's death. "Now you and I are left. You say I am old; it is because you never came for me when I was young. So I flew off and looked for you! Čin-kojo raised an army, slaughtered horses and fillies, and prepared to have the wedding, but I hurried after you. If you want to see a fight, try to take Ak-šunġar!"

Kalıyman intercedes and says, "Leave off with your anger, elder cousin. Go into the white pavilion and serve *arak* and *bozo* (to Semetey), and drink." Ay-čürök quiets her

anger, prepares tea, has a two-year-old filly slaughtered, and spreads out the rectum sausage and mane fat⁶⁸⁸ on the eating cloth. Semetey, Kül-čoro, and Kan-čoro eat and drink. Semetey says, "We have come a long, hard way. Let's sleep a bit, then go to Akun Kan's city."

Ay-čürök says, "Didn't I tell you? Don't you know? If you sleep out here on the steppe, Čin-kojo will see it from afar and come and take Ak-kelte from your neck, take Ay-čürök from your breast! We mustn't act like slaves' children (and stay out on the steppe). Čin-kojo and Toltoy are not ones to be afraid! Make no mistake—we should go to the white palace (of Akun Kan) now! Let's travel by night, then fulfil our desires; submerge ourselves in enjoyment; undress and go to bed (together)!" Semetey agrees, and they break camp and travel by night. Ay-čürök rides in splendor.

They draw near the narrow gate (of the city). The gatekeeper asks who is there. Ay-čürök identifies herself and gives him gold from her saddlebag; the gatekeeper is appeased, but Ay-čürök charges him not to tell anyone who has come in, and to allow the guests to pass freely at any time. Then she takes Semetey, Kül-čoro, and Kan-čoro to the guest yurt, clothes them in golden garments, and serves them sumptuous food and drink without end. Semetey, having eaten his fill, is led to a soft down bed. Ay-čürök tells the 10 young braves who stand guard to go home and tell no one that Semetey has come; "If you tell a soul, you'll lose your property and your head!" Then she fastens the door tight and sends away her maids. After going to bed with Semetey, she rises alone (Semetey is asleep) and goes back to Akun Kan's palace.

Kül-čoro decides to have a look for fun and see if Semetey and Ay-čürök are together. He goes and finds Semetey asleep and Ay-čürök gone, and wakes up Semetey:

⁶⁸⁸ Delicacies.

"Lord, where is Ay-čürök? We can't leave without taking her—let's go (find her)."

Semetey tells Kül-čoro to come with him.⁶⁸⁹

They go together in the dark, Semetey tormented by love, and Kül-čoro carrying the battle axe Ay-balta. (Kül-čoro) raps on the door (of Akun Kan's yurt). (Semetey) is dazzled by the glory of the sleeping Akun Kan's inner chamber and the 40 guards standing by. He waffles, unsure whether to address Akun Kan; finally he goes to Ay-čürök and says, "The changeful wretch can do anything; if death overtakes her, she would change her shape and get away, the shrew!",⁶⁹⁰ and he seizes her hair and lays his hand on her breast. Ay-čürök awakes groggily and is filled with wrath "like a white snake." Recalling Čačikey, she says, "Let go of my hair; shall I have your head (cut off)?! I am not your intended lover for you to grab my breasts! Go away—such manners!"⁶⁹¹—and tell your story to your spouse ..."

(The book abruptly ends.)

⁶⁸⁹ From here to the end of the text the narration becomes steadily less coherent.

⁶⁹⁰ At I,3) 1556 another supernaturally endowed bride-to-be is found using shape-shifting to try to avoid the union.

⁶⁹¹ Sexual union in a separate yurt in the girl's father's camp before the conclusion of the wedding was traditional; cf. I,3) and Kisliakov 1969, p. 120. Ay-čürök's rejection of the second advance as she sleeps at her father's may reflect the custom that the bride and groom must continue to live separately in their parents' camps long after the wedding (Kisliakov 1969, p. 119); but see also note 558 on p. 232, above.

