

THE BIRTH OF MANAS

A confrontation of two branches of heroic epic poetry in Kirgiz

by A. T. HATTO

It does not happen often in the vast field of heroic poetry that one is able to compare two versions of the same episode standing as many as two generations apart and in two contrasting styles of treatment. But, thanks to the genius of the Russo-German turkologist V. V. Radlov (W. Radloff), who was active in Central Asia and Siberia during the latter half of the nineteenth century, it is possible to do so in several instances. Or rather, it is possible for some to do so and it will only become possible for others when the scholars of Kirgizia succeed in publishing even a fraction of the heroic-epic material in their archives relating to the national hero Manas. Yet within the limits imposed in this field on a scholar of the West, one theme has become available for comparison, that of the Birth of Manas.¹

Radlov's version of a hundred and sixty four lines² was taken down by him in a dialect with some southern features³ from a bard of the Sary Bagysh tribe south of Tokmak in 1869. Radlov comments on its brevity and surmises that it was improvised merely to meet his enquiry concerning the birth of the hero.⁴ Here-below, these hundred and sixty four lines (and no others recorded by Radlov) will be referred to as "R".

The version of the bard Sagymbay Orozbekov (1867-1930), consisting of some twelve hundred lines as it stands in the edition,⁵ was recorded during the 1920's and published as part of the whole Boyhood of Manas. The anonymous preface does not even broach the question how the text was

¹ The authoritative bibliography of *Manas* in *Kirgizskiy geroicheskiy epos MANAS*, Moscow, 1961, ed. M. I. Bogdanova, V. M. Zhirmunskiy and A. A. Petrosyan, lists 695 items and publishes nine important essays on various aspects of the subject, thus placing the potential study of *Manas* on a sound basis.

² V. V. Radlov, *Narechiya tyurkskikh plemen zhiunushchikh v Yuzhnoy Sibiri i Dzhungarskoy Stepi. Obraztsy narodnoy literatury severnykh tyurkskikh plemen*, St. Petersburg, V (1885) Kara-kyrgyz, I, (1) 1-164.

³ E.g. 127 *edän* : *әлән*; 156 *ordo çaykan* : *ordo çalğan*. See K. K. Yudakhin, *Kirgizsko-russkiy slovar'*, Moscow, 1965 under *әде, çaykan*.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. xiii.

⁵ *Manastin balalik çagi (Manas seriyalari)*. Sagymbay Orozbekovtun aytusu boyunça. Frunze, 1940. I am grateful to Mr. J. D. Pearson, Librarian of the School of Oriental and African Studies, for providing a microfilm of the text through his liaison with The Library of the Institute of the Peoples of Asia in Leningrad.

recorded, a subject on which Radlov in his case is admirably explicit.⁶ Since the convention of *Manas* was one entirely of verse (unlike the *Uzbek Alpamysh*, in which verse alternates with prose), we can be sure that the prose passages at the beginning of the Boyhood of *Manas* are the work of editors anxious to condense. This condensation, however, can be supplemented at some risk from the harmonized version of *Manas*, *Semetej* and *Seytek* in four volumes, the editors of which had access to the full text of Sagymbay together with other versions which they introduce at their pleasure.⁷ Sagymbay was born on the southern shores of Lake Issyk Kul, but it must be remembered that his interest ranged far and wide (indeed too wide for the comfort of scholars) over the lands of Islam and Turkic speech. This published version of Sagymbay on the birth of *Manas*, unscholarly and incomplete as it is, will be referred to below as "S".

R may be regarded as giving the elements of a version of the hero's birth which the bard could have extended at will according to his patron and the occasion; whereas S offers an episode in Sagymbay's full epic manner. Comparison of the two texts should thus provide us with an opportunity of discovering by what means Sagymbay obtained that fullness of circumstantial narrative detail which since the days of Aristotle has been ascribed to "epic";⁸ so that if anything is to be gained from the comparison it may serve to sharpen the eyes of scholars in other fields in which such opportunities are not given. Radlov was well aware of the importance of his heroic material in Kirgiz for the study of Homer, and I myself shall look in the direction of Homer in my conclusion.

R may be briefly analysed thus:

1. The genealogy of *Manas* (lines 1-6)
2. *Manas*' father *Ĵakip*'s marriage with the mother, *Ĵiriĉi* (10-11)
3. The couple's childlessness over fourteen years (12-19)
4. *Ĵakip*'s steps to overcome their childlessness (20-39)
5. *Ĵiriĉi* bears the hero (40-1)
6. The outward appearance of her son (42-4)
7. The sacrificial feast for and the naming of *Manas* by four prophets (45-59). (In this section there are indications that the bard can expand if he so wishes.)
8. Young *Manas* is reared in concealment (60-5)⁹

⁶ Radlov V, p. xv ff. Radlov was well aware that the process of singing for a written notation was highly frustrating to bards accustomed to sing by inspiration. Writing of this painful experience some time before 1885 he seems unaware that Edison had invented the phonograph in 1877.

⁷ Editor-in-chief B. M. Yunusaliev, Frunze, 1958-60.

⁸ *Poetics*, xxiv, 4.

⁹ 63: *Manas kabak jerdän buguldu* 'Manas was hidden in a secluded place'. As implied, this element does not appear in S, as it stands. But in the harmonized version we read: *kabilan Manas balani, / kabak jerge bagalı* (*Manas* I, 31, 60 f.) "Let us rear his
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9. *Manas* announces his programme of heroic exploits from the cradle (66-72). (Although this programme is conceived by Radlov's bard as a sort of *jihād*, it has traditional roots in Kirgiz heroic poetry, see p. 228, below.)

The episode now strides forward to *Manas*' youth. *Ĵakip*, perceiving his son's martial ardour, gives him a steed and arms (73-80). He then summons wise old *Bakay* to be *Manas*' companion and by bardic licence gives a fuller version of *Manas*' itinerary than *Manas* had given himself (81-143). (The bard is warming to his theme.) *Bakay* accepts the charge (144-9). *Manas*' swift rise to manhood and early victories, introduced by the epithet *ordo ĵaykan* 'palace-destroyer'¹⁰ (150-64).

S can be analysed as follows. (Where there is a correspondence with R, I insert the latter's number in round brackets.)

- a. (1) The genealogy of *Manas* (Prose) (5, 1-17)
- b. The political fate of *Manas*' elder kinsmen (Prose) (5, 17-6, 13)
- c. (2) *Ĵakip* marries *Ĵiyirdi* (elder wife) and *Bakdöölöt* (Prose) (6, 14-21)
- d. (3) *Ĵakip* laments that at forty-seven he is childless (Prose) (6, 24-7, 5)
- e. *Ĵakip* and his two wives see prophetic dreams betokening the birth of a son (*Manas*) and later of a daughter (*Kardigaĉ*) to *Ĵiyirdi*, and of two children to *Bakdöölöt*. *Ĵakip* gives a feast (Prose and verse) (7, 6-9, 6)
- f. *Ĵakip*'s enforced migrations, cf b., above (From now on all is in verse) (10, 1-11, 23)
- g. *Manas* is conceived after two years (11, 24-12, 3)
- h. *Ĵiyirdi* obtains and eats a tiger's heart in order to give her son ferocity and courage. She is also tricked into eating the heart of a mare that has died of *tehi* (a gyrating disease) (12, 4-15, 8)
- i. *Ĵiyirdi*'s heroic pangs begin. *Ĵakip* sacrifices (15, 9-17, 4)
- j. *Ĵakip*'s nerve gives way. After tethering forty four-year-olds as prizes for those who will race to bring him news, he rides to the foothills (17, 25-19, 13)

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son *Tiger-Manas* in a secluded place", the motive being to hide *Manas* from Kalmak treachery. The harmonizers may be drawing on the version of Sayakbay Karalaev here. *Kös Kaman 987 kölöködö kön öskön* ("grew to manly courage in the shadows") also seems to refer to this.

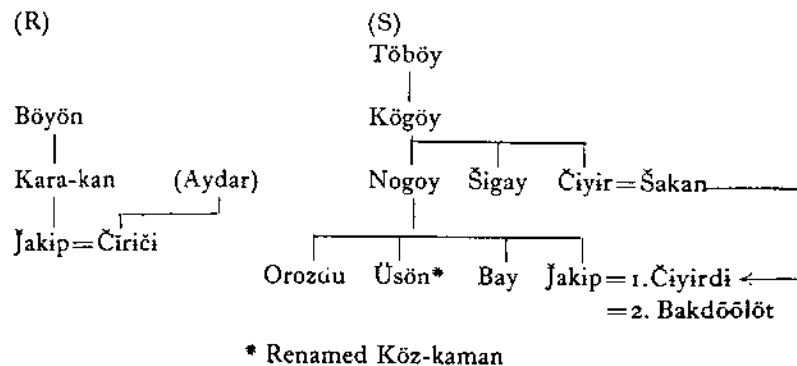
¹⁰ For the form of *ĵaykan* see n. 3, above. That built palaces or citadels of sedentary peoples are to be understood is evident from the mention of Kokand, Bukhara, Kashgar and Turfan. This, then, is a parallel to the Homeric *πρῶλιπορος* "sacker of cities", epithet of Achilles, Odysseus, Ares and the war-goddess Enyo, and the Vedic *purandard* "render of citadels" epithet of Indra. (I have to thank Professor J. C. Wright for this example.) On the connexion between epithets and episodes see p. 235 ff., below.

