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**A.T. HATTO**  
**ALMANBET, ER-KOKCHO**  
**AND AK ERKEC**

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Натто: Almambet, Er Kōkchō, + Ak-erkeč

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## ALMAMBET, ER KÖKČÖ AND AK ERKEČ

(An episode from the Kirgiz Heroic Cycle of Manas, a. d. 1862)

by  
A. T. HATTO  
London

The episode of Almambet and Er Kōkčö<sup>1</sup> (henceforth *AK*) recorded in 1862<sup>2</sup> from the Bugu tribe of the Kirgiz by V. V. Radlov,<sup>3</sup> deals with tough but inconclusive events. It tells how an Oiro<sup>4</sup> prince, Almambet, comes to Khan Kōkčö;<sup>5</sup> is converted by him to Islam; becomes Kōkčö's sworn friend; brings prosperity to Kōkčö's people; thereby excites the jealousy of Kōkčö's Forty Companions; is

<sup>1</sup> The standard 20th cy. forms of the names of heroes are used here throughout. Cf 'Alman Bet' in the text under discussion.

<sup>2</sup> The dates and origins of the various texts recorded by Radlov have to be deduced from casual statements by him in his introduction, see A. T. Hatto, 'Kukotay and Bok Murun: A comparison of two related heroic poems of the Kirgiz' — I, in *BSOAS*, XXXII, 2, 1969.

<sup>3</sup> *Narechiya tyurkskikh plemén zhivushchikh v Yuzhnoy Sibiri i Dzungarskoy Stepi. Obraztsy narodnoy literatury severnykh tyurkskikh plemen*, St. Petersburg, V (1885) Karakyrghyz, 2) pp. 6-39 (1131 lines).

<sup>4</sup> The 'Mongol'-jabbering Kalmak and Oiro<sup>t</sup> are the traditional enemies of the Nogoy/Nogay heroes, who incorporate the ideals of the Kirgiz.

<sup>5</sup> Kōkčö is traditionally a Kazakh hero to the Kazakh and also to the Kirgiz (as in Sagymbay's version of the episode under review, see below, p. 190). In *AK*, however, his tribe is never named. Until he moves to the Oiro<sup>t</sup> frontier he has a position as the leader of one of three Muslim tribes between Jamgirči of the 'Kará Nogoy' (21) and Manas of the 'Sari Nogoy' (22). He could therefore be imagined as the Khan of a third Nogoy tribe. Geographically, his sphere lies somewhere between Jungaria and Manas' home-region of the Talas Valley, though not on the R. Ili, to which Jamgirči has come down (30ff). I have failed to trace the evidence on which Mrs. N. K. Chadwick based her statement that Kōkčö is an Uigur prince (H. M. and N. K. Chadwick, *The Growth of Literature*, III (1940) p. 37; p. 76 'We are told that Manas is a prince of the Sary-Nogai, Joloi of the Kara-Nogai, that Alman Bet belongs to the Oiro<sup>t</sup>, or Kalmucks, Er Kōkčö to the Uigurs'. In this first valuable pioneering survey of the field, in course of reprinting at this time together with a long appendix on more recent work, by Professor V. M. Zhirmunskiy, a great rôle is attributed to the Uigur in the Kirgiz epic poetry recorded by Radlov, see index sub 'Uigurs'. Yet I regret to say that I have quite failed to discover the factual basis for this attribution. For the unusual rôle of Joloy as a 'Nogay', see below, p. 183).



accused by them of sleeping with Ak Erkeč, one of Kōkčö's two wives; is called to account by Kōkčö and offered gifts; refuses all but Kōkčö's best horse and accoutrements, and on being denied them threatens Kōkčö with destruction using terrific oaths; but then quits him; is waylaid by Ak Erkeč who obtains the desired gifts, though too late, since, tired of waiting, Almambet has ridden away.

This narrative sequence rises to a point of high tension when Almambet, a warrior unmatched by Kōkčö or by any of Kōkčö's Companions, yet alone against a tribe, threatens Kōkčö with total destruction unless his demands for the named gifts be met. But nothing comes of this confrontation. Almambet arms and rides to a short distance, and when the gifts fail to arrive promptly, departs.

We are left with the initial impression that if this sequence derives from a self-contained poem, now lost, such a poem must have differed considerably in its narrative data from what we have before us in *AK*. What we have before us is truly an *episode* of the *Manas*-cycle, as comparison with the next episode shows. It is only the general knowledge that the *Manas*-cycle has evolved by incorporation of formerly independent poems, coupled with the presence in *AK* of what looks like an important blind motif – the mysterious involvement of Almambet with Ak Erkeč – which at all suggests that *AK* might be regarded as a possible descendant of an independent poem.

The function of the episode *AK* within the *Manas*-cycle recorded by Radlov is: a) to have Almambet converted to Islam on his entry into the Muslim world; b) to introduce his character as that of a prince who must serve an alien khan, and who, although he brings prosperity, falls victim to the jealousy of native chieftains; c) to bring out by contrast the supreme fitness of Manas to enlist such champions as Almambet; for, unasked, Manas generously offers Almambet the very same type-gifts that Kōkčö in his meanness<sup>6</sup> has refused. The net result is to emphasize the outstanding worth of both Almambet and Manas, and to propel the former with the utmost force from the Oïrot frontier into the world of Manas by means of the tension accumulated in between at Kōkčö's court. If *AK* descends from an independent song, it was a fine stroke by the

<sup>6</sup> Cf Ak Erkeč's rebuke to Kōkčö at 614 'içinda bir tar elä, töröm'.



bard who incorporated it into the *Manas*-cycle to put it to such use.