Appendix 4. The *Semetey* of Kenje Kara (Text and Verse Translation)

The original source is a phonogram on six wax cylinders. Below is the text and translation, without apparatus, musical transcription, or commentary, taken from Prior 1998b, pp. 19-55. (Note: - in the text represents an unintelligible syllable. // indicates interrupted speech, as at the end of a cylinder.)

Andıyandın belinen		From the pass of Andijan,
- - - - elinen		from the land of [. . .];
- - - - belinen		from the pass of [. . .],
kalıñ Nogoy elinen:		from the land of the numerous Nogoy:
Astındagı Tay-buurul—	5	Tay-buurul, beneath [<i>Semetey</i>]—
(Kuday bilet kim bilet!		(Who knows? God knows!
Anın özü bilbeze,		If He Himself knows not,
aytkanım jalğan kelbese)—		and if my words do not prove to be lies)—
Dürbü - - - - -		A telescope [. . .]
- - - - -	10	[. . .]
Bulgarıdan kabı bar.		It had a case of yuft—
Kuday bilet kim bilet!		Who knows? God knows!
Suu arjak bolgon çon jolor.		What is on the other side of the river would appear big and close [in the telescope].
Janınan suurup aldı, deyt—		He drew it from his side, they say,
tegeretip jer közdöy	15	and twisting it, pointing it at the land,
- - - dürbü salğanı.		he trained the telescope [. . .].
Anın arı jerinen		From thence into the distance
agarıñkı körünöt;		[the scene] appears white [with mist];
agargandın ber jağı		this side of the whiteness
kararıñkı körünöt;	20	[the scene] appears black [with shadow];
karargandın ber jağı		from the blackness hence
kubarıñkı körünöt.		[the view] appears pale [with haze].
Çıgıp keldi bir top jan		A group of people emerged, approaching,

anı boljoy albay - - -.

“Janımdağı Kül-čoro!
Oo kaşımdağı Kan-čoro!
Kimiñ barsañ anıñ bar!
Tay-buuruldu minip bar!
Ak-kübönü kiyip bar!
Jatıp alba jay ayıl!
Kabar ala koysoñor!
Jatkan jeri bilseñer!
Bayge alba zambirek!

jeldey - - badirek!

- - - - -

- - - - bolgondo,
sını jakşı bolgondo,

- - - - -

tabı jakşı bolgondo

- - - - -

- - Tay-buurul - - - - -

- - - - -

Tay-buuruldu mindi ele!

“Astımdağı Tay-buurul
kimiñ barsañ anıñ bar!”

A Tay-buuruldu mindi ele,
Ak-kübönü kiydi ele.

“Jatıp alba jay ayıl!

Kabar ala koysoñor!

Jatkan jeri bilseñer!”

Ak-kelteni asınıp

- - - - - ele.

Astındağı Tay-buurul

but he could not make them out
[. . .].

25 “Kül-čoro, at my side,
O Kan-čoro, attending me!
Go, whichever of you will go!
Mount Tay-buurul and go!
Put on Ak-kübö and go!
30 Don’t just lie there summer-camp fashion!
Bring me tidings!
See how the land lies!
No [stopping to] pick up the racing-prize;
[be a] cannon-shot!

[. . .] swift as the wind!

35 [. . .]

Since [. . .]

and since his points are good

[. . .]

since his fettle is fine

40 [. . .]

Tay-buurul [. . .]

[. . .].

He mounted Tay-buurul!

[Semetey said,] “Tay-buurul, beneath me—

45 Go, whichever of you will go!”

[Kül-čoro] mounted Tay-buurul,
and he put on Ak-kübö.

“Don’t just lie there summer-camp fashion!

Bring tidings!

50 See how the land lies!”

Slinging on Ak-kelte,

[. . .]