- k. In the hills, to the auspicious whistling of a mountain-turkey, Jakip sees a grey mare gravid with the future steed of Manas (19,14-20,20)
- l. (4) The bard reverts to Čiyirdi, who after a week's labour bears the hero. Manas emerges clutching a handful of blood (20,21-21,12)
- m. The boy's portentous sex. Stretching out his hand he terrifies the women. As Bakdöölöt lifts him from the ground she feels his massive weight (21,13-23,1)
- n. Manas at the breast - more marvels of comedy and wonder (23,2-19)
- o. In the absence of Jakip, Čiyirdi sacrifices (23,20-29)
- p. The bard reverts to Jakip, in search of whom forty men set out on his horses (24,1-13)
- q. Jakip's friend Ak-balta has scorned to join the race, but his wife Zulayka goads him into participating. Comedy (24,14-28,28)
- r. Jakip watches the grey mare foal while Ak-balta observes him. Jakip swoons at his friend's news that he has a son. Their altercation over Ak-balta's reward. Comedy (28,29-35,11)
- s. Jakip and Ak-balta ride home to see Jakip's new-born son (35,12-37,11)
- t. (5) A portrait of young Manas (37,12-38,4)
- u. In Manas, Jakip sees not only the future avenger of his wrongs but also a possible threat to his own life (38,5-38,18)
- v. (6) A sacrificial feast for Manas and his naming by a mysterious dervish (38,21-47,29)
- (Later episodes deal with the hero's youthful exploits with the outcome that he is made Khan -pages 48-126.)

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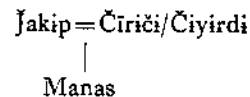
It is easy to see from the foregoing that what the two versions have in common is: 1. a genealogy; 2. the father's marriage with the mother; 3. the future father's lament for his want of a son and heir; 4. by implication the extraordinary birth of the hero by a woman who, even if she is not past child-bearing, has for a long time not conceived; 5. a description of the child's appearance; 6. a sacrificial feast followed by the naming of the boy by a holy person or persons. Within the general context of Central Asiatic heroic poetry these motifs are utterly commonplace and obvious. Divergences within them will tend to be due (i) to local or regional traditions, (ii) to the spontaneous choice among largely traditional elements by the bards. This deserves some detailed consideration.

1. To begin with, the persons of the genealogies are largely different, a sure sign of divergent traditions:



In what follows it is my purpose to discuss the literary implications of these genealogies when confronted. Their historical implications have been studied by V. M. Zhirmunskiy.¹¹ In the hundred and sixty lines of R, the tribal group of Böyön and his descendants is not given. Jakip hopes that his son will annihilate the Noygut (30), those of Kókand (31), the plainsdwelling Sart (33), the Kazakh (35) and the Kirgiz (38); and men of the Nogoy agree in a parallel passage with the hostile Kitay that Manas when older will prove terrible (55 ff.). The latter circumstance, however, is not sufficient to disprove that the bard of R may have imagined Manas as a (Sary) Nogay, as he is reckoned to be in some of Radlov's other recordings. (In the *Smert' Kukotay-khana* recorded by Ch. Valikhanov, Buyun is great-grandfather to Manas.) In S, the Nogay have been assimilated as an aristocratic element into the great tribe of the (idealized) Kirgiz, having been originally adopted from Kazakh heroic tradition.¹² It is appropriate that in S, Manas' grandfather should bear the name of "Nogoy" as against the stereotype "Kara-kan" of R. The name "Böyön" occurs in S, but this Böyön is one of the Kalmak overlords of Jakip (6,16). Thus do illustrious names float around in tradition and even cross the frontiers separating friend from foe.¹³ Jakip's father Kara-kan in R has just such another floating name.

All that R and S have in common in the genealogy, then, is the element



The link Jakip-Manas is attested as far back as the beginning of the sixteenth century in a pseudo-historical source that draws on the poetic

¹¹ *Kirgizskiy geroicheskiy epos MANAS*, p. 146 f.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ A further example in the epic tradition is "Čayan" as grandfather to Manas in *Kukotay* but as Kalmak father to Bakdöölöt in S, see below, p. 223.

tradition.¹⁴ But even then we note the apparently Kuranic Biblical name of Jacob, whereas "Manas" and its variants are deeply embedded in Turkic folk-tradition. The link Čiriči/Čiyirdi-Manas is more slender. The similarity with difference in the obviously divergent traditions of R and S argues for some ancestry in this name for Manas' mother, and we note that Sagymbay's Čiyirdi is supported as early as 1862 by the occurrence of the form Čirdi [*<*Čiyirdi] at Radlov V, I, 3) 1410 Čirdi baidin Čin ["true"] Manas (in apparent conflict with Bagdi Dölöt at 367 and 639 before, and 1855 after line 1410 in the same episode). On the other hand, the episode recorded by Radlov on Manas' battle with Kökčö,¹⁵ gives Bagdi Dölöt as Manas' mother: 367 enä Bagdi Dölöt Baibičä, which, despite his capitalization, Radlov very oddly obliterates in his translation at this, its first mention, by rendering it literally as "Meine reich begabte Mutter" (Perso-Arabic-Kirgiz bak/bakti döölöt "good fortune" twice over). In this group of episodes (with the exception already noted of Čirdi at 3) 1410) "Bagdi Dölöt" recurs frequently as the apparently sole wife of Jakip and mother of Manas and also of Manas' sister Kardigač, who in S (together with Manas) is the offspring of Čiyirdi.¹⁶ The situation becomes clear when we note that in the episode recorded by Radlov, "How Alamambet turned Turk, deserted Kökčö and joined Manas",¹⁷ Manas' mother bears the name of "Čakan" (1255: at 1841 and 1844, however, Radlov fails to detach the possessive affix in his translation "Tschakanym", cf 1255 "Tschakan"!). Čakan's role is to give one breast to her son Manas and the other to Almambet so that they may become milk-brothers. We thus have three different names for Manas' mother, so that it must be concluded that at a time when the name of Jakip had established itself, there was no fixed name for her. How, then was she referred to? The state of the texts affords a sure answer. She was referred to as Jakip's "Old Lady", a woman of uncertain age whose conceiving after a long period of apparent barrenness was to lend wonder to the birth of the hero. At line 60, R reads: *Bu baibičä Čiriči* ("This elderly lady Č.") In S, *baybiče* and *Čiyirdi* are self-sufficient alternatives; the apelative function of *baybiče* emerges clearly at 11,27 ff., where the bard turns from Jakip's affairs to the conception of Manas and refers to the expectant mother for the first time, not as *Čiyirdi*, but as *baybiče*. Radlov's "Battle with Kökčö", line 367, has already been quoted: *enä Bagdi Dölöt baibičä*. The line 1841 from "How Alman Bet turned Turk etc." giving the third name for Manas' mother reads: *bu Čakanım baibičä*. One may fairly conclude that only when a more developed stage of "epic" narrative was reached did bards

find it necessary to specify a name for the hero's mother. In the *Er Töštük* both of a bard recorded by Radlov and of Sayakbay Karalaev (b.1894), the hero's mother is not named either at his conception or at his birth. Sayakbay introduces her as "*kempir*" ("old woman") in his first line.¹⁸

In S, however, *baybiče* means not only "Old Lady" but also "Senior wife", a title of respect, because Jakip has a junior wife - Bakdöölöt! Here Čiyirdi, already a member of the leading Kirgiz-Nogoy family through her first marriage to Čiyir, is presented as "positive", whereas Bakdöölöt, a daughter of Jakip's Kalmak overlord Čayan, tends to be "negative" (her sons later betray Manas' only son Semetey). Furthermore, this plurality of wives seems to have been exploited by Sagymbay or a predecessor to imply that it was Jakip, not his wives, who was sterile, with the insinuation that his childlessness was the expression of his stinginess, a quality loathed by poets dependent upon patronage. The condensed prose of S fails to clarify how Jakip and his wives overcame their childlessness: but the harmonized version not only causes Čiyirdi to welcome the "melting of the ice" round Jakip's heart (18,68 f.), but also has Bakdöölöt upbraid him for his meanness, on which he ponders, and then gives a feast. This may well be the text of Sagymbay. The situation is comparable in Radlov's version of *Er Töštük*. Eleman had begotten eight worthless sons and it was only after a long interval of sterility that this likewise stingy Khan¹⁹ gave a lavish feast at a hint from a heavenly wind, after which his wife conceived the hero.