Were *AK* descended from a self-contained heroic poem, we might have expected Almambet to have carried out his threats to Kökčö in one form or another. For can we assume that a Kirgiz audience of the period prior to *AK* would have been content with a merely moral victory – Almambet's cowing of Kökčö and his Forty Companions into passivity? Such a reaction would not immediately accord with what we know of the rapacious Bugu of c. 1860. Nor does *AK* exploit the latent possibilities of Almambet the tragic exile (though a contemporary poem lays the foundations for this future development).<sup>7</sup> A proto-*AK* may be expected to have had a sequel in which Almambet carried out his threat and exacted vengeance on Kökčö.<sup>8</sup>

The core of the problem of the independence or otherwise of the tradition prior to *AK* lies in Almambet's relations with Kökčö's wife Ak Erkeč. It is one thing for a stranger to be falsely accused of abusing his host's hospitality with his wife and then to be moved on, and quite another thing if he dares to enjoy her love and then faces it out against a whole tribe. Of the alternatives, the former might be thought to be more suited to a 'sophisticated' level of society, and in fact two or three generations later the wide-ranging Kirgiz bards Sagymbay Orozbekov (1867–1930) and Sayakbay Karalaev (b. 1894) luxuriated in the opportunities it offered them of showing the tragic figure of an exiled warrior at an alien tribal court, with the corollary, supported by their commitment to Islam, that Almambet must be a man of honour defamed. The latter of the alternatives, with Almambet's enjoyment of Ak Erkeč's love, would seem to offer a more viable plot for an independent poem at a time prior to 1862, when the old heroic manner still had some life in it.<sup>9</sup>

What is the nature of Almambet's and Ak Erkeč's involvement with each other in the extant text *AK*?

*AK* presents Ak Erkeč together with Kökčö's other wife Buudaybek as youthful and lovely. Indeed, enough of the fine lyrical set-pieces in which Kökčö describes them<sup>10</sup> has survived Radlov's

<sup>7</sup> Radlov, V, I 5) *Kös Kaman*, 1304ff (a quarrel between Almambet and Serek).

<sup>8</sup> See below, pp. 187ff.

<sup>9</sup> See for example my above-quoted article in *BSOAS* XXXII, 2, 1960, pp. 352.

<sup>10</sup> 400ff and 1023ff. See p. 352, below.



mistranslation<sup>11</sup> to attract the interest of Mrs Chadwick<sup>12</sup> and Sir Maurice Bowra.<sup>13</sup> Kökčö speaks of having chosen her and Buudaybek as the most beautiful of the daughters of the Naiman.<sup>14</sup> Which of the two is the first wife (*baybiče*)<sup>15</sup> and which the second (*künü*) is not made verbally explicit, since these terms are absent from *AK*. In his great threat to Kökčö, Almambet swears not only that he will destroy Kökčö's home and lead his daughters into captivity but also that he will ravish his 'old woman': 967 '*seniñ kempiriñdi sikipäsäm . . . Alman Bel atim kurusun!*' In such contexts, *kempir* is synonymous with *baybiče*. But this *kempir* is not identified. Similarly, when Buudaybek lends support to the conspirators' accusation that Almambet has been sleeping with Ak Erkeč, she alleges that she had feared to mention the matter before, lest Kökčö should think she spoke from *künaluk* - 'co-wifely jealousy' (753ff). Since *künü* means 'co-wife' as well as 'second (or later) wife', the relative status of Ak Erkeč and Buudaybek does not emerge. It might be argued rather shabbily that since Kökčö rebukes Ak Erkeč publicly on one occasion and she later rebukes him and there is mention of his having passed a night in Buudaybek's yurt (730), whereas he does not sleep with Ak Erkeč in the course of the narrative, Buudaybek must be the younger wife. More solidly in favour of such a view is the prominent rôle accorded to Ak Erkeč as hostess (569ff; 624ff); her reputation with Kökčö himself as a wise counsellor (616ff); her fearless and successful activity in that rôle when she at last persuades Kökčö to bestow his steed and accoutrements on Almambet, though too late (1059ff); and there is her claim of long devotion to her lord, in the course of which she had dutifully welcomed him back from raids and hunts (595ff). As I have remarked elsewhere, it will not be safe to adduce the versions of 20th cy. bards when analysing versions of the mid-19th cy. until the former have been properly edited and published and shown not to have been conflated with the latter via the publications of Radlov

<sup>11</sup> I shall offer a more accurate translation one day.

<sup>12</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 38

<sup>13</sup> C. M. Bowra, *Heroic Poetry*, London, 1952, p. 189. Sir Maurice's rendering has been influenced by Mrs Chadwick's. He also adopts Mrs Chadwick's identification of Kökčö as an Uigur prince. See also note (10), below.

<sup>14</sup> 488; 1007. See the discussion of the term 'Naiman' below, p. 181.