Tay-buurul, beneath him—

- - - menen asılat;
 aram ölgön Tay-buurul
 abayı menen jabılat;
 kökülün kökkö ırğıtat,
 tuyagın jerge mılgıtat;
 kalıñ üyürdön börttü ele!
 Öngü-döñgü jeldirip

 ört jakkanday aldirat,

 eñgi-deñgi jeldirip
 een jaykınday aldirıp

 bolup gana bargan oşol!
 Čoñ Ürgönčkö bardı ele.
 Čoñ Ürgönčtün belgisi—
 kükük bolup küülönüp
 küñgürönüp süylönüp
 jatkan eken Čoñ Ürgönč!
 (Oo kудay bilet kim bilet?)
 Čoñ Ürgönčtün belgisi—
 kükük bolup küülönüp
 küñgürönüp süylönüp
 neče bölük türlönüp
 jatkan eken Čoñ Ürgönč!
 Toodo möñgü buzulup
 karı, suusu koşulup
 karagay menen sal ağıp
 kayıñ menen tal ağıp
 üydöy bolgon karagay
 barı birge koşulup—
 (Kудay bilet kim bilet!)—

he took him by the bridle with [. . .];
 55 dear dauntless Tay-buurul
 is fitted out in his figured horse-cloth;
 he tosses his forelock to the sky,
 and beats his hooves on the ground;
 he trotted out from the teeming herd!
 60 Keeping him to a jog-trot on uneven
 ground,
 [Kül-čoro] makes him eat up the ground like
 a fire ablaze;
 keeping him to a jog-trot till his head spins,
 making him eat up the ground as he gives
 him free rein,
 thus did he make his ride!
 65 He came to the Čoñ Ürgönč.
 The sign of the Čoñ Ürgönč:
 raging in torrents,
 roaring and complaining
 was the Čoñ Ürgönč!
 70 (Ah, who knows? God knows!)
 The sign of the Čoñ Ürgönč:
 raging in torrents,
 roaring and complaining,
 dividing in numerous channels
 75 was the Čoñ Ürgönč!
 Glaciers melting in the mountains
 pouring together their snows and waters;
 spruces and log-snags flowing down,
 birches and willows flowing down,
 80 spruce-trunks the girth of a tent—
 everything pouring together—
 (Who knows? God knows!)—

üstündöğü ak köbük
kamırdıy bolup juurulup
anı körgön adamdar
zamanası kuurulup
töö örköçtöp tögülüp
jatkan eken Čoŋ Ürgönč!
Jer-jerge mindi jügürüp—

üydöy bolgon kara taš
suu tübündö šaldırap
Čoŋ Ürgönčkö barganda
- - - - - //
Čoŋ Ürgönčtün belgisi—
čılbr salsa boyloboy

čıbırğa tülkü joyloboy;
Čoŋ Ürgönčtün belgisi—
arkan salsa boyloboy

adırga tülkü joyloboy
eki četi jar bolup
orto jeri kan bolup
jatkan eken Čoŋ Ürgönč!
(Kuday bilet kim bilet!)
On ekide Kül-čoro
kan büyüzünön karasa

“kečüünü kaydan bileyin,
kečüünü kimden surayın,”
eki jagın karabay
ölömün dep sanabay
on ekide Kül-čoro
karap-karap turčü čunak boldu!

the foam on the water's surface
churned like kneaded dough!
85 Men who got near enough to behold it
knew dire straits!
Massed like camels' humps
was the Čoŋ Ürgönč!
[Kül-čoro] gallops here and there [along the
brink]—
90 black rocks the size of yurts
were rumbling in the riverbed
when he rode to the Čoŋ Ürgönč!
[. . .]
The sign of the Čoŋ Ürgönč:
95 if one dropped a lead-rope it wouldn't reach
the bottom,
and foxes would not prowl the slope;
the sign of the Čoŋ Ürgönč:
if one dropped a lasso it wouldn't reach the
bottom,
and foxes would not prowl the talus;
100 the two banks of it were cliffs,
and between them, bloody
was the Čoŋ Ürgönč!
(Who knows? God knows!)
Twelve-year-old Kül-čoro,
105 when he looked on his side of the blood[y
torrent]
[thought not,] “Where shall I find the ford?
Whom shall I ask where the ford is?”
He looked neither right nor left,
he thought neither that he might die:
110 twelve-year-old Kül-čoro
was looking and looking—then he cut a