Examination of the forms R Čiriči and S Čiyirdi, supported by 3) 1410 Čirdi, throws more light on the prior history of *Manas*. It was said above that the similarity with difference of the two forms requires us to allow some time for their divergence. Čiriči is merely Radlov's notation of what would now be spelt as *Čiyiriči (cf. Radlov V, 17/367 *jîn* "assembly", modern Kirgiz *jiyin*; 26/689 *üründö* "in the herd", modern *üyüründö*). Variants with elimination of the second syllable before *r* are given in the magnificent Kirgiz-Russian dictionary of K. K. Yudakhin²⁰ as a matter of course: thus under *kıyr* we are referred to *kıyır* I "edge". There can therefore be no objection to deriving the Čiriči of R via *Čiyiriči from *Čiyiriči. Similarly, Čirdi at 3) 1410 can be derived from *Čiyirdi - the form which actually occurs in S. Then both R Čiriči and S Čiyirdi can be derived from Čiyir, which, as we have seen, was the name of the lady's first husband, a paternal uncle of Jakip. Jakip evidently married Čiyir's Šakan by an extension of the levirate to perpetuate not only his "seed" but also his name.²¹ The con-

¹⁴ Kirgizskiy geroicheskiy spos MANAS, Bibliography, p. 366, Year 1960, item 678, and a private communication to the writer by Professor V. M. Zhirmunskiy.

¹⁵ V, I 3). Cf. further line 639: *kain anä Bagdi Dölöt Baibičä*.

¹⁶ Cf. further Radlov V I 5) *Kös Kaman* 510 *Bagdi Dölöt* and 736 *baibičä*.

¹⁷ V, I 2).

¹⁸ *Er Töštük*. Aytuuçu S(ayakbay) Karalaev. Frunze, 1956. (With an introduction by Dzh. Tashtemirov.) *Al kempiridin balasi | toguz ayga toluptur*.

¹⁹ Radlov V, III, 16 ff.

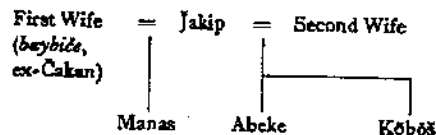
²⁰ *Op. cit.* (n. 3, above).

²¹ Cf. R. Fox, *Kinship and Marriage, An anthropological perspective*. (Pelican Books A884) London, 1967: "In the levirate, when a man dies one of his brothers has

version was effected by the particles *-di* and *-(i)di* in the traditions of S and R respectively.²² Unless the name of Čiyir was arrived at by back-formation from an already extant Čiyirdi or "Čiyirič", which seems improbable, we can assume that Čiyir (whose name means "path") belongs to a stage in the development of *Manas* prior to the naming of Jakip's wife.

If we look farther afield to Radlov's recording of a version of the "Birth of Semetey" (1862), the first episode in the cyclic extension of the epic of *Manas* to that of his son, yet other interesting complications arise. In this version *Manas* dies at a time when his wife *Kanikāi* is seven months gone with child. As her time approaches, *Jakip*, who is presented as an out-and-out villain, sends *Meḡdi Bay*, a traditional enemy of *Manas*, to inform her that she must marry one of *Manas'* younger half-brothers *Abeke* and *Köböš*, quoting the rule of the levirate: *at ölsö söri heris döösü di, | aga ölsö feyd heris döösü di* "If a horse dies its rump remains as a legacy, if an elder brother dies his wife falls to a younger brother" (85 f.). *Kanikāi* resists, pleading her good right to bring up her child independently if it is a son (95 ff., cf. note 21, *supra*). *Jakip* later plots against the life of the newly born *Semetey*, but *Kanikāi* flees with her son with the help of the sixty-year-old *Bagdi Dölöt*. Henceforth *Bagdi Dölöt* is referred to as "Čakan". At the end of the episode Čakan kills *Jakip*, reproaching him with the words: *kui jerim sen kem tapıy, Jakip? | menis bir uulım Manas Kan, Jakip . . .* "What did you find bad in me, *Jakip*? *Manas-kan* was my only son, *Jakip . . .*" (1068 ff.). In the "Birth of *Semetey*", too, *Bagdi Dölöt* is evidently wife to *Jakip*. *Abeke* and *Köböš*, then, are not *Bagdi Dölöt's* sons (as was already implied in *Kanikāi's* lament on *Manas'* death 59 ff.). Of which other wife of *Jakip's* are *Abeke* and *Köböš* the sons? The "Birth of *Semetey*" does not tell us. But its pattern is that of S with the names interchanged. For in S, *Jakip* has two wives *Čiyirdi* and *Bakdöölöt*, the former with one son, *Manas*, and the latter according to her dream with two who will be inimical to *Semetey*. (The harmonized version, apparently following *Sayakbay* and the tradition in general, names them *Abeke* and *Köböš*.) And, furthermore, on leaving her husband *Jakip*, *Bagdi Dölöt* in Radlov's "Birth of *Semetey*" assumes a new name "Čakan" – or so we might deem it to be had we no other version to judge it by. Rather is she reverting to her former name of "Čakan," and "Čakan" must be identical with the "Šakan" of S, so that we now have the parallel *Šakan-Čiyirdi* (S) and *Čakan-Bagdi Dölöt* ("Birth

of *Semetey*"). (The forms *Čakanım*, nom. at (2) 1841 and *Čakanımdın*, gen. at 1846, in which the lady is referred to in the 3rd person are to be accounted for as a fusion of *Čakan* and the first-personal possessive affix *-ım*, expressing the sympathetic interest of Radlov's bard in this old mother about to give suck to two mighty heroes – "my Čakan". The sympathy of audiences is similarly engaged in Kirgiz heroic poetry by the affixation of the second person singular possessive to the names of beloved characters, e.g. "Alman Bet", i.e. "thy Alman Bet", i.e. the Alman Bet so dear to each individual member of the audience.) Thus *Šakan-Čakan* is attested by at least three different traditions, two of them older (with *Čakan*) and the third more recent (with *Šakan*). "Čakan" is another well-attested "floating" name in *Manas* tradition. And, as we saw, the name "Bagdi Dölöt" can be allotted to either the positive or the negative position in the pattern of *Jakip's* marital establishment:



2. Beyond stating the fact that *Jakip* had wooed and won *Čiriči* in former days, R says nothing about how this was accomplished. In this version *Čiriči* is the daughter of *Aydar*, one of the stock figures of *Jakip's* generation in various branches of *Manas* tradition. In other episodes recorded by Radlov, *Aydar* is the son of *Kambar* and father of *Kökčö*,²³ a genealogy corroborated for 1856 by *Valikhanov's* version of the "Death of *Kökčöy*".²⁴ In the second of Radlov's episodes, *Alman Bet*, soon to become the milk-brother of *Manas*, is falsely accused by *Kökčö's* jealous retainers of sleeping with his wife *Ak Erkeč* and leaves him to look for a better lord,²⁵ and in Radlov's third episode (a very weak piece poetically) *Manas* himself attacks *Kökčö* without cause.²⁶ Is it possible that the bards of these last two episodes conceived *Kökčö* as *Manas'* maternal uncle, a most intimate relationship on the steppe?²⁷ Admittedly, in his youth in most if not all traditions *Manas* was a "madcap" capable of desecrating graves and showing disrespect even to his father.²⁸ Yet in the absence of a positive statement or implication in Radlov's second and third episodes that *Kökčö* was *Manas'*

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the right and obligation to marry the wife and raise children 'to the name of the dead man.' (p. 235). Cf. also L. Krader, *Social Organization of the Mongol-Turkic Pastoral Nomads*, Bloomington/The Hague, 1963, p. 248, writing not of the Kirgiz but of the Kazakh, c. 1870: "if the deceased husband had no brothers, the husband's family then sought to find a husband for her among the closest collateral kinmen in the paternal line, such as the husband's father's brother's son".

²² Neither the text-books nor the philologists I have consulted have furnished an explanation of the origin and function of *-di* and *-(i)di* in these names.

²³ E.g. V, I (2), 23 f.

²⁴ *Sochineniya Chokhana Chingisovicha Valikhanova*, ed. N. I. Veselovskiy in *Zapiski imperat. russk. geograf. obščestva ot del. etnograf.* XXIX, St. Petersburg, 1904, p. 211.

²⁵ V, I (2).

²⁶ V, I (3).