<sup>15</sup> See A. T. Hatto, 'The Birth of Manas. A confrontation of two branches of heroic epic poetry in Kirgiz', *Asia Major* XIV, Pt. 2 (1969) pp. 222f., for *baybiče* and *kempir*.



and Valikhanov;<sup>16</sup> yet it is at least interesting that, judging by the dubious Harmonized Version of *Manas*,<sup>17</sup> Sagymbay names Ak Erkeč 'baybiče' on one occasion: *Buudaybek anda kep aytat: 'Buzuk da bolso baybičeñ menden ĵakši', - dep aytat.*<sup>18</sup> If mid-19th cy. Kirgiz tradition indeed saw Ak Erkeč as the senior wife, that is as a woman with an assured position in society vis-à-vis her husband, in keeping with pre-Islamic Turkic custom, then what is now to be discussed as her 'involvement' with Almambet must be regarded in a less romantic light than might at first have been supposed.<sup>19</sup>

When Kōkčō brings his new friend Almambet home to the tribe, Ak Erkeč and Buudaybek peep out from Ak Erkeč's yurt, and Ak Erkeč's comment is that if enemies should come here is a man who can use his lance, and if lawsuits should come, here is a man who can talk (551 ff). Eloquent 'he-men' were of course admired, and no doubt desired, by Kirgiz women: but the emphasis here is on Almambet's potentialities as an ally for Kōkčō, a rôle which he subsequently fulfils. As Almambet rides up, the two wives step out, and Ak Erkeč hails Almambet as the son of Kara-kan, lord of the Oiroṭ, and then remarks, evidently speaking for herself and Buudaybek:

579 'Salam aitmak bistā jok,  
ālik almak sistā jok,  
Salamdi siskā buyurgan,  
tataidi biskā buyurgan,  
atıñdin bašin buratır!  
kak aldima turatır!'

('It is not for us to utter the greeting, it is not for you to respond; it is for you to utter the greeting, for us bashful words are fitting. Turn your horse's head! Rein hard before me!')

<sup>16</sup> See 'Kukotay and Bok Murun' - II, *BSOAS* XXXII, concluding paragraph.

<sup>17</sup> Frunze, 1958, ed. Yunsaliev.

<sup>18</sup> *Manas* I, 214, 12.

<sup>19</sup> Cf N. K. Chadwick, op. cit. p. 38, after citation of the lovely description of Ak Erkeč (see pp. 163-4, above and notes 10-13): 'It is not difficult to picture to ourselves this frivolous and excitable woman, and we are fully prepared for the intrigue which follows . . .' The frisky movements, however, do not imply a frivolous or even necessarily a young woman, since in the episode in which *Manas* is killed (V, 3), *Manas'* aged mother Bagdi Döölöt is said to go pattering along like a young bird: 2161 *Bagdi Döölöt bai biča / kekiriktaı keddäñdap* (Redlov *kekirik* 'junges Vöglein', unconfirmed by Yudakhin, *Slovar*).



She then seizes Almambet's bridle for him to dismount. Stung to jealousy, Kōkčö refuses to dismount because Ak Erkeč did not take his bridle. She then rebukes him for his meanness, reminding him how often in the past she had held his bridle, and he accepts her rebuke. This all happens in public with an indirect apology by Ak Erkeč for addressing a man before she has been addressed. Far from being an amorous manoeuvre, her welcome to Almambet is a stroke of high family policy. When her pusillanimous and short-sighted husband, against her advice, has jettisoned his mighty ally, it is she who will make the last effort to win him back and almost succeed, prefacing her appeal with a variation of her opening formula, quoted above (579ff):

1045 'Salam aitmak sistā jōk, ayaš,  
Alik bir bermāk bistā jōk, ayaš  
atiñnin bašin bura tur!  
ošu jergā tura tur!'

('It is not for you<sup>20</sup> to utter the greeting, my husband's friend, it is not for us<sup>21</sup> to respond [to the greeting 'Salam!' with 'alik']. Turn your horse's head! Rein in at this place!')

It is noteworthy that Ak Erkeč now adds 'ayaš' ('my husband's friend') to the formula, since Almambet has in the meantime become and long proved himself as Kōkčö's friend. 'ayaš' precisely marks the distance between them. It also accounts in full for Ak Erkeč's bold behaviour in waylaying Almambet. Ignoring the suspicion that attaches to the two of them, she pursues the interests of her worthless husband to the last. Ak Erkeč is the pattern of the shrewd and virtuous senior wife. We remember that at the outset of his career, Almambet is still very young, whereas Ak Erkeč is a wife of some standing with daughters only, if she has any children;<sup>22</sup> so that if there is any personal warmth in her feelings for Almambet this may well be due to unfulfilled longing for such an upstanding son.

It is a little strange that when Ak Erkeč and Buudaybek are mentioned together, Buudaybek is always named first: but, as is

<sup>20</sup> Radlov's rendering is based on the exchange of *sistā* and *bistā* in lines 1045 and 1046.

<sup>21</sup> In the parallel passage at 579 *bistā* referred to Ak Erkeč and Buudaybek, and perhaps to women in general. It may be used here 'automatically' as often in set passages. Radlov's silent interchange of the pronouns does not offer a convincing solution of the problem.