(Kuday bilet kim bilet!
 Jaratkan Özü bilbese,
 aytkanım jalğan kelbese,)

Čoŋ Ürgönčkö barganda
 suuga salıp kirdi ele!
 Bara tüšüp jogoldu;

jogolo tüšüp oŋoldu!
 Astındaŋı Tay-buurul
 kaš takıldap barganda
 bulğarıdan terdigi
 suusu kagıp burčunan
 astındaŋı Tay-buurul čildey
 kılčıldap!

(Oo Kuday bilet kim bilet!)

Ua munu mınday taštaŋar;
 Akın kan kızı Ay-čürök—
 Ay-čüröktön kabar al!
 Kırk kelinder - - -
 Kırk kızdarın košo alat.
 Ak čatırın бүктөдү,
 Ak-borčukka жүктөдү;
 kök čatırın бүктөдү,
 Kök-borčukka жүктөдү.

(Kuday bilet kim bilet!)

Čoŋ Ürgönčtün boyuna
 ak čatırın tikti ele.

(Kuday bilet kim bilet!)

Tubardan kılğan joldugu
 başına - - saldı ele.
 Koykoyo basıp bardı ele

caper!
 (Who knows? God knows!
 If the Creator Himself knows not,
 and if my words do not prove to be lies)—

115 When he rode to Čoŋ Ürgönč,
 he plunged right in the water!
 He rode [off the edge], and disappeared as
 he fell,
 then reappeared again!
 Beneath him, Tay-buurul—

120 saddle-bow squelching as he went,
 his saddle-blanket of yuft—
 shaking the water from its corners,
 Tay-buurul beneath him trembled like a
 quail!
 (Ah, who knows? God knows!)

125 Leave him just like that;
 Ay-čürök, daughter of Akın Khan—
 hear tidings of Ay-čürök!
 Forty young ladies [. . .]
 She takes forty maids along with her.

130 She packed up her white tent,
 and loaded it onto Ak-borčuk;
 she packed up her blue tent,
 and loaded it onto Kök-borčuk.
 (Who knows? God knows!)

135 Beside the Čoŋ Ürgönč
 she pitched her white tent.
 (Who knows? God knows!)
 Her gifts made of Chinese silk
 she now placed at the head [of the bed].

140 Stepping gracefully she walked

- - - - -	[. . .]
başına salıp aldı ele	she placed it at the head.
- - jılkı bardı ele.	[. . .] horses went.
“Semetey kelet ıraktan.	[Ay-čürök said,] “Semetey is coming from afar.
Anın özün körgöndö	145 When I see him,
özüm joop bereyin!”	I myself shall give my answer!”
- - - - -	[. . .]
Kök çatırın büktödü,	She packed up her blue tent
Kök-borčukka jüktödü;	and loaded it onto Kök-borčuk;
ak çatırın büktödü,	150 she packed up her white tent
Ak-borčukka jüktödü.	and loaded it onto Ak-borčuk.
Akın kan kızı Ay-čürök	Ay-čürök, daughter of Akın Khan
Čoŋ Ürgönčtün boyuna	to the banks of the Čoŋ Ürgönč—
Čoŋ Ürgönčkö keldi ele.	she came to the Čoŋ Ürgönč.
Čatırın tikti - - da	155 She pitched her tent at [. . .]
kerebetin - - -	[. . .] her bed
- - - - -	[. . .]
- - - - -	[. . .]
anı kızdarı - - - - -	the maids [. . .]
- - - - -	160 [. . .]
- - - - -	[. . .]
- - - - -	[. . .]
?	[. . .]
- - - - -	[. . .]
?	165 [. . .]
“Ee tüšümdü jakşı joruŋar!	“Interpret my dream well!
Ua kečinde - körgön tüšümdö	In the dream [. . .] I saw last night,
ua at başınday ak šumkar	a white gyrfalcon, big as a horse’s head—
ua munuday aalam - - -	such a one [. . .] the sky;
uay ar kıl - - börü aldı!	170 it seized all manner of [. . .] wolves;
Bul azuuluudan tülkü aldı!	it seized foxes from among wild beasts!