²⁷ L. Krader, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

²⁸ E.g. *Sagynbay's Manasın balalik tayı* (i.e. the continuation of S), p. 45 ff.

maternal uncle, it will be safer to regard Radlov's first episode - R, "The Birth of Manas" - as belonging to a different tradition, a notion adequately corroborated by the discrepancy in the name of the mother - here Čiriči, there Bagdi Döölö. There is nothing in Radlov's introduction to gainsay this: R as we have seen was taken down among the Sary Bagyah south of Tokmak; *Joloy* and *Er Töñük* were recorded from one and the same bard (among the Soltu). This is all the information we are given.

In S (condensation in prose), we are told nothing about Jakip's early dealings with Šakan-Čiyirdi. Nor does the harmonized version help us here, for its editors have deliberately suppressed this element: for the line S 20,22 *Baybičesi Šakandan* ("his old lady from - i.e. out of - Šakan") they read 23,56 *Baybičesi Čiyirdin*, the identical formula with which they introduced her (17,37). As between R and S there is thus no shared tradition on the subject of Jakip's marrying apart from the name of his wife. (The situation of the well-attested genealogy Kambur-Aydar-Käčäš with regard to the family of Manas is uncertain.)

3. In R, Jakip's lament on his childlessness briefly refers to his fourteen years of unblest marriage and contains a reproach that his wife has never paid a visit to a holy place which could have brought her a child. Instead, as we shall see, it was Jakip himself who took steps to overcome their lack. As to S (condensation in prose), we are merely told that he lamented having no child. The harmonized version gives a long lament (17,8-36): his people will have no leader, his corset will rust. He upbraids Čiyirdi for being barren. Conception follows the giving of a great feast. These motifs may well derive from Sagymbay. In any event, the sequence is a traditional one, compare Radlov's version of *Er Töñük*, in which Eleman laments that he has no worthy son to succeed him, with the outcome that his wife conceives after he has given a feast.²³ Compare further the lament of the childless Bay Büre Beg in "Bamsi Bayrek", the third story in the *Book of Dede Korkut*, where conception follows the prayers of Bayundur-kan's Begs. All that R and S have in common, then, is the fact that Jakip laments his lack of a son and heir, a commonplace of patriarchal society and an element that is introduced automatically by the need to make the birth of Manas remarkable in that it came after prolonged barrenness.

4. The theme of the barrenness of Manas' mother is by now familiar. The birth of a hero out of barrenness is of course well attested not only in Turkic heroic poetry,²⁴ but also more widely. Such births are as miraculous and ominous as births by a virgin, being equally indicative of supernatural intervention.²⁵ In R, however, it is not clear in just which condition of life

Čiriči finds herself. "*Baybiče*" = "elder woman", "mistress of the house", in no way implies that a woman is past childbearing (whereas *kempir*, in *Töñük*, line 1, probably does). No more than fourteen years have passed since Jakip married Čiriči (18 ff.). Lastly, Jakip had expected his wife to cure her apparent state by visiting an apple-tree²⁶ beside a holy well, with the implication that she was not past praying for (20 ff.). A turning-point was indeed Jakip's prayer at 23 ff.: "O help me God most high, in Čiriči's womb let there be a manchild!" - cf. the prayer of the Oghuz Begs cited above. That Čiriči's conceiving was also helped on by a magical operation can be shown. At line 16, Jakip exclaims: "*belin bekem bübadi, / bu Čiriči erhek bala tübadi.*" ("She never bound her thighs tightly, this Čiriči never bore a manchild!"), a statement of fact which is taken up at 26 ff. by the wish: "*bu belin bekem büdursam, / bu Čiričidan erhek bala tüdursam!*" ("If only I had those thighs of hers tightly bound, if only I had a manchild born of this Čiriči!"); and this wish is duly fulfilled at 39 ff.: *emi belge sadak* (sic) *büdurdu, / Jakip kan Čiričiday katından / em erhek tüdurdu* ("Now he had the *saadak* [Radlov: 'Bogen'] bound round her thighs, Jakip-kan caused a manchild to be born of Čiriči."). Whether or not the binding of thighs was a technique of folk-medicine (the pregnant Kanikey binds hers in "The Birth of Semetey", Radlov, line 69), the third passage adds the *saadak* - the equestrian quiver with bow and arrows - with the clear intention of inducing the conception and birth of a manchild capable of wielding the bow. The Jakip of R is made of sterner stuff than the Jakip of S. Whereas the latter ill-temperedly curses the helpless Čiyirdi for her barrenness when his own meanness is no doubt the cause and later retires to the foothills because he cannot endure her birth-pangs, the Jakip of R, considering that Čiriči has failed him by not seeking out holy places like others in her situation, himself takes charge and first prays to God for a son and then has his wife's thighs bound with the *saadak*. The force of the factitive verbs *büdursam / tüdursam, büdurdu / tüdurdu* is largely lost in Radlov's verse translation and with it a trait in the character of this Jakip. The strict parallelism of language in the three passages quoted is a structural element in this brief heroic poem which warns us not to accept Radlov's poor opinion of it too readily.

In S (prose) also, Čiyirdi is a woman of uncertain age. Jakip himself is childless in his forty-seventh year. Irresponsible though he is, he could scarcely curse his wife for being barren if she were past the age of child-bearing. But for the junior wife Bakdöölöt also being childless, suspicion would attach to Čiyirdi for having borne her first husband no children;²⁷ but we have taken the bard's insinuation that Jakip is childless because he is mean. The all-round improvement in the state of the three, it is

²³ V, III, 16 ff.

²⁴ V. M. Zhirmunskiy, *Kirgizskiy geroinicheskij epos MANAS*, p. 98 f.

²⁵ Cf. O. Rank, *Der Mythos von der Geburt des Helden*, Schriften zur angewandten Seelenkunde, Heft 5 (1909), *passim*.

²⁶ See below, p. 232.

²⁷ Had she borne Čiyir a son she would have remained in her own yurt in order to rear the boy to manhood, cf. L. Krader, *op. cit.*, p. 248 f. (Kazakh).

implied, not stated, must have been due to heaven's hearing his lament, after which they were vouchsafed dreams that were correctly interpreted and acted upon: Bakdöölöt (if we can trust the harmonized version to give us Sagymbay's narrative data lost in the prose of S) exhorts the inactive Jakip to give a feast and "realize" their dreams.³⁴ R and S agree only that Čiriči/Čiyirdi was more or less advanced in years though not past child-bearing. The bards of R and S are less intent than St. Luke on establishing a miracle that will permit of no argument, they neither say that Manas' mother was barren nor that his parents were well stricken in years.³⁵ On the other hand they knew that if they were merely to hint at the well-known topos they could rely on their audiences to fill in what was missing and find the circumstances of the hero's conception appropriately remarkable if not indeed wonderful.

5. All that R tells us of the appearance of Jakip's new-born son is that "his flesh was as white as *čütöš* -- thin white batiste", and that "he is well-built and beams with good health".³⁶ S on the other hand makes much of the awesome appearance of young Manas. Sagymbay dwells on his piercing gaze, his hooked nose, well-knit brows, broad jaw, thick lips, elephantine limbs, broad shoulders, wolf's ears and tiger chest, for twenty lines, so that Jakip sees in his son not only his avenger but also a possible threat to his life (37, 12 ff.). The two versions have nothing in common concerning the outward appearance of the babe.

6. In R, Jakip had a white mare sacrificed and he invited four prophets (*paigambar hojo*) to name the boy (46 ff.). At the naming-feast envoys were present from Yarkand, Kitay, the Nogay (Nogoy), and all agreed that he would be fierce and terrible. This passage fills fifteen lines (45-59). True to its "epical" manner, S warms to this theme, a favourite theme of bards, and deals with Manas' birth-feast and naming in some two-hundred-and-seventy lines (38, 19-47, 29), prefaceing them with Jakip's programme of his itinerary to the place of assembly. This latter, as was hinted above, is a topos of Kirgiz heroic poetry that in former times may have constituted an independent genre (cf. Manas' pronouncement from the cradle, R 68 ff.; and, in Valikhanov's "Death of Kökötöy" and the parallel *Bok Murun* (Radlov V, I, 4)), Bok Murun's pronouncement on his intended itinerary to the venue

³⁴ *Manas* I (1958), 19, 38 ff.

³⁵ *The Gospel according to St. Luke*, I, 7. Cf. Genesis, XVIII-XXI. Despite the close analogy between the births of Turkic heroes and the birth of Isaac it seems unnecessary to derive the former from the latter specifically through the mediation of Islam. It is more likely to be a commonplace in the legends of patriarchal societies. Had Manas' father been named "Abraham" instead of "Jacob" there would have been more to it.