<sup>22</sup> At 977ff, Almambet threatens to seize Kōkčö's daughters.



clear, this is due to the exigencies of the alliterative formula that links their names.<sup>23</sup>

The complete honesty of the relationship between Almambet and Ak Erkeö is upheld also if we examine it from the side of Almambet. After he has joined Kökčö we are told that he leads a life free of care:

698 Kök Alman Bet batir jürdü deit  
kün oroyun surabait  
tün oroyun surabait.

(They say the doughty warrior Almambet lived without asking what sort of day, without asking what sort of night it was . . .) He spends the days at Kökčö's aul, but the nights at Kökčö's father Aydar-kan's (711ff), a brisk horse-ride away up in the mountains (796ff). When Kökčö's man Kök Kiyas comes to summon him into Kökčö's presence, Almambet divines that he has fallen from favour, turns to Aydar-kan and asks:

778 kilganim mildät kildimba?

('Have I not fulfilled my obligations?') And when he stands before Kökčö after an icy reception, and Kök Kiyas<sup>24</sup> accuses him of sleeping with Ak Erkeö, his only reply is to resign himself to God's will and call for arak:

858 'Kudai kildi argam Jok,  
küdröt kildi çaram Jok,  
kelä berin araktan!'

In the text that we have before us<sup>25</sup> we are to understand from this fine gesture that the charge is utterly beneath Almambet's notice. He will draw his conclusions, revoke his sworn friendship with Kökčö and ride away in search of a better lord, but not before he has cowed Kökčö at the very heart of his tribe and demanded Kökčö's personal accoutrements as his reward for services rendered.<sup>26</sup>

As befits its starker, more archaic style, *AK* spares us the fuss of the conspirators concocting their conspiracy, to which the 20th century bards treat us. The gravamen of their discontent in *AK*, expressed

<sup>23</sup> 566 *bulgari jittü Budai Bek/buruksugcn Ak Erkeö*

<sup>24</sup> 844 *Kök čoro*. Correctly identified by Radlov with Kök Kiyas (Čoro).

<sup>25</sup> Another interpretation of this gesture is offered below to suit a conjectured more primitive stage of the story (p. 189).

<sup>26</sup> For observations on the personal accoutrements, see below, pp. 189.



in a recurring formula, is that Almambet is an alien upstart who has been set over them. We do not see them arrange with Buudaybek beforehand that she should corroborate their slander; but we can assume that they did so from the appositeness of her confirmation together with her ready-made excuse for not having mentioned it before.

The conspiracy is lead by two of Kökčö's Forty Companions (*kirk čoro*), Ak Kiyas and Kök Kiyas. Their real grievance is expressed in the formula referred to, which occurs in varying contexts at 741ff, 845ff, 916ff and 946ff, not accurately dealt with by Radlov in his translation. Uttered by Ak Kiyas Čoro at 741ff, and by Kök [Kiyas] Čoro at 845ff, the formula is:

741 'Jogorton kelip bödösüp,  
kirk čorodon ödösüp,  
kudai kilgan kepsänip  
töröm-minän tepsänip . . .'

744 = 848 *töröm* < *törö*, the reciprocal of *čoro* = 'member of comitatus', is to be rendered by 'my lord', that is Kökčö, a fact which is corroborated by the variation in this line of the formula when Kökčö himself utters it:

919 *törö-minän tepsänip* ('his lord')<sup>27</sup>  
949 *emi özüm minän tepsänip* ('myself')<sup>28</sup>

The formula is to be rendered thus:

'Coming from the high land<sup>29</sup> and giving himself airs, fancying himself above the Forty Companions,<sup>30</sup> made God Almighty<sup>31</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Radlov, rather ambiguously: (918 'Ihn hat Gott der Herr erhoben,) Ihn dem Herren gleich gemacht'.

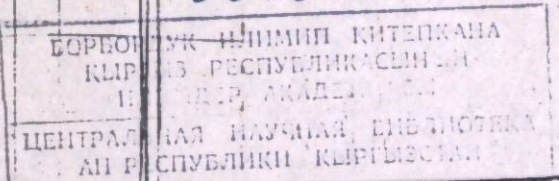
<sup>28</sup> Radlov: 'Mir, dem Herrn, ihn gleich gemacht'.

<sup>29</sup> Presumably the Altai region.

<sup>30</sup> Cf Radlov: 741 'Der von fern herabgekommen, / Den du höher als uns Vierzig stelltest, / Den auch Gott der Herr vergrößert . . .' In his translation, here and elsewhere, Radlov shows himself unacquainted with what S. Wurm ('The Kara-Kirghiz Language', BSOAS, XIII, 1, 1949, pp. 97ff) calls the 'Delusion-form' (p. 117): modal *-gen si-*, or *-sin* added to nouns or adjectives, producing forms 'which indicate that something seems to be done in a certain manner, but in reality this is not the case'. Thus *öödösi-* = 'to fancy oneself high' < *öödö* = *öydö*; *böödösi-* = 'to give oneself airs' from *böödö* = 'vainly' (showing that *-si* occurs after adjectival stems as well as *-sin*, which is illustrated in the following lines: 743 *kepsän-* (Yudakhin, *Slovar' kepsin-*) = 'to be generous' < *kep* 'wide', 'broad'; and 744 *tepsän-* (Yudakhin *tepsin-*) = 'to fancy oneself equal' < *tep* 'equal'.

