

## ‘The Birth of Manas’

The following material has been reformatted for the FYS Reader from Hatto, A. T. (1990), *The Manas of Wilhelm Radloff*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz. Hatto introduced ‘The Birth of Manas’ with the following remarks:

Radloff judged that this short poem on the Birth of Manas was extemporized for him personally, by a bard among the Sarı Bağış tribe south of Tokmak in 1869, in response to a question he had asked. It is the only mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century heroic poem recorded from within that tribe. The poem can be analysed as follows: (1-9) Manas’s genealogy and birthplace; (10-41) his parents’ childless state and father Jakıp’s masterly steps to remedy it; (42-65) the naming of Manas and prophecies on his future; (66-72) Manas’s boast from the cradle in general terms future exploits against the Infidel; (73-149) Jakıp’s formal appointment, as he stands fully armed, of Bakay as Manas’s tutor and the promulgation of the itineraries of two planned Holy Raiding Expeditions (*kazat*), as though from Manas’s lips; (150-164) Manas’s precocious growth to heroism and his success in exacting tribute from the Chinese of Kashgaria and in pushing them eastwards.

Interesting features of this improvisation are these. Whereas other mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century epics make the Talas Valley the seat of power of Manas’s line, *The Birth of Manas* has him born on one of the Almaty rivers. This is understandable in as far as the powerful Sarı Bağış were nomads on the Western Kungey Alatu not far short of the present Alma-Ata beyond the Zailiyskiy Alatu to the north. It might thus have been a defiant gesture on the part of the Kirghiz bard that he perched Jakıp’s aul in an eyrie in the mountains from where he could look down on Vernoe (Alma-Ata), which had been given the status of a Russian town only two years before. This would go well with Manas’s projected First Raid past Semipalatinsk and Krasnoyarsk. Manas’s epic feat of driving the Chinese back towards the east had recently been achieved in life by Yakub Beg’s immediate forerunners, though with his increasing participation (by 1865). As in *Bok-murun* and *Kökötöydün aşı*, the itineraries of *The Birth of Manas* are plausibly factual. *The Birth of Manas* is alone among the 19th-century heroic poems in presenting Jakıp as a resolute man of action. Elsewhere he is feckless and even treacherous towards his descendants through Manas. The nearest genealogy in the mid-19th-century material to that of *The Birth of Manas* is in *Kökötöydün aşı*, with Čayan inserted between Böyön and Kara-kan. Uniquely in *The Birth of Manas*, Manas’s mother is explicitly daughter to Aydar-khan (regularly father also to Er Kökčö), yet this relationship is implied in *Semetey*. Despite the sinister attribute of ‘bloody born’ and its expanded form ‘born grasping a clot of blood in his right hand...’ in the general tradition, this element is not used by the bard of *The Birth of Manas*. The question whether *The Birth of Manas* furnishes evidence for an expedition to Peking by Manas, as in some 20th-century ‘epopees’, is discussed in the Commentary.

To cite this material, reference should be made to Hatto’s original version as follows: the Kyrgyz lines 1-50 (p. 6), 51-120 (p. 8), 121-164 (p. 10). The numbers for variants from Radloff’s edition that Hatto emended likewise follow the page numbers of the Kyrgyz lines. For Hatto’s English translation: ‘Jakıp-khan, by birth courageous’ to ‘held the boy tight and surveyed him’ (p.9), ‘Seven envoys come from Yarkend’ to ‘sling the cauldron, light the fire’ (p. 11), ‘be the comrade’ to ‘drove them to Aksu’. The notes, a selection from the same volume, with the number referring to the Kyrgyz line number, have been shortened for the FYS Reader, and are as follows: 2-14 (p. 400), 20-32 (p. 401), 36-38-63 (p. 402), 76-128 (to ‘figure is’) (p. 403), 128 (from ‘also known’)-153 (p. 404). The introduction, above, with slight omissions of references and expansions of abbreviations (to ‘regularly’ p.3, from ‘father’ p.4).