³⁶ R 43: *apak eti čütičidi, / ustakan sığa mirtidai*. Radlov questioned his rendering of *čütič* as "Flaum", and translated the second line as "Seine Knochen wie von Kupfer". Yudaikin in his Dictionary quotes the whole couplet in modernized spelling and renders: *os stroen i pyshet adoroem*, eliminating what seemed a portentous trait.

of Kökötöy's funeral feast).³⁷ This passage is too long to summarize here. It will suffice for the purpose in hand to say that Yarkand is not named in it (though Tashkent, Andizhan and Kashgar are). Kitay, inevitably are present and so are Nogoy, together with many other groups not named by R. It is quite clear that both bards were drawing on their general notions of who were the surrounding tribes and peoples, the one briefly, the other *ad lib*. In S, it is only when the friends of Jakip fail to find a name for Manas that the mysterious dervish appears in his white-pointed cap, spells out the name Arabic-fashion in consonants only, and then disappears into thin air.

To sum up this discussion of the six narrative elements shared by R and S. Their treatment by the two bards is wholly divergent. These elements are commonplaces of Turkic heroic poetry. The only specific traits shared by R and S are the names Manas, Jakip, and a derivation from Čiyir, in association with the commonplace that before the hero's conception there had been a period of childlessness. Bakay (R 82 ff.), though named as a son of Jakip's brother Bay in the prose introduction of S, has not yet come into action. A comparison of the older and younger Germanic heroic lays of Hildebrand, on the other hand, both very short poems separated in time by more than six hundred years, would yield more shared items despite a fundamental change of style and ethos, the reason being that in the Germanic tradition of heroic song the lay tended strongly to be a memorized art-form, whereas in the Turkic tradition the bard expresses himself through more or less inspired improvisation. Though various motifs of Kirgiz heroic epic and of Turkic heroic epic at large will be of ancient origin, formed chains of specific events comparable with those of Germanic heroic poetry must tend to lose their identity since it is not in the nature of such a style that they should retain it. The narrative sequences of the *Alpamysh*³⁸ are likely to show the upper limit of what could hang together.

How did the bard Sagymbay obtain "epic" length? First of all, it must be admitted, by sheer loquacity. We are not told under what conditions he produced his two to three hundred thousand lines of *Manas*, but it is difficult not to believe that it was under laboratory conditions with the worst possible type of audience for a bard - patriotic intellectuals understandably anxious to preserve their neglected national heritage. Bards shape their material to meet their estimate of their patron's tastes and they adjust the length of their performances to their reward. In former times at long festivals *Manas* could be drawn out for weeks or months on end; but the longest festival given by the richest Manap of all the Kirgiz lands would

³⁷ Valikhanov, *op. cit.*, p. 212.

³⁸ Cf. V. M. Zhirmunskiy, *Shazama ob Alpamysh i bogatyrskaia shazha*, Moscow, 1960.

have been a passing moment compared with the sessions of the 1920's when presumably the state itself was patron. The shrewd eyes of Sagymbay Orozbekov as they peer from the photograph of the harmonized version,³⁹ assure us that he will have availed himself of such an opportunity to the full.

ii

How does Sagymbay the artist achieve length? Briefly, in particular: (i) on the basis of the genealogy (a., above), he sketches in the adverse fate of the sons of Nogoy – they have been overwhelmed and dispersed by the Kalmak, the traditional enemies of the Kirgiz (b. and f.); (ii) he introduces prophetic dreams of immediate beauty and symbolic interest which in turn require interpretation and action (c.); (iii) he narrates the steps taken by Čiyirdi, not by her husband as in R, to assure the birth of a warrior – she eats a “tiger’s” heart (h.); (iv) he prolongs Čiyirdi’s labour prodigiously so that it matches the conception for wonder (i. and l.); (v) he also makes the birth (l. and m.) and the suckling (n.) of the boy prodigious; (vi) he cleverly breaks the unity of scene by sending Jakip to the hills (j.), which not only contributes greatly to the characterization of Jakip but also makes it possible for Jakip to see the birth of Manas’ future steed (k. and r.) and this again enables Sagymbay to have a horse-race to bring news of Manas’ birth (p. and s.) and to have Ak-balta come and find Jakip (x.); but (vii) the last trait makes it possible for Sagymbay to preface Ak-balta’s departure with a long altercation between Ak-balta and his spouse (q.). In general the bard achieves length: (viii) by seizing his chances of comic elaboration, e.g. the business with the “tiger’s” and the mare’s hearts, Jakip’s loss of nerve during his wife’s labour, the exchanges between Ak-balta and his wife, Jakip’s resolution to the awful aspect of his new-born son; (ix) Sagymbay deftly takes each opportunity that offers of characterizing his persons, the outstanding example being that of the pugnacious Jakip.

I will select (ii), (iii) and (v) above for more detailed examination, pausing to deal with (viii) and (ix) where appropriate.

The Dreams

The prophetic dreams of Jakip, Čiyirdi and Bakdöölöt (the first and the third strangely intermingled) are given in S partly in prose condensation, partly in verse. Their poetic qualities were too remarkable for the editors to pass them by. Jakip dreamt that a *Buudayık*, a fabulous bird of prey, appeared (7,8). In its rage it was unable to fly. Jakip summoned it with the falconer’s cry of “*börö!*” and it alighted on his fist. He cast it but it fell. For it he made a perch and then together with it he attached a white gerfalcon (*sumkar*) with a striped neck. Čiyirdi dreamt that she ate a large white

³⁹ *Manas* I (1958), p. xv.

apple, honeysweet, from which her belly swelled. Hissing, there emerged from her womb a dragon (*afidaar*) full sixty fathoms long:

7,28 *ačuulanıp op tartaa*

ay aalamdı sarpıptur.

(When, roused to fury, he breathes in, he sucks in the whole world.) Gazing in terror, Čiyirdi is dumbfounded, the dragon’s form extended is a hundred-and-thirty-arshin. Thanks to the editors, Bakdöölöt dreams in prose. She takes two goshawks (*tuıjır*) and attaches them to the side of the yurt. If the “Buudayık” (in Jakip’s dream) flutters its wings to fly, the goshawks (in Bakdöölöt’s) fall flat on their backs.

Jakip summons wise friends, and one of them, named Bayjigit, interprets (8,28 ff.). Either Bayjigit or the editors of S take it for granted that the “Buudayık” stands for Manas, since Bayjigit opens by predicting that the dream is a dream of good omen for Jakip: Jakip’s cares will abate while his heir will have cares as far as the sun and moon reach. The gerfalcon which Jakip attached will be a girl (named in the prose as Kardigač). The goshawks attached by Bakdöölöt signify that she will bear two children.

Bayjigit passes over Čiyirdi’s dream in silence in S, but we may be sure that the dragon emerging from her womb will be Manas.

In an article devoted to the ethnographic material embedded in *Manas*, S. M. Abramzon quotes the dream of Dei Sechen in the *Secret History of the Mongols* as a self-evident parallel. Here, after Temujin’s (Chinggis-khan’s) father Yesugei has set out with him in the intention of finding him a bride, Dei Sechen dreams that a white falcon comes flying with the sun and moon in its talons and perches on his fist, a dream of good omen presaging good news (marriage) from Yesugei’s kindred, to whom they were accustomed to give women.⁴⁰ The similarity as interpreted by S. M. Abramzon, however, is not great, even if we overlook his error in equating the white gerfalcon (the girl Kardigač) in S with Manas (the “Buudayık”).⁴¹ The contexts of birth and marriage are very different, so that unless one looks deeper all

⁴⁰ *Этнографические сюжеты в киргизском эпосе “Манас”*, *Советская Этнография*, Moscow, Leningrad, 2 (1947), p. 139 ff. Abramzon follows S. A. Kosin, *Собрание сказаний*, Leningrad, 1941. I follow E. Haensch, *Die Chinese Geschichte der Mongolen*, Leipzig, 1948, 9/61 ff., which is almost identical in sense.

⁴¹ Abramzon names the “Buudayık” on p. 139, but forgets it and then concludes on p. 141: “*Уполне возмозжно, что бelyıı krecet, povayeniye kotorogo vo sne Znakypa predvashchaset rozhdeniye Manasa . . .*” overlooking the fact that the white gerfalcon portends the birth of Kardigač: S 9,1 (verse) “*Dagi bir sumkar baylasag / anık jeri kis hen*” *deyt.* (prose) Čiyirdi kiyin Kardigač atnu bir kis tórtıyt . . . on p. 139 he seems to add to the confusion by his translation of 8, 21 ff. *ay tıygen Jerdin baarısın, / alat shen bolımsız / . . . kün tıygen Jerdin baarısın, / kúıı shen balazısız* as “*veshk, zhıvushchiklı v podlunnom mire, / ochastıvıt [!] tvoe ditya . . . vse, zhıvushchik na podsolnechnoy zemle, / budut ulchashivat’ za tvoira rebenkom*”. This involves translating an accus. (*baarısın* 8, 24) as a nom. (*ose*) and so breaking the parallelism without explaining why the other accus. (21) is left as an accus. (*veshk*). (*alat shen* = ‘will conquer’, *kúıı shen* = ‘will possess, rule’.)

that the two passages have in common is a bird of prey – here a white falcon, there a “Buudayik” – standing for a young warrior. But if we add to Dei Sechen’s reading of his own dream the surmise that his falcon with the sun and moon in its talons is a world conqueror, drawn to Dei Sechen’s fist by the beauty of his daughter Borte, the likeness increases. The fabulous “Buudayik”, too, must signify a world conqueror and Bayjigit makes this explicit when he says that Manas will conquer and rule as far as the sun and moon shine: meaning that whilst Jakip’s cares will find release, Manas will overcome the Kalmak and the Kirgiz’s other enemies and administer his conquered lands until he is killed after taking Beyjin (Pekin). It may happen in oral poetry that an interpretation contains more details than its dream, and we are justified in asking whether the sun and the moon were originally in the dream of the “Buudayik” since Bayjigit has them in his reading of it. If so, it will have been more like Dei Sechen’s dream. The goshawks terrified by the “Buudayik” are the Kalmak woman Bad-döölöt’s treacherous sons (Abike and Köbööl, see below).