<sup>31</sup> *kudai kilgan*<sup>2</sup> of two possible meanings the one offered seems much to be

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showing his munificence, accounting himself the equal of my lord [Kökčö] . . .' (with the variants 919 'equal to his lord'; 949 'now equal to myself').<sup>32</sup>

Kökčö's henchmen resent the elevation of this alien to a position above theirs, a position no less than equal to that of their lord the Khan. We are reminded of another great warrior who rose to a position of influence at a foreign court, which he benefited, and who was 'downed' and indeed murdered by the henchmen of the king with the name of whose wife his had mistakenly become involved. The details of Hagen's conspiracy against Siegfried in the *Nibelungenlied* of c. 1200 are very different, but it will be worthwhile to examine them briefly for the light they will throw on the jealous love that loyal vassals bear their lords and on honour between sworn friends where their womenfolk are concerned.

Siegfried's sojourn among the Burgundians, like Almambet's among Kökčö's people<sup>33</sup> (until as a Moslem he makes war on his own Oïrot race), is self-imposed. His alliance with King Gunther, like Almambet's with Kökčö, is very profitable to his host in military and political terms. This alliance is sealed by Siegfried's marriage with Gunther's sister Kriemhild, the result of a bargain struck between the two men, Siegfried's obligation being first to win Brunhild for Gunther in three contests (which have their Turkic analogues<sup>34</sup>), and then to subdue her to Gunther's will, leaving her to be deflowered by Gunther. It is only in the more archaic versions that Siegfried (Sigurð) and Gunther (Gunnar) become sworn brothers like Almambet and Kökčö. Unlike Siegfried, Almambet gains no wife or even concubine from his friend, a fact commented upon adversely by the 20th cy. bard Sayakbay.<sup>35</sup> In the *Nibelungenlied*, Gunther's vassal Hagen resents the overshadowing of his lord and his lord's vassals by the alien Siegfried but is forced to bide his time.

preferred in the context to '(God-created) creature'. I do not see how the sense offered by Radlov is grammatically possible, even if he had not misunderstood *kepsänip*.

<sup>32</sup> Although on my reading God did not magnify Almambet, there are protective spirits which will leave the tribe if Almambet leaves it (1072ff). For Almambet's presumably shamanistic gift of auspicious behaviour see note (123), below.

<sup>33</sup> As to this people, see note (5), above.

<sup>34</sup> Compare Bamsi Beyrek's wooing of Bani Chichek in the Third Chapter of *Dede Qorqut*.

<sup>35</sup> Judging by the not always reliable harmonized translation in *Manas. Kirgizskiy épos. Velikiy pokhod*. Moscow, 1946, p. 216b.



Gunther's wife Brunhild, too, is restless on the subject of Siegfried's and his wife Kriemhild's status. For in order to win Brunhild for Gunther, Siegfried had made a show of being vassal to Gunther – the first deception of Brunhild – whereas Kriemhild (who is unaware of the deception) comports himself as the sovereign queen she is. To get to the bottom of this matter, Brunhild has Siegfried and Kriemhild invited back to Burgundy. The two women quarrel over the status of their men, and Kriemhild humiliates Brunhild by publicly flaunting the ring and maiden's girdle which Siegfried had taken from her secretly when subduing her for Gunther. As Kōkō summons Almambet, so Gunther summons Siegfried to account for himself, since although Gunther knows full well that Siegfried did not deceive him on the nuptial couch, the court will be able to place only one construction on Kriemhild's possession of the symbols of Brunhild's maidenhead. The point at issue is whether Siegfried had boasted to his wife that he had enjoyed Brunhild. On his denying it, he is acquitted by Gunther, and Kriemhild is thrashed in private by her irate husband. But in the eyes of the world Brunhild's and Gunther's honour is stained. Hagen and Brunhild are at one in their desire for revenge, and Hagen wins the irresolute Gunther's consent to murder Siegfried as soon as he offers a viable plan.

The confrontation of the two plots has the interest of showing that, given the same ingredients of ethos, it is possible to construct a very simple plot, as in *AK*, or a very complex one, as in the *Nibelungenlied*, which, beyond what was narrated above, has a grander sequel, Kriemhild's dire revenge on Hagen and her brothers. Just as in *AK* the Khan has a yellow streak, so in the first part of the *Nibelungenlied* King Gunther is a craven. And as in the one the dastardly natures of Kōkō and his henchmen are reflected back from the pure mirrors of Almambet and Ak Erkeč, so those of Gunther, Hagen and their accessories are reflected back from the flawless Siegfried – flawless in respect of his loyalty to Gunther, though of course through his threefold deception of Brunhild he violated her personality and paid the price with his life.<sup>36</sup>

Further comparison with the *Nibelungenlied* will serve to bring out the nature of *AK*. Confrontation with the *Thidrekssaga* shows that a lost source of the extant courtly Austrian *Nibelungenlied* must

<sup>36</sup> See the analysis which follows my translation of the *Nibelungenlied*, The Penguin Classics, L 137, London, 1965.