	Jeti-tördün başında jetkilän tūyan Böyön-kan, Böyön-kandın balası kairattū tūyan Kara-kan,		em erkäk bala tūdurdu. Emi erkäk bala karasa, apak eti čüštödöi, ustukan-sögü mistädäi.
5	Kara-kandın balası kairattū tūyan Jakıp-kan, Čuŋkar-uya üstündö, Almatının ösında jerdäp jatkan Jakıp-kan.	45	Ak bos biä soidurdu, Jakıp-kan tūyan balasınan tört paiyambar kojoyo atın 'Manas' koidurdu.
10	Kečä Aydar-kandın kısı Čıyrıçı alyan ekän Jakıp-kan. 'Ošu Čıyrıčını alyanı, men jittap bala öppödüm, bu Čıyrıçı jaiyan čačın tarabait,	50	Tört paiyambar balanı sınadı. Jerkendän kelgän jeti elči jentägin mıktap jep ketti, 'Manas jelmoyus čıyat!' dep ketti; Kıtaydan kelgän kırk elči
15	Kudayya tōba dep tipti meni karabait! Belin bekäm būdadı, bu Čıyrıçı erkäk bala tūbadı. Bu Čıyrıčını alyanı, jayı-kışı on tort jıl	55	kainasın mıktap jep ketti, 'Manas Kıtaydı kırıat!' dep ketti; Noyoydon kelgän on elči olturup etin jep ketti, 'Manas oiron čıyat!' dep ketti.
20	bu mazarlū jergä sıdırbait, bu almalū jergä önabait, bu arašandū jergä tünöböit! E Kuday Taala jar bolso! Čıyrıčının kursayına	60	Bu baibičä Čıyrıçı Manastı sır beşikčä bölödü, Manastı Kızır jölödü. Manas kabak jerdän buyuldu. Kapır-minän Busurman
25	erkäk bala bar bolso! Bu belin bekäm būdursam! Bu Čıyrıčıdan erkäk bala tūdursam! Noktolū ötüč, kök köpüč Noyguttu buzup jegändäi,	65	Manastın kabarı mıktap uyuldu. Manas emi kŭlödü, Manas bešiktä jatıp sŭlödü: 'Ak sakal atäkä Jakıp-kan, Busurman jolum açamın,
30	kušbaš er, kök čapan Kokondū buzup jegändäi, jör ešäk, tešik tam Sarttı buzup jegändäi, čiri tokum, kŭ naiza	70	Kapırdın malın čačamın! Kapırya ketät kılamın, Bursurman jetät salamın! Jakıp-kan ošu kepti ukkanda, ala baš joryo at
35	Kazaktı buzup jegändäi, suyalayın koiboyon, surap-ičip toiboyon Kırğıstı buzup jegändäi! Emi belgä sadak būdurdu,	75	alıp kelip tokuttu; jakası altın, jeŋi jes ak kŭrōkō toryoi kōs altındın šerin japtıryan, kŭmüštün šerin töktürgön
40	Jakıp-kan Čıyrıčıdai katından	80	badanı kīgän soŋ, bu Jakıp-kan çıkırdı:

22 tünüböit. 43 čüštüdäi. 44 mistidäi. 67 sölödü. 76 jeŋa.

2 On Manas's varying pedigree (a sign of more recent tradition), see Hatto, 'The Birth of Manas, a confrontation of two branches of heroic epic poetry in Kirgiz'.

14 *jaiyān čačın tarabait* implies that after giving birth, Čıyrıçı, having loosed her (two, married woman's) plaits, would dress her hair again (possibly in a different style, to indicate motherhood). The reason for her plaits being loosed would be sympathetic magic: to help a woman in labour, all knots must be untied, all obstructions removed. In Sagymbay's variant of the *Birth*, after bearing her son and on the eve of the feast to celebrate this event, Manas's mother sews a cloak, poor men patch their garments, young women and girls do up their hair, and young men dress their horses' tails. All of this can of course be interpreted as preparations for the feast, yet all four instances among many other possible preparations imply a reversal of loosening, and in the case of the females' and horses' hair the same verb *tara-š-* 'to dress' is used. *Čač jay-* otherwise refers to a widow's tearing out and scattering her hair in mourning. The change from a girl's (many) to a married woman's (two) plaits is named *čač örüü*, and the rite was performed prior to her moving to her husband's aul.