- - - bul emine boluçu?

Bul eki čaar ala jolbors

köčönün barın kıldırıp,

kapkanın barın sıldırıp

?

?

(Kuday bilet kim bilet!)

Jasalgallu boz üydü

teskey alga tigipmin.

- - bul emine //

Oo jasalgallu boz üydü

ua teskey alga tigipmin.

Ua bul emine boluçu?

Bul ešigimdin aldında

bul eki may köl - - -

ua bakası čardap jatıptır.

Jeñeler bul emine boluçu?

Bu kuday bilet kim bilet!

Bu kak törümdün tübünö

čınar terek čığıptır,

başı asmanga tiyiptir.

Jeñeler bul emine boluçu?

Kuday bilet kim bilet!

Bul aytkanım jalğan kelbese,

Alda-taala bilbese,

kuday bilet kim bilet!

Munu da jeñelerim munu da jorup
berseñer!”

Ošondo on eki juban otuz kız.

Oy kelinge kızdar karadı,

[. . .] what does this mean?

Two striped tigers,

roaming all the streets [of the city],

175 and stalking all the gates

[. . .]

[. . .]

(Who knows? God knows!)

An ornamented yurt

180 I pitched at the foot of a northern slope.

What [does] this [mean?]

An ornamented yurt

I pitched at the foot of a northern slope.

What does this mean?

185 Just outside my door

two salt-lakes [. . .]

and the frogs in them were croaking.

Elder sisters, what does this mean?

Who knows? God knows!

190 Right from my [yurt's] seat of honor

a poplar grew up,

and its crown touched the heavens.

Elder sisters, what does this mean?

Who knows? God knows!

195 If these words of mine do not prove to be
lies—

if Allah Most High knows not—

who knows? God knows!

This as well, my elder sisters, interpret this
as well for me!”

There were twelve young ladies and thirty
maids there.

200 The maids looked at the ladies,

- kelinder jerge baykap karadı.

Ua bečara //

Ua bečaranın bir kızı—

ua bu kelinder kızdı karasa,

ua kelinder jerge baykap karadı

“Men bolso anan Ay-čürök - - tüš
jorup bereyin!

Aa bul at başınday ak šumkar

uay alğanıñ ay alğanıñ,

ua jakşı taptap salğanıñ!

Bul azuuluudan börü alsa,

Šıgaydın uulu Čın-kojo čunak
bolgonsup

Semetey munun başın kesip alğanı!

bu ar kıl - - tülkü alsa

Jedigerdin Er Toltoy

oo jezdekem munun - alıp
salğanı!”

Oo kудay bilet kim//

- - - - - bereyin!

Ua - - - - -

Uay eki čaar ala jolbors

köčönün baarın kırırsa,

kapkanı baarın sırırsa,

ua Semeteydin Kan-čoro menen
Kül-čoro

ua bul eki beren - - - .

Jeñe - - - - - .

Ua munun - - - - - .

Uay ešigin den karasa,

uay eki may köl - - -

[. . .] and the ladies stared at the ground.

A poor [man’s daughter] //

A poor man’s daughter—

when the ladies looked [back] at the maids,

205 the ladies stared at the ground—

“As for me, then, let me interpret [. . .] the
dream [for] Ay-čürök!

This white gyrfalcon, big as a horse’s head:

you will catch it—ah! you will catch it;

you will man it well!

210 If this [bird] seized a wolf from among wild
beasts,

it seems Čın-kojo son of Šıgay will become
the wretch:

your Semetey will cut off his head!

If this [bird] seized all manner of [. . .]
foxes,

[it is] Er Toltoy of the Jediger:

215 elder sister, [Semetey] will take his [. . .]!”