have told the story of Brunhild's nuptials more rudely. There, in this lost source of a generation or two prior to 1200 A. D., in order to reduce Brunhild from her amazonian strength; the mighty Siegfried in Gunther's shape had to deflower her. This he did under licence from Gunther, whom, as in the later extant *Nibelungenlied*, he always treated with perfect loyalty. Thus with a refinement of manners such as had taken place at the leading courts of German speech between, say, 1160 and 1200, cruder narrative motifs had to be blinded. Our examination of *AK* under this head, however, revealed no trace of such blinding. Almambet and Ak Erkeç are imagined consistently as flawless characters, and Er Kökçö in his dealings with Almambet is a craven. If the relations of these three characters were ever the subject of an independent poem, such a poem can scarcely have ended with Almambet's empty-handed withdrawal from Kökçö's court and lands.

In a speech of seventy lines, Almambet threatens Kökçö with total humiliation and destruction unless he rewards Almambet with Tekeçi's dapple-grey steed and his personal accoutrements, punctuating his threat at intervals with the oath 'If I do not do so, may my name of Almambet wither!' Just as Ak Erkeç says 'He is no such Kalmak!',<sup>37</sup> when Kökçö's men return from seeking Almambet with the words 'Almambet lies drunk in the shade of a fir-tree',<sup>38</sup> so we may assert that Almambet is not the man we know him for if he does not put this drastic oath into execution. Almambet *must* have had his revenge in one form or another.<sup>39</sup> And we feel that above all he will have taken Tekeçi's Dapple.

Are there any traces in mid-19th cy. Kirgiz epic tradition apart from *AK* that Almambet had his revenge on Kökçö and that he acquired Tekeçi's famous steed?

To take the latter question first. The tradition consistently presents Almambet as riding a *sar(ı) ala (baytal)* – a dapple-chestnut (mare).<sup>40</sup> Even when he rides into Manas' court and is offered Manas' own *Ak-kula* – 'Light bay', he chooses another dapple-chestnut,<sup>41</sup> so that elsewhere Manas can claim 'I mounted him on a dapple-chestnut'.<sup>42</sup> Tekeçi's coveted steed on the other hand is a *kök ala* –

<sup>37</sup> 1125 'antär kalmak bu emäs!'

<sup>38</sup> 1121ff.

<sup>39</sup> The argument is taken up below, p. 187.

<sup>40</sup> E. g. *Bok Murun* 364; 1517; *Kös Kaman* 303; (1087 *ala baital*).

<sup>41</sup> 2) 1745 'Sar'alandı mindin / Ak kulan tursun özüydö / bolso bolsun!'

<sup>42</sup> *Kös Kaman* 608 'sar'alaga mingizip Alman Bettäi çoronu ...'



dapple-grey. The existence of passages in which *kök ala* and *sari ala* are used as synonyms should not mislead us into thinking them interchangeable.<sup>43</sup> The horse-mad Kirgiz specialize in distinguishing mounts by their coats. *kök ala* and *sari ala* are interchangeable only within the 'parallelistic' verse technique as a poetic device.<sup>44</sup> Thus if Almambet acquired the *kök ala* at all, he did not retain him long enough for the steed to provide him with a standing epithet. Almambet's horse-epithet is, with variations, *sari ala mingän* (*Alman Bet*) - 'Almambet mounted on Sar'ala' (the coat type-name is often taken as a proper name, at least by some 20th cy. editors.<sup>45</sup>) Another descriptive epithet of Almambet's mount tending towards a proper name is *kil feyren* 'of the chestnut coat'.<sup>46</sup> It will be seen that Almambet's new lord Manas fights *Kökčö*, on one occasion expressly on Almambet's behalf, and when he does so he kills *Kökčö*'s mount - again not Tekeči's steed but a *küröñ* - 'brown-horse'.<sup>47</sup> Thus although *Kökčö* owns Dapple-grey, this famous steed is not his regular mount. If we ask ourselves whether this is because Tekeči's steed is above all a racer (see the quotation from *Kukotay*, below), we find that the distinction is foreign to Kirgiz heroic poetry. Manas's and Joloy's famous war-horses, Ak-kula and Ač-buudan respectively, are also famous racers,<sup>48</sup> and so is Er Töštük's Čal-kuyruk.<sup>49</sup> We are forced to conclude that at the period in question the sole function of Tekeči's steed was to provide warriors hostile to *Kökčö* with substance for a classic threat or *Kökčö* himself with substance for a boast. Isolated motifs derived from an otherwise forgotten narrative sequence are of course a well-known feature of heroic epic traditions.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>43</sup> E. g. AK 894 '*Kök aladan köp elän / sar'aladan sañ elän*'.

<sup>44</sup> See '*Kukotay and Bok Murun*' - I, p. 344, and note 3.

<sup>45</sup> For example, those of the Harmonized Version of *Manas*, Frunze, 1958.

<sup>46</sup> Radlov: *kil jirän* AK 228; 269; 343; 707. But *kil jirän* at 1004, as several times also in other poems. Despite the various Turkic forms which Radlov adduces corresponding to (Asiatic Russian) *dzheyran* = '*Gazella subgutturosa*' in his *Opyt' slovaryä*, he shows himself uncertain of its occurrence in his Kirgiz texts, see '*Kukotay and Bok Murun*' - II, p. 563 and notes 118 and 122. Under *feyren* Yudalchin gives 1. *ryzhiy*, 2. *dzheyran*, *gazel*'.