Çiyirdi’s dream is clear enough except that, in folklore, conception normally follows after the biting of a real apple, not dreaming that one has bitten one. We remember that in R. Çiriç ought to have wallowed under an apple-tree near a holy well and we wonder whether in Valikhanov’s “Death of Kökötöy” the repeated reference to Manas as “the warrior who grew fat by gnawing ripe apples of Andizhan”⁴² has not somehow acquired an epithet more appropriate to his mother. The dream of a dragon that rends its mother’s womb and with the intake of its breath sucks in the whole world unmistakably points to the advent of a world conqueror. We might suppose it sufficient that the neighbouring Chinese Dragon, like the Roman Eagle, stood for universal empire even in the days of its decline, if the nearest parallel that I have been able to discover were not from distant medieval Germany, in the epical romance of *Parzival*.⁴³ Queen Herzeloide, big with the hero, dreams a terrible dream as pages approach with news of her husband’s death:

One noontide the lady lay in troubled sleep. She received a dreadful shock. It seemed to her as though a meteor wafted her to the upper air where a host of fiery thunderbolts assailed her, flying at her all at once so that her long tresses bissected and crackled with sparks. The thunder roared pouring tears of fire. As she came to herself again, a griffin snatched at her right hand, and all was changed thus. She

⁴² Valikhanov, *op. cit.*, p. 210: *k nomu batyru, kotoryy v Andizhane otshel, spelye andizhanskie chto gryx yubolaki*; p. 212: *R otshirevshemu v Andizhane, chto gryxet andizhanskie spelye yubolaki*.

⁴³ Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Hrag. von K. Lachmann* (neu bearbeitet von E. Hartl), Berlin, 1952. The word *epheor* in the Kirgiz points to Persia, but the Persian member of the London Seminar on Epic can cite no parallel, nor can the other members. Works on Dragon-lore are also silent on this theme.

marvelled at how she was now mothering a serpent which then rent her womb and how a dragon sucked at her breast and flew swiftly away so that she never glimpsed it again – it tore her heart from her body. Such terrors had she to behold. Never did such anguish come upon a woman in her sleep.⁴⁴

Herzeloide’s dream looks back to the husband she has lost and to the unborn son in whom she will lose him for the second time. But this son, Parzival, is not a world conqueror in the sense of Chiaggia or Manas. Unvanquished as a warrior except by God himself,⁴⁵ he becomes lord of the spiritual empire of the Graal, which extends its sway even to the lands of Prester John.⁴⁶

This colourful episode of S with its dreams and interpretations will have been longer in the unabridged text of Sagymbay.⁴⁷ Because of its beauty and suggestiveness and the opportunity it affords the three of escaping from their childlessness and also the light and shadow that it casts into the future, we may regard it as a thoroughly legitimate means of putting flesh on to the bare bones of narrative. In the opening section of the medieval German epic of the Nibelungs, the heroine Kriemhild has a dream of a falcon (her future husband) which interpreted contains much of the tragedy to come.⁴⁸

The Tiger’s heart

After she has conceived, Çiyirdi is haunted by strange cravings, She desires to eat the heart of the *kabilan*, a feline as ferocious as it is indeterminate, often rendered by “tiger”, “leopard” or “lion”, and translated here as “tiger”. Having no tiger-meat to hand she begins to grow thin in her ravings. But luckily the horse-herd Badalbay brings news that “the cruel marksmen of Kangay” (i.e. the Kalmak) have shot a tiger and left its carcass

⁴⁴ 101, 25 ff. See A. T. Hatto, “Herzeloide’s Dragon-dream”, *Germanic Life and Letters*, New Series XXII (1968) p. 16 ff.

⁴⁵ 744, 14 ff.

⁴⁶ 822, 23 ff.

⁴⁷ The harmonised version is not helpful here (*Manas*, I, 18, 35 ff.). It suppresses the name “Buudayik”. As described, the bird seems to be a compound of golden eagle and (white) goshawk. Have we here an authentic description of the fabulous “Buudayik” (whom Yudakhin *sub. tit.* does not further describe), or do the editors not know a hawk from a heronshaw? The translator of the abbreviated version of the harmonised version make the bird an eagle straightway (*Manas. Epizody iz kirgizskogo narodnogo spoea*, Ferrv. S. Liptkina i L. Pen’kovskogo, Moscow, 1960, p. 16).

⁴⁸ *Das Nibelungenlied*, Hrag. H. de Boor, Wiesbaden, 1957, 14 str. 13 f. Translated: “Living in such magnificence, Kriemhild dreamt she reared a falcon, strong, handsome and wild, but that two eagles rent it while she perforce looked on, the most grievous thing that could ever befall her. She told her dream to her mother Uote, who could give the good maiden no better reading than this: ‘The falcon you are rearing is a noble man, who, unless God preserve him, will soon be taken from you.’” (*The Nibelungenlied*, A new translation by A. T. Hatto, Penguin Classics L 137, London, 1965, p. 16).

to freeze on the steppe. Hiring Badalbay in advance with an enormous ingot of silver, Čiyirdi sends him to fetch the heart. On the way back Badalbay sees a mare that has died of *teli* and cuts out her heart too. Seeing two hearts, Čiyirdi suspects a trick but is persuaded by Badalbay that she has two tiger hearts. She then makes a soup of them and gulps them down. In due course – the gestation of Manas in S is of normal length – her pangs begin. This episode of the tiger's heart is narrated at length, with dialogue and ample attention to its comic potentialities. The bare narrative germ, however, is traditional in Eastern Turkic heroic poetry.

This last point requires some exemplification; then Sagymbay's exploitation of the theme will be discussed; and lastly an attempt will be made to draw some conclusions that could contribute to the general understanding of how oral heroic poetry is transmitted.

In a Kazakh version of *Alpamysh*, old Bayböri and his *baybiše* Analyk (note the type-name "Analyk" "Motherhood") are childless. A holy man foretells that they will have a son Alpamysh and a daughter Karlygash. Analyk acquires an aversion to ordinary food but craves the meat of the *kabilan*. She reminds Bayböri of his former prowess, and he takes her to the forest, where (with a rifle) he shoots a tiger and cuts out its heart. Analyk eats it greedily, forty years fall away from her and she becomes fresh and lovely as a bride. She conceives the hero Alpamysh.⁴⁹ This is straightforward and coherent and acceptable as a normal narrative sequence. It is right and proper that an old warrior should shoot his own tiger. Whether or not the dual or triple purpose of the recipe – to rejuvenate the mother, confirm the sex and induce a hero's heart in her offspring – is original or not, it is well found.

In *Manas* S, however, husband Jakip is not there to shoot the tiger, and he will soon be skulking in the hills until his son is born. This is surely a reflexion on his pusillanimity, and it is significant that those who shot this tiger are the Kalmak who hold Jakip in tutelage.⁵⁰ Whereas in R it was Jakip who operated magically to assure the birth of a hero, in S it is his wife Čiyirdi. Subtle and amusing though Sagymbay's work is at this point, like so much else in S, it betokens a move away from heroic sentiment towards novelistic treatment, and the addition of the heart of a mare that has died of the gyrating disease of *teli* caps it. Is this mare's heart also to exert an influence on the future life of Manas? The answer, I think, is in the affirmative. The young Manas was a wild fellow, a madcap, a non-conformer, a

crazy eccentric, in short a *teutek*.⁵¹ Sagymbay (and possibly forerunners) was disturbed by the wild, cruel and eccentric traits attributed to Manas by tradition, and, instead of suppressing them, decided to retain them and account for them by Čiyirdi's eating of the mare's heart.⁵² It accords well that Jakip was not concerned with providing a tiger's heart, since he could never have brought a mare's heart, too. Such an interpretation might, however, require qualification. Reporting on a version of *Shora-batyr* said to have been taken down from Kirgiz in prose, A. S. Orlov states that Gul Khanys, future mother of Shora, had an irresistible desire to eat lion (*kabilan*?) meat. A little shepherd procured her some: stumbling on a lion in the reeds he lavished such praises on him that, leaping with delight, the lion broke his paws. Since this text is not available to me I have been unable to discover why the important task of obtaining lion-meat for a hero's mother was left to "a little shepherd" (cf. the horseherd in S).⁵³

Sagymbay's adaptation of a traditional motif has been discussed on the way and needs only to be summarized now. In his hands it throws light on Jakip's irresponsibility and unmanliness. It accounts for the wilder and stranger aspects of Manas' character as fixed by traditional episodes. It affords him opportunities for comic business with dialogue between Čiyirdi and her horse-herd and in her gulping down of the fateful soup.