Ah, who [knows]? God knows!

[The poor man’s daughter said,] Let me
[. . .].

[. . .].

The two striped tigers:

220 if they roamed all the streets

and stalked all the gates,

[it is] Semetey’s [Companions] Kan-čoro
and Kül-čoro:

these two heroes [. . .].

Elder sister [. . .].

225 This one’s [. . .].

If one looks out your door,

these two salt-lakes [. . .]

ua bakası jatıp çardasa,
uay eliñdin kenen taraganı!
ua Semeteydin - - -
? kalganı.
Ua - - - - -
Ua kak törüñdün tübüñdö
ua çınar terek ay çıkısa,
ua başı asmanga tiyip ese
Manastın uulu Semetey
Ay-çüröktü alganı!
Ua baybiçe bolup kalganı!
Ua başaalıktı kök sürüp
Semetey başaa - - - Ürgönçtön
ötkönü!”

and if the frogs in them sat croaking,
[it means] your people will be spread wide!
230 Semetey’s [. . .]
will [. . .].
[. . .].
If right in your [yurt’s] seat of honor
a poplar grew up,
235 and its crown touched the sky—
[it means] Semetey son of Manas
will marry Ay-çürök!
She will become his senior wife!
Stubbornly imposing his khanly state,
240 Khan Semetey [. . .] will cross the Ürgönç!

References

A Note on Sigla

Prolonged research on Kirghiz epic texts has shown both the wisdom of the system of sigla which Arthur Hatto introduced in his studies, and the need to expand and modify it. With several epics already attested and studied in more than one variant, and the happy anticipation of more like them, the need to identify the bard-authors of epics in their sigla has become apparent. To the basic key-letters of the title siglum, then, are added up to two tag-letters in smaller type, usually representing the bard's initials, as in *SKK* "The *Semetey* of Kenje Kara." The tag-letters may also represent some other identifying words, as in *MGC* "*Manas*: The Great Campaign" (a published translation). For consistency, Hatto's sigla for Radlovian epics could be tagged with a small *R*, but this was deemed unnecessary. The most important difference to note between Hatto's system and that used in this dissertation is that Hatto's *KO* (anonymous) denotes the same text as my *MKNB*, the *Memorial Feast for Kökötöy Khan* of Nazar Bolot uulu.

Key to Sigla and Abbreviations

- I,1) I,1) *The Birth of Manas*, in: *MWR*, pp. 3-11. (= *B*)
- I,2) I,2) *Almambet, Er Kökčö Ak-erkeč; How Almambet Came to Manas*, in: *MWR*, pp. 13-71. (= *AK*)
- I,3) I,3) *Manas's Duel with Er Kökčö; The Marriage, Death and Return to Life of Manas*, in: *MWR*, pp. 73-160. (= *M*)
- I,4) I,4) *Bok-murun*, in: *MWR*, pp. 159-225. (= *BM*)
- I,5) I,5) *Köz-kaman*, in: *MWR*, pp. 227-303. (= *KK*)
- I,6) I,6) *The Birth of Semetey*, in: *MWR*, pp. 305-337. (= *BS*)
- I,7) I,7) *Semetey*, in: *MWR*, pp. 340-395. (= *S*)
- II. II. *Joloi Kan*, in: Radloff, *Obraztsy/Proben*, vol. 5, (*Obraztsy*) pp. 369-525; (*Proben*) pp. 372-529; synopsis in Appendix 1, above. (= *J*)
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Резюме

«Переходный период киргизской эпической традиции»

Диссертация на соискание ученой степени Ph.D.