<sup>47</sup> The full form in Radlov, V, 3) is *küröñü*, which occurs absolutely and also before at 143; 198; and after *atı* at 237 etc. Cf also AK 676. I am at a loss to account for the element -*ü*.

<sup>48</sup> See BM 1423ff.

<sup>49</sup> Especially in Sayakbay's version of *Er Töštük*, Frunze, 1956.

<sup>50</sup> A famous example from *Beowulf* (1199) is the *Brösinga mene* 'the Neck-lace of the Brosings' or rather 'Brisings'. After discussing the various passa-



What can be gleaned about Tekeçi and his steed from mid-19th cy. Kirgiz tradition?

In the *Smert' Kukotay-khana i ego pominki (K)*, a close translation of a (now lost) Kirgiz original dictated to Chokan Valikhanov probably by a bard of the Bugu tribe in 1856,<sup>51</sup> we are told the following. After the funeral of Kukotay-khan (Kökötöy-kan) a preliminary horse-race takes place. Between five and six thousand 'kulans'<sup>52</sup> were started in the snow-flecked mud of spring, and now in cool autumn the dust of the returning racers was visible.<sup>53</sup> He that was fed daily on seven sacks of grain, who was born in the mountains and grew up on rocks in the company of wild goats, that fed among the sands with kulans, he whose hooves are of iron and his legs of bronze, knowing no sweat, he, the Leader<sup>54</sup> like unto the *irga*-bush,<sup>55</sup> came first. Warrior Ir-Kokche (Er-Kökçö), who never since birth showed his back, son of Aydarkan son of Kambar-kan, like a dapple-grey racer,<sup>56</sup> seized the first among the first,<sup>57</sup> paid for

ges in Germanic poetry in which the necklace is alluded to, the editor F. Klaeber comments: 'the details of the original story are lost beyond recovery'. Nevertheless, like Tekeçi's steed, it was a very fine thing to allude to, whether the full story was known to bard and audience or not.

<sup>51</sup> See 'Kukotay and Bok Murun' - I, note 1.

<sup>52</sup> The meaning of *kulan* varies in Kirgiz between 'wild horse' and 'wild ass'. These race-horses are to be imagined as exceptionally spirited beasts with some sort of 'wild' past like that of Dapple-grey himself, see further in this same paragraph.

<sup>53</sup> The start in spring and end in autumn is a topos of Kirgiz epic poetry. It suggests mounts as 'heroic' as their riders. Cf *AK 879* *čaptır, elä ala šalbırt jas-minän, / keldin elä köpur salkın kils-minän* - a hot summer's ride, and *BM 765* *Barstın köpur salkın kils-minän, / kelsin elmin uŋkan ala čalbırt jas-minän* - a cold winter's ride. In the parallel passage *BM 609f*, Radlov reads *čalbırt*. Yudakhin, *Slovar'* does not recognize 'čalbırt', and he cites 'šalbırt' only in the collocation *ala-šalbırt*.

<sup>54</sup> *K 201,36* *Serko*, capitalized as a proper name = 297,5. At *K 295,10f* there are two *Serke*: *Otets ezdil na bol'shom, kak šater, Serke, matushka ezdila na igrivom Serke*. In Kirgiz and Kazakh *serke* = 'castrated goat', 'leader of herd'. One wonders what the basis of reference may be when *serke* is transferred to outstanding horses. When men are named '*serke*' the reference is to their powers of leadership and guidance. 'Leader of a herd'?

<sup>55</sup> *rgayu podobnyy Serko (K 201,35)*, of *s sheeyu podobnoyu vysokshemu rgayu (K 291,42)*. *rgay* corresponds to Kirgiz *irgay*, glossed by Yudakhin not by *rgay*, the form used by Valikhanov, but by *irga*, with the added information 'a bush with very hard wood'. Since the first term of the simile is the steed's neck, one wonders whether the basis of the comparison can be the steed's firm neck. Or is *irga* beautifully curved and twisted? I have not noticed this trope in Radlov's texts.

<sup>56</sup> See the discussion of this mistranslated and misplaced line below, p. 174.

<sup>57</sup> *pervyy pervym*.



him nine horses,<sup>59</sup> a she-camel with [a] foal, and gave a slave-woman with a son and gave a yurt covered with broad-cloth. Having thus acquired him of the iron hooves and legs of bronze, with neck like a dried-out *irga*-bush, him that belonged to warrior Tekeči, Er Kōkčō Batir rode off to his *ulus*.<sup>60</sup>