Lastly, there is something to be learnt from this for the understanding of bardic improvising technique in general. That it was not Sagymbay who first introduced the motif of the tiger's heart is shown by *Bak Maras* in Radlov's version of the mid-nineteenth century, line 275: *kabilan tügan Er Manas* "Tiger-born Er Manas", though it must be borne in mind that *kabilan tügan* is pre-dominantly but not exclusively the epithet of Manas. Even more striking is line 287: *kabilan tügan teutek* "Tiger-born madcap", which would seem to contain the psychological elements of Sagymbay's episode in which Čiyirdi consumes the hearts of a fierce tiger and a frenzied mare. In other words, the occurrence of these epithets in an older and more concise source on the one hand and of a fully narrated episode in a more ample source of epic type on the other strongly suggests that traditional epithets could serve as reminders, both for bards and audiences, of incidents that could be dealt with at greater length if desired, a suggestion which receives support from the following section.

⁴⁹ *Baırlar jiri*, Alma Ata, I (1963), p. 233. The editors of *Kazakhskiy epos*, Alma Ata, 1958, which gives verse translations of an earlier edition of *Baırlar jiri* I, mention in their introduction that the eating of the heart of a wild beast by an expectant mother is a commonplace of Kazakh heroic poetry, specifying the bear or the lion (Kh. Dabunskiy and M. Gabdullin, p. 14).

⁵⁰ S: p. 3 f. and 12, 14; *Kongaydin kara mergeni*.

⁵¹ Yudaşkin, *op. cit.*, *sub* *ib.* Cf. the abstract noun *teutek*ik a 'nonnormal'/'not' (*psikhicheskaya*). Physically, Manas' spine is not like that of other men (S 45.24 f.) – so we understand that there is an equine feature? Kirgiz scholars will know the answer.

⁵² Faced with similar problems the author(s) of the Homeric epics more or less consistently ennobled.

⁵³ A. S. Orlov, *Kazakhskiy gericheskij epos*, Moscow, 1945, p. 89.

The Blood-birth

Çiyirdi's labour lasted for seven days. As the moment of birth approached, twelve midwives became active. The voice of a manchild was heard crying "Bar!"

21,8 Karindi katuu süzgönü,
 Eki kolun toltura
 Kan çengeldep tüškönü.
 Bala jerde tuyladı
 Bar-bar ɛtip iyladı.

(He butted her womb hard. Filling both hands, grasping the clotted blood he descended. The boy frisked on the ground. He wailed crying "Bar-bar!")

The women are left in no doubt as to the babe's sex, since he is born with an erection, the self-sufficient symbol of his virility but also an allusion to his future amours noted as far back as Valikhanov. Manas' first suck at Çiyirdi's breast is so prodigious that she at once substitutes a bag of stomach-fats and honey. After the cutting of the umbilical cord, Manas to the midwives' consternation stretches out his right hand. Comedy and terror are intermingled.

Commenting on the passage in which Manas grasps a clot of blood, S. M. Abramzon cites a striking parallel from the *Secret History of the Mongols*:⁵⁴ "And it was while they were sojourning at Del'iun boldach on the Onan that she gave birth to Chinggis-kan. At his birth he held in his right hand a clot of blood as large as a knuckle-bone." As a symbol of the ruthless quest of power this is but a variant of Çiyirdi's Dragon dream. The legend of Oghuz-kan shows that the less successful Turks cast wistful glances at the brilliant achievements of the Mongols as enshrined in the latter's traditions.⁵⁵ But here it is unnecessary to regard the *Secret History* as a direct source. Rather does this motif belong to the shared oral tradition of the Turco-Mongol peoples, if not of many others. The gigantic suck of Manas at his mother's breast certainly has wider validity. Although Hera in extant Greek myth was the enemy not mother of Herakles she chanced to give the lusty babe her breast not knowing who he was and unable to bear the pain cast him to the ground. Yet his one huge draft of the mother-goddess's milk sufficed to make him immortal.⁵⁶

Comparison with other versions of *Manas* shows that the "blood-birth" of the hero on which S expatiates in detail was traditional. Just as Manas' "tiger-birth" is enshrined in the epithet *kabılan tügan* (*Bok Murun* 287), so his "blood-birth" is enshrined in the epithet *kandū tügan* "bloody

⁵⁴ Abramzon, *loc. cit.*, p. 141. *Secret History* § 59.

⁵⁵ A. T. Hatto, *Encyclopaedia of Islam* sub "Hamāsa, iv.—Central Asia" (Bibliographical article on heroic poetry among the Turkic-speaking peoples of Central Asia, 1965).

⁵⁶ C. Kerényi, *The Heroes of the Greeks*, London, 1959, p. 134.

born" (*Bok Murun* 75). It is of great interest that *Bok Murun*, which is more ample in style than R, itself expands *kandū tügan*:

70 enädän jañi tüšköndö,
 koi bōrindai kara kan
 oñ koluna uštağan,
 kabagi bik, kaši bas,
 kösü kizil öñü sas
 kandū tügan Er Manas . . .

(At the moment he descended from his mother's womb, he clutched in his right hand a mass of black blood as large as a sheep's liver, he of the high eyelids, low brows, red of eye and grey of visage, bloody-born Er Manas . . .)

Compare the passage in *Kös Kaman*, in which, Manas' wife Kanikāi addresses Alman Bet on the subject of her "Tiger", Manas: 807 *koi bōrindai kara kan, ül, | oñ koluna uštağan, ül . . . |* = 985 f.

The motif of the blood-birth, like so much else in *Manas* is re-used in its second-generation extension *Semetey* in a weakened form, when two boys born simultaneously, the one holding a rose, the other a blood-clot, are named appropriately "Kül Čoro" and "Kan Čoro" (Radlov, lines 190 ff.).

Bok Murun thus tells us something traditional about the birth of Manas which R itself does not even hint at. This suggests that *Bok Murun* and R were not recorded from the same school of bards, which accords with our impression that R stands on its own among the episodes preserved by Radlov.⁵⁷

If this comparison has been accurately conducted, the results are fourfold: (i) there is information on what R and S have in common, and how S obtains "epic" fullness; (ii) there were deductions based on genealogies as to stages in the growth of *Manas*; (iii) it emerged that the various poems recorded by Radlov could not all be from the same school of bards; (iv) as an unexpected by-product there was the theory of a reciprocal relationship between some standing epithets and fully narrated episodes.

(i) It would be tedious to repeat what was said above, but one cannot emphasize too much how very little R and S have in common, and that where S expands it is often on entirely traditional lines. Apart from the six commonplaces which S shares with R, the only motifs which I was able to discern⁵⁸ as traditional to *Manas* were the blood-birth and tiger-birth, but even here we have to do with Turco-Mongol and Kirgiz-Kazakh tradition respectively. The conclusion seems inescapable: the major portion of S is founded on the one hand on numerous discrete commonplaces of Kirgiz folklore and on the other on the highly individual art of Sagymbay. Specific

⁵⁷ See p. 225, above.