20 As Radloff explains in his footnote to his translation, barren women resorted to holy places with a lone apple-tree to pray to God to remedy their condition. In the Kazakh *Alpamis*, the aged parents of the future hero obtain the boon of parenthood by prayer and charities at all the saintly tombs of Samarkand, Otrar, Sairam and Karatau.

Jakip-khan, by birth courageous, son of the born-brave Kara-khan, son of the high born Böyön-khan, at the head of the Jeti-tör, had his being at the mouth of the Almatı-gorge above Šunġar-uja.

Time past, Jakip-khan had married Aydar-khan's daughter, Čıyırçı. 'Having married this Čıyırçı, I have never nuzzled and kissed a child! This Čıyırçı has never unbraided her hair to dress it, she never looks at me entreating God, has never bound tight her waist – this Čıyırçı has never born a man-child! Since I married Čıyırçı, during fourteen years, summer and winter, she has not sought places with holy tombs, has not rolled where apples thrive, or passed the night among health-giving springs! Ah, would that God Most High would be my helpmeet, if only a man-child would form in Čıyırçı's womb! If I could have her waist bound tight, could have a son born of this Čıyırçı! – such would as shatter the Nogyt of the boot-thongs long as halters and the blue saddle-covers, and 'gobble' them, such as would shatter the Kokanders with their Özbeg saddles, their gowns of blue, and 'gobble' them, shatter the Sart, with their galled asses, their riddled walls, and 'gobble' them, the Kazakh, with their-soft leather saddle-cloths, their white lances, and 'gobble' them, the Kirghiz that never cease their greed and for all the food they crave are never sated, and 'gobble' them!' Then he had the bow-and-arrow case bound around his waist, Jakip-khan caused a man child to be born from Lady Čıyırçı. And now if one looks at the boy, his flesh is dazzling white as cambric, his bones are strong and shapely.

He had a white mare slaughtered, Jakip-khan had the four prophet-hojas name his new-born son 'Manas'. The four prophets held the boy tight and surveyed him. Seven envoys come from Yarkend ate up their birthday-feast and left: 'Manas will prove a Jelmoguz!', they said. Forty envoys come from China ate their meal and went away: 'Manas will destroy China!', said they. Ten envoys came from the Nogoy sat and swallowed their meat, then left: 'Manas will be our ruin!', they declared.

That Mistress Čıyırçı swaddled Manas in a painted cradle, and Kidor supported him. Manas was hidden in a hollow. Among the Infidel and the Muslim great report was heard of Manas.

Manas grew mettlesome, and spoke as he lay in his cradle, 'White-bearded Father Jakip-khan, I shall open up the path of the Muslim and scatter the wealth of the Infidel. I shall force the Infidel back, shall impel the Muslim to victory!'

When Jakip heard these words, he took a magnificent ambler and had it saddled, and when he had donned his mail-shirt with collar of gold and sleeves adorned with copper, his gleaming surcoat of a lark's eye mesh which he had covered with golden lions and sprinkled with lions of silver, he Jakip-khan, shouted:

21 The eating of apples from a sacred source was widely believed to be efficacious against barrenness in Central Asia.

This motif receives a grotesque twist in the Karakalpak *Jartı bas batır* ('Half-headed Hero'), where the mother eats two-and-a-half apples and the father the remaining half, with the result that three sons are born, the third with but half a head. In Sagymbay's variant, a dervish-like figure appears to Čıyırçı in a dream with a fructifying Apple from Gos.

28 That Nogyt boots should have *nokto* 'halters' instead of the usual *bayloo* 'thongs (for tying round the ankle)' is a typical caricature of another tribe.