Даниел Г. Приор

Данная диссертация рассматривает культурную историю киргизской устной эпической традиции в поэтическом плане, анализируя творческие связи сюжетной структуры с этосом (духом) эпических поэм. Предмет анализа--определение концепции героического эпоса с точки зрения сюжетной структуры. Английский исследователь в области сравнительной фольклористики А.Т. Хатто предлагал рассматривать структурное значение известных выших точек, так называемых «эпических моментов», в сюжетах устных эпических поэм, притом Дж.Д. Смит наблюдал в структуре раджастанского (Индийского) устного эпоса функциональное совпадение эпических моментов с теми кульминационными действиями, когда герои принимают и выполняют «договоры», за которыми следуют друг за другом главные действия сюжета. В киргизской эпической традиции, наличие эпических моментов и сюжетных «договоров» явно соотносится с исторической эпохой--середине XIX века, когда киргизское общество характеризовалось документально удостоверяемыми «героическими» чертами. Это соотношение лежит в основе введенной впервые в диссертации концепции героического эпоса с точки зрения отличительных сюжетных структур в устном исполнении. Позже, когда киргизы жили мирно под русской властью, сказители полагались на разные виды сюжетных средств в исполнении эпоса. Эпические поэмы этого периода имели тенденцию к более короткому или длительному времени исполнения, чем ранее, причем эпические темы

распадаются и перегруппировываются. Мы называем период 1863-1922 гг.-- приблизительно, со времени подчинения Северной Киргизии России до установления Советской власти--П е р е х о д н ы м П е р и о д о м (Twilight Age) эпической традиции. Этот период характеризуется происшедшим структурным переходом в сказительском исполнении эпических сюжетов, и тем, что немногочисленные фольклорные источники периода до сих пор почти не привлекали внимания ученых.

Диссертация разделяется на главы, посвященные Старому (до 1862 г.), Переходному (1863-1922), и Поздному (с 1923 г.) Периодам. Каждая глава содержит информацию о социальном, политическом и культурном фоне эпической традиции, а также анализ текстов эпических поэм. Используются в диссертации почти все текстовые материалы Старого и Переходного Периодов, которые в настоящее время известны. В приложениях дано изложение четырех ранее не доступных на английском языке текстов из Переходного Периода, составляющих свыше 15.000 стихотворных строк в оригиналах.

Новизна данной работы заключается во-первых в том, что в ней теория и методология анализа структур сюжетов устных эпических поэм, предложенная участниками Лондонского Семинара по Эпосу А.Т. Хатто и Дж.Д. Смитом, применена материалам киргизской эпической традиции; во-вторых, в том, что в ней демонстрируется применение данной методологии для анализа в диахроническом и жанровом плане; в-третьих, в том, что для выполнения этого анализа, введен в научный оборот существенный фонд ранее не опубликованных и малоизученных эпических материалов Переходного Периода, отчасти письменные и фонографические записи. Работа основана на

опубликованных материалах (эпизоды эпоса «Манас» записаны Ч.

Валихановым и В. Радловым), на материалах, полученных из архивных фондов и библиотек Средней Азии и России (записи эпоса «Семетей» в вариантах Малдыбай Борзу уулу, Тыныбек Жапый уулу, Кенже Кара ырчы, и др.), а также на аудио-визуальных фольклорных записях, сделанных автором в 1996 г. при исполнении известного киргизского сказителя Шаабай Азиз уулу.

Vita

Daniel Prior was born on November 25, 1963 and raised in Birmingham, Michigan. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree in linguistics from Yale University in 1985. He attended Indiana University in the Department of Central Eurasian Studies from 1996 to 2002, with minors in Folklore and Ethnomusicology. He received his M.A. in 1998 and his Ph.D. in 2002.

Between 1985 and 1996, Daniel Prior traveled extensively in Asia, Europe, and the Americas. He worked as an assistant editor on the Random House Dictionary in New York (1986-87) and on the American Heritage Dictionary at Houghton Mifflin in Boston (1989-90). He taught English in Chungking, China (1987-88), Bishkek, Kirghizstan (1991-92), and Tokyo, Japan (1992-93). In 1993-96 he lived in Kirghizstan and worked as a publisher, translator, and editor while conducting extensive fieldwork on Kirghiz folklore and history. At Indiana University, he has lectured and taught two courses on epic poetry, and currently holds a position in the library of the Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies.

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