⁵⁸ See p. 233 ff, above.

legend on the birth of Manas is at a minimum – it can be carried in a few formulaic epithets. This need not surprise us. At its most typical the Kirgiz bardic tradition is one of frenzied improvisation, requiring an extremely flexible medium. It lies at the opposite pole to the creations of the Germanic poets of the age of migrations, since in their lays those poets evolved a highly wrought art-form, the memorized poem composed of phrases as memorable and often as unique as the events they enshrined, a close-set pattern that took centuries, sometimes even a millenium to erode.⁵⁹ It follows from this that whereas 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.⁶⁰

(ii) On comparing R, several other poems recorded by Radlov, and S, the following stages of growth were discerned:

- | | | | |
|-----------------|--|-----------------------|-------|
| 1. | Jakip – baybiče | Čiyir | |
| 2. | Jakip – Čiyir $\begin{cases} -\check{c}i \\ -di \end{cases}$ | OR Bakdöölöt OR Čakan | Čiyir |
| 3a. (R) c. 1860 | Jakip-Čiriči | OR Bakdöölöt OR Čakan | Čiyir |
| 3b. (S) 1920–30 | Jakip-Čiyirdi | AND Bakdöölöt | Čiyir |

(iii) It appeared that among the poems recorded by Radlov, R stands alone. “Manas’ Battle with Kökčö” (with mother Bakdöölöt) and “How Almam Bet turned Turk” (with mother “Čakan”) are each independent of R. On Radlov’s explicit statement *Ĵoloy* and *Er Töštük* are by one and the same bard, who, by implication, was the bard of no other poem or poems recorded by Radlov. *Bok Murun* and *Kös Kaman* would appear to go together,⁶¹ and possibly also with *Kökčö*. If we add the bard of Valikhanov’s “Death of Kökötöy”, we have records of the work of five different major or minor schools c. A.D. 1860.⁶²

(iv) The question was raised: “Is the phenomenon of the expansible epithet (*kabilan tūgan*, *kandū tūgan*) specific to Kirgiz or does it occur in other traditions of heroic poetry?” This is not the place for a long comparative investigation. A few observations must suffice. One would expect *a priori* to find it in traditions in which the dominant style is that of

improvisation, where shorter or longer treatment of heroic themes is required according to the occasion (as in Kirgiz); and one would not expect to find it where memorized short art-poems were handed down as the dominant form (as in Germanic).⁶³ It is well known that the Homeric poems are studded with formulaic epithets of which some were so old as to be no longer understood, so it is said, in the eighth or seventh centuries B.C., and which must presumably have been coined when the shorter lay, not the longer epic was the dominant form. There seemed to be an opportunity here of discovering whether any of the traditional epithets correspond to episodes or at least to longer passages in Greek heroic legend, extant or reliably reconstructed. But the search did not prove very rewarding. The epithet *πολιόροθος* (“sacker of cities”) perhaps comes nearest. In the *Iliad* it is used four times of Achilles who, as we know from allusions in the *Iliad* itself, sacked Lyrnessos, Thebe and Pedasos during the nine years before the action of the poem begins; and it is used twice in the *Iliad* of Odysseus, who by his intelligence was to breach the walls of Troy.⁶⁴ In the *Odyssey*, *πολιόροθος* (with its variant *πολιόροθιος*) is used of the hero eight times and “justified” not by passing allusion as with Achilles in the *Iliad*, but by direct narration framed within Demodokos’ lay on Odysseus and the Trojan Horse, a familiar epic device employed here with great mastery.⁶⁵ But both with Achilles and with Odysseus, *πολιόροθος* is used in contexts other than those which might be deemed to justify it. Apart from the instance cited above from *Bok Murun* 70 ff., this is also the case in the episodes from *Manas*.⁶⁶ The heroic epithets in Homer are too general convincingly to be linked with specific events of narrative, and wherever the events lie outside Homer one has the onus of proving that such events were ever part of an heroic epic poem. For example, *πόδας ὠκύς* (*ταχύς*) (“fleet-footed”), almost exclusively the epithet of Achilles, could be taken as referring to the passage in which he overtakes Hektor under the walls of Troy;⁶⁷ yet it would be apter if it referred to his overtaking on foot the mounted Troilus before sacrificing him – if this were ever narrated in heroic song.⁶⁸

The normal relationship between epithet and episode must be that the former derives from the subject matter of the latter and encapsulates it in a mnemonic sense until it requires expansion, with the rider that if the

⁵⁹ E.g. the fifth century Gothic lay of Ermanarik-Sonild (not extant, but reconstructed in outline) and its thirteenth-century Eddaic descendant *Hamðismál*.

⁶⁰ Styles, however, are not absolutes. M. Auzov records that memorized passages are apt to recur especially among the less creative singers of Manas, *Kirgizskiy gericheskij spos MANAS* (cited above in n.1), p. 24.

⁶¹ They share Bagdi Döölöt as mother of Manas, and also some extended formulae.

⁶² The authors of *Kirgizskiy gericheskij spos MANAS* in 1961 recognized two main “schools”, those of the great bards Sagymbay (Tien Shan) and Sayakbay (Issik Kul). Whether or not such a division gives undue weight to the sheer mass of these bards’ output only time can show.

⁶³ These assumptions are likely to be very severely tested by the London Seminar on Epic (covering the field Mongolia-Uganda-Iberia-Iceland) which meets six times a year and of which the writer has the honour to be a member.

⁶⁴ Complete references in R. J. Cunliffe, *A lexicon of the Homeric dialect*, Norman, Oklahoma, 1924/63, *sub vb*.

⁶⁵ viii, 499 ff. Whether by chance or by intention, this book opens with *πολιόροθος* ‘Ὀδυσσεύς’ in the cadence of its third line.

⁶⁶ E.g. lines 573 and 580, passages in which Manas controls his anger.

⁶⁷ *Iliad* xxii, 131 ff. Here Achilles has the epithet ὠκύς “swift”, not his regular epithet, 188, 229. When the pursuit is over there is a return to *πόδας ὠκύς*, 260.

⁶⁸ Kerényi, *op. cit.*, p. 348 f.

episode is ill-remembered, the epithet may be justified by a new fabulation. The possibilities of such reciprocal influence between epithet and episode are well illustrated by the famous epithet of Margrave William in the *chansons de geste* that bear his name: "*Guillelme al Cort Nes*" ("William Short-nose").⁶⁹ The earliest sources tell us that Guillelme's epithet was originally "*al Curb Nes*" ("Hook-nose").⁷⁰ With the loss of the lexical item *curb* or as a result of a weakening in the pronunciation of the final consonant, the epithet was no longer understood everywhere and was reinterpreted as containing the element *curt*. How Guillelme lost the tip of his nose was then duly narrated in the *Coronemenz Loois* (line 1,041). He lost it in battle with the giant Corsolt, and himself – rising above the disgrace of a felon's mutilation – claimed his epithet: *mais que mon nes ai un pou acorcé; / ben sai mes nons en sera alongiez* (1,159 f.) ("Although my nose has been shortened a bit I know that my name will be lengthened"). (These remarks deal with but one of the several functions of epithets in heroic poetry. I pass over the function in which an epithet is specific to a given hero and so contributes to his characterization, and the function in which an epithet recalls in passing a glorious deed for the sake of its glory. Epithets no doubt possess yet other functions.)

The study of *Manas*, which is of such vital importance both in the history of the Kirgiz people and the comparativist approach to heroic epic poetry, is attended in this part of the world by the most formidable difficulties, chief among them the paucity of sources. The two great libraries in this country in which one would expect to find the main sources are largely bare of them. Kirgiz scholars and their neighbours have had to approach with caution the inconveniently warlike legends of their national heritage and in any case in their uncritical early enthusiasm had allowed the bards to "give" them a store of "*Manas*" too vast to be handled in a life-time; while on the other hand the authorities here and in most other places with understaffing and lack of funds as their excuse have had to turn a blind eye on the subject despite the eager attention paid to it by Mrs. Nora Chadwick and Sir Maurice Bowra.⁷¹ The present comparative study of R and S, which might be made to appear naïve by Soviet scholars sitting in their silent archives, is intended as a first effort here in the West towards overcoming the undeserved neglect into which *Manas* has fallen in international scholarship.*

⁶⁹ M. de Riquer, *Les chansons de gestes françaises*, Paris, 1957,² p. 157: "En de nombreuses chansons de notre cycle, Guillaume est aussi nommé *al cort Nes* (au court nez)".

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ H. M. Chadwick and N. K. Chadwick, *The Growth of Literature*, Cambridge, III (1940), p. 3 ff.; C. M. Bowra, *Heroic Poetry*, London, 1952, *passim*.

* Working in such isolation, the writer would be grateful to learn from any interested reader of the existence and location of editions of *Manas*. He has incorporated several suggestions by Dr. J. B. Hainsworth and Professor B. Lewis, to whom his thanks are due.

Postscript. With reference to the epithet 'bloody-born', i.e. 'holding a clot of blood' (see p. 236 ff, above), H. W. Bailey has communicated the following. "In the A-yu-wang Chuan, translated from Sanskrit into Chinese by the Parthian Fa-k'in in about 300 A.D., the dissolution of the Buddhist dharma is prophesied. The king Mahāsena will beget a son who on issuing from the womb 'sera vêtu d'une armure et tiendra du sang dans sa main' (J. Prysluski, *La légende de l'empereur Açoka*, 1923, translated from Chinese, p. 401). The same Buddhist story is told in Khotan Saka verse. Here the king Mahendrasena will beget a son to be born *hūmjīnā yā dasta* 'his hands associated with blood' (edited E. Leumann, *Das nordarische (sakische) Lehrgedicht des Buddhismus* 25,397; new edition E. R. Emmerick, *The Book of Zambasta*, p. 389)."