29 *je*- lit. 'to gobble' refers to the taking of tribute. The Nogyt were a very small tribe surrounded by the Bugu and are the only Kirghiz tribe to be named in the mid-19th century epic.

32 *teşik tam* lit. 'walls with holes in them', i.e. not like the nomads' yurts.

36-38 This reference to the Kirghiz, like others of this earlier period before the rise of Kirghiz nationalism, is extraordinarily detached.

44 *ustukan* Persian *ustukhwān* 'a bone', specialized in Kirghiz as a bone with a little meat on it such as was given to a guest before the main meal.

46 Other similar miraculous name-givings occur, of Semetey, of Seytek, of Töštük.

53 *jelmojūs*: a man-eating monstrous Crone. [footnote, p.9: 'An ogre-like crone with seven heads and powers of flight']

57 *Birth* is the only Radlovian text in which it is implied that Jakip and Manas are not Nogay.

62 *Kidor*: the pre-Islamic 'prophet' Khizr, widespread in the popular beliefs of Central Asia. Kidor helps above all the poor and needy, indeed he incorporates the spirit of charity and may appear in the guise of any needy person one may meet. But the rich and mighty depend on his 'support', too. For a detailed study of Kidor's manifestations among some Kirghiz tribes, see F. Pojarkov, 'Iz oblasti kirgizskich verovanij', pp. 28-35. The 'help' of such figures as Kidor and the Ancestor Spirits (whom, according to Pojarkov, Kidor tended to replace under Islamic influence) was conceived of as a lifting with hands under the armpits, expressed here by *jölo-*, elsewhere by *kötör-*. Similarly the Mongols believed that Bayatur Tugri 'held up' in the ribs, like a support of larch-wood, those who invoked him.

63 As befits a member of an endangered line of khans, Manas's boyhood runs parallel to Temujin's: to safeguard the stirps, Manas must be hidden away.

76-80 This topos of an ideal impenetrable overtunic and family heirloom with a personal name 'Ak-olpok' recurs with some variation. The topos is discussed in Hatto 'Kukotay and Bok Murun: A comparison of two related heroic poems

	'Baydın ūlu Bakay-kan, beri kelči kaşıma! Kep aitamın başıma.		Bilbägänin bilgisip, Bakay!
85	Menin Manas kulunum "Attanamın, jortom!" deit, "Alıska sapar baram!" deit. "Medineni sıdırıp, Čoaşıma Bukardı kıldırıp	125	birgä jortup жүрсөңчү, Bakay! Adam ata, Oobo enä, tüyan jerin bilči edäñ, Oñ jayına Oysul-ata buka etkän, Bakay! sol jayına Kojo Kızır duka etkän! Bakay!
90	It-kečüüdän kečäm", deit, "Beš-Terektän ötöm", deit, "Bejindägi Konjur-bay barıp uruś salam", deit, "ak tengä buldu açam", deit,	130	Baabedin başında, Bakay! Kojo Kızır kaşında, Bakay! Oşu Manas balamdın, Bakay! Arbayıp adam bolyondo, Bakay! at jalındı tartıp mingändä, Bakay!
95	"Kalmaktın malın čačam!" deit. "Uzun-bulak aşam", deit, "Kebes-bulak tüšöm", deit, "Semey-minän Kızıl-jar ortosunda Kır-kečüü	135	erbäyıp adam bolyondo, Bakay! äginä sakal čikkanda, Bakay! minärinä at tapçı, Bakay! kiyärinä ton tapçı, Bakay! At başındai kurandı, Bakay!
100	oşondon kečip ayam!" deit. "Beš-Terektän ötöm", deit, "Kum-buluñdu basam", deit, "Almatını aşam!" deit. "Eşikti menän türgöndö,	140	koi başındai kıtäpti – Bakay! kıyamat jolun turuşıp, Bakay! jılkı içindä bos bolçu, Bakay! Manas-minän kıyamattık dos bolçu! Bakay!
105	enjkäyıp ötüp čıyam", deit, "Kopoluunu kečäm", deit, "Tor-aygırdı aşam", deit, "Sarı-Kaykan basam", deit, "Temirdikti aşam", deit,	145	Baydın balası bu Bakay aitat: 'Makıl bolot, jöp bolot, Jakıp! attanalı jortolu, Jakıp! Bursurman jolun açalı, Jakıp! Benjindin jolun basalı, Jakıp! Kuday berse čabalı! Jakıp!
110	"Medine-čöldü sıdırıp, oşu keñ İleni kıldırıp, Čoñ-Buranın boyunda alti künü jatam", deit. "At sergitip ötöm deit!" deit.	150	Botodoi közün jainatkan, şakardai için kainatkan, Jakıp ūlu jaś Manas, jangis oñgon er Manas on jaśında ok atkan,
115	"Keñ İleni kemä-minäm kečäm", deit, "keñ Kuljanı tegäränä ötöm", deit, "Kojonun şärin basam", deit, "Korguştan tūra ötöm!" deit. Oşu Manas balama	155	on törtünö čikkanda ordo čaikan kan bolyon, altımıś aiyr, jüs kunan aidap jedi Kokandan, seksen baital, mıñ kimkap
120	kazan asıp, ot čayıp, janına joldoś bolsoñçu, Bakay! körböğönün körsötüp, Bakay! kötünön birgä жүрсөңчү, Bakay!	160	jetkisip aldı Bukardan. Kaşkardayı Kıtaydı Turpan aidap čıyardı: Turpandayı Kıtaydı Aksı aidap tüşürdü.

86 atanamın. 88 Mädinäni. 99 kır kečü. 106 Kopolunu. 114 sergätip. 117 Kotyonun. 129 Kotyo.  
130 Babedin. 131 Kotyo. 136 eginä.

of the Kirgiz', n. 2046-2049 (p. 197), together with analogues in Kazakh and *Dede Qorqut*. *ak kürökö* varies *Ak-olpok*. For *kürökö*, Yudakhin, *Kirgizsko-russkij slovar'* gives the meaning 'robe of gold-embroidered silk tissue'. Radloff, however, gives 'der Panzer', and indeed our epic contexts imply that it is *badana*. The ambiguity arises on the one hand because the *ak kürökö toryöi käs/Ak-olpok*, though of fabric, is as impenetrable as chain-mail on account of its magical qualities; and on the other because it is worn immediately above chain-mail. The regular epithet of *ak kürökö 'toryöi käs'*, i.e. 'lark's eye' is surely more appropriate to chain mail than to a finely spun silk? Although *ak kürökö* and *Ak-olpok* vary each other, the wadded armour implied by *olpok* is hard to reconcile with gold-embroidered silk, but such is the nature of ancient weapon armour epithets handed down, sometimes uncomprehendingly, by the bards.

86-118 This is a boast at second hand, uttered prophetically by Jakıp on behalf of his son Manas.

‘Bakay-khan, Son of Bay, come over here to me! I wish to speak a work to my elder! My dear son Manas says “I shall mount and go raiding!”, he says “I shall go on a far journey! I shall range through Medina, shall roam through Great Bukhara, then ford the Ili at It-kečüü! I shall go past Beš-terek and, making for Koñurbay of Bejin, I shall give battle. I shall throw open his silver treasure and scatter the wealth of the Kalmak! I shall cross over Uzun-bulak, go down Kebez-bulak, ford [the Irtysh] and then float by Kır-kečüü midway between Šemey and Kızıl-jar. I shall turn past Beš-terek and make for Kum-buluñ. I shall ford the Almatı. When I have rolled up my door-flap, I shall stoop and come out. I shall ford the Kopoluu, cross over the Tor-aygır Mountains, make for Sarıkaykan, cross over the Temirlik Range, roam through Medine-čöl, then, after passing along the broad Ili, I shall camp for six days on the course of the Čoñ-buura. Traversing it, I shall rest the horses, then ferry across the broad Ili. I shall by-pass spacious Kulja and, marching straight past Khorgos, make for the city of the Hojas!” For this son Manas of mine, sling the cauldron, light the fire, be the comrade at his side, Bakay! Show him what he has never seen before, Bakay! Be his inseparable companion! Acquaint him with what he does not know! Go ranging together! You know the land where Father Adam and Mother Eve were born! At his right side, Oysul-ata did ‘The Bull’, at his left, Kızır-hoja did his Blessing! Baabedin was at the head, Kızır-hoja at the side of my son Manas! When he broadens out and reaches manhood, when he grasps his horse’s mane and mounts, when he grows to be a size and becomes a man, when a beard sprouts on his chin, Bakay, find him a horse to ride, find him a cloak to don! Holding a Koran as large as a horse’s head, a Book big as a sheep’s, stand with him on the Path that leads to the Beyond, Bakay! Be the White Stallion in the herd, Bakay! Be Manas’s Friend for the Afterlife, Bakay!

Bakay, Son of Bay, replies: ‘Indeed I shall, gladly, Jakıp! Let us mount and go raiding, Jakıp! Let us open up the Path of the Muslim! Let us beat the road of Bejin! If God grant, we shall destroy them, Jakıp!’

Opening his eyes so like a camel-foal’s, his heart seething like lye within, Jakıp’s son Young Manas, his only thriven child, Er Manas, at the age of ten shot the arrow, on reaching fourteen shattered khan’s yurts and himself became a khan! Driving sixty stallions and a hundred three-year-olds from Kokand he ‘gobbled’ them, he took eighty young mares and a thousand brocades from Bukhara and bestowed them. He brought out the Chinese of Kashgar and drove them to Uch Turfan, he brought the Chinese of Uch Turfan down and drove them to Aksu.

127 *bilči* ‘connoisseur’ (?) is unattested. But since –*či e-* as a formation is also unattested, it seems simplest to take *bilči* as a nonce-word parallel to *sinči* ‘critic’.

128 *Oysul-ata*: the Protector of Camels, whose name is derived by Pertev Boratav and Louis Bazin in an authoritative note, from Uways-al-Qarānī, a Companion of the Prophet. Among the Karakalpak this figure is also known as Oysıl-kara or Oyıl-baba. *buka et-* lit. ‘to do “the Bull”’ remains unclear. *duka et-* in the next line confirms *buka*, and suggests an audible act, perhaps bellowing like a bull (rather than sounding the bull-horn). This, however, would be strange in a Protector of Camels, whose sires are *buura*, with their own characteristic roar. In any event, bellowing like a bull is funereal, not auspicious, as required here.

129 *duka*: Arabic du‘ā’ (‘invocation’, ‘salutation’, ‘imprecation’).

130 *Baabedin*: the Bukharan ‘saint’ Bahā ad-Dīn Naqshband (1318-1389), subsequently mythologized with successive layers of pious folk-belief. In epic, Baabedin was invoked by heroes in distress. Prayers to Baabedin were learnt by heart, among live Kirghiz shouts invoking him mingled with cries to Allah and Apakhoja. The fusion of Baabedin with pre-Islamic figures is indicated by the phrase *baabedinge kötör-* ‘to dedicate (an animal) as an expiatory or thanksgiving sacrifice’.

145 *jöp* ‘right’, ‘agreeable’; not Standard (Modern) Kirghiz or Kazakh, Karakalpak, but well represented in Altaian and associated languages also in nominal function as settlement of a dispute. *Jöp* has left no trace in Kirghiz dialects according to Mukambaev, *Kirgiz tilinin dialektologijalik sözdüğü*.

153 *ongon* implies ‘thriven’, but it is better to accept Čıyrıçı as barren and not force the text to mean she had given birth to other children who had died. Other variants of the Birth of Manas and indeed the Birth of Heroes can be read in the sense that the woman in question is not barren at all but on the contrary, the husband’s lack of generosity towards the needy has made him infertile. This point is made thoroughly clear when, as in Sagymbay’s variant, the would-be father’s second wife also fails to bear.