*h*  
This passage presents several difficulties. The overriding difficulty is that although Kōkčō 'seized' (*skhvatil* 291,38) Tekeči's steed, he also paid a good price for him, as he could well afford to do, since in *K* he is fabulously rich (*khvabryy Ir-Kokche, ne znayushchy bogatstva* 297,2). For some reason the heroic feat of wresting a famous steed from a warrior as attested in *AK* (876) and in *Manas' Wooing of Kanikey* (3) 413 (*daṅ-minān* 'gloriously'), has been toned down into a rough commercial transaction in *K*. The bard shows himself sensitive to the supposed wishes of Valikhanov, a Russified Kazakh princeling, in other matters:<sup>60</sup> is it possible that he thought Valikhanov would not like the Kazakh hero Er Kōkčō to appear in the rôle of a horse-thief? There is also reason to think that Kōkčō's other plunder from Tekeči has been converted by *K* into the price paid by Kōkčō.<sup>61</sup> Another difficulty is *K* 291,38 *podobno seropegomu beguntsu* ('like a dapple-grey racer', italicized above by me). As it stands in the Russian text of *K*, this can refer only to Kōkčō. But logically, of course, it can refer only to Tekeči's steed. It clearly corresponds to a self-contained line of the original poem and can be reconstructed with certainty as *kōk aladai kulūk(tu)*. Valikhanov was evidently unaware of the transferred function of *-day* in the Kirgiz heroic style. Normally, *-day* implies a comparison of some sort: but when it follows a proper name it is purely adjectival and periphrastic. Thus in Radlov's *Bok Murun (BM)* at 252 *Bok Murundai törödön / čikkan elči ketti* we have to translate 'Heralds went out from his Bok Murunian lordship', that is, 'from lord Bok Murun'. Similarly in *Joloi-kan* at 4823 *Kanĵakādai katini / kerät tūgan kiši ekān* is to be rendered 'His [Tōstūk's] wife Kenjeke was born with the gift of foresight'.<sup>62</sup> Examples with proper names are

<sup>59</sup> *K* 291,39 *skotom. skot* for *mal*, which in this context = 'horse'.

<sup>60</sup> Ch. Ch. Valikhanov, *Sobranie sochineniy v pyati tomakh*, Alma Ata, I (1961) p. 291,29-43. The *Smert' Kukotay-khana* is printed on pages 289-300. I refer to it throughout as *K*.

<sup>61</sup> See 'Kukotay and Bok Murun' - I, p. 373.

<sup>62</sup> This is argued below, p. 179.

<sup>63</sup> Kenjeke's gift of foresight is borne out by Radlov's *Er Tōstūk*, recorded from the same bard as *Joloi-kan*. At 661ff, for example, the disguised peri



legion in Radlov's Fifth Volume, and he correctly renders them as periphrastic. One example, however, is strictly parallel to our reconstruct *kök aladai külük*. It occurs at *Semätai* 1234 *Kil žirändai kalügün / koštop alıp čikkanda* – 'When he rode out leading the racer Kiljeuren as a reserve mount' (i. e. riderless beside the horse he was riding).<sup>63</sup>

In the passage from *K* under discussion, then, *podobno seropegomu beguntsu*, according to the rules of the underlying epic Kirgiz syntax, anticipates *konya* in the phrase *skhvatil konya*, in the Kirgiz original of which the verb would follow the noun. The sense of the passage is, therefore: 'Er Kökčö, son of Aydar-kan son of Kambar-kan, seized the racer *Dapple-grey*, the winning horse . . .'

Later Er Kökčö is invited to bring his racer to the anniversary funeral feast and games of Kökötöy,<sup>64</sup> but Valikhanov's translation breaks off before the guests arrive.

It was seen in *K* that Kökčö acquires Tekeči's steed by means of an arrogant form of purchase. Whether this was softened by its being established usage at races I have been unable to discover. In *AK*, however, when Almambet demands the steed, he says that Kökčö had won him gloriously:

876 'aldıñ, elä dañ-minän,  
altimiš togus mal-minän,  
Jemdädiñ elä Jetmiš batman nan-minän,  
čaptıñ elä ala šalbirt jas-minän,  
keldiñ elä koñur salkin kūs-minän,  
kirk adam boyuñ bar edi,  
kil kuiruk tai jok edi,  
Tekäčinin terdābas  
altıñ biläk Jes tuyak  
Kök alañ berči minäin!'

Bek Toro offers Töštük's bride Kenjeke honey and poison: Kenjeke drinks the honey but recognizes the poison and pours it on to the ground. Kenjeke also shows her clairvoyant gift in the *Er Töštük* of Sayakbay. It was an established element of the tradition. As his rendering shows, Radlov has misunderstood this passage: 'Kändschäkä, des Helden Frau, ist ein trefflich-schönes Weib'.

<sup>63</sup> A further example of this periphrastic device will be found below, from *Joloi-kan* 4848, p. 183.

<sup>64</sup> *K* 297, 1 ff. Tekeči is not named on this occasion, but the Serko is given his stock epithets with some variation: 'born in the mountains in the company of mountain-goats; who gambolled on the sands together with wild horses; with hooves of iron and legs of bronze . . .'



('In former days you took him, winning fame, together with sixty-nine horses. You fed him on seventy batmans of bread, you galloped out in the checkered snow-and-thaw of spring, returning in the gentle<sup>65</sup> cool of autumn,<sup>66</sup> your frame was that of forty men, here was no foal of flowing tail<sup>67</sup> – give me Tekeči's [Steed]-that-never-sweats,<sup>68</sup> with pasterns of gold and copper hooves, your Dapple-grey, I want to ride him!')

A further speech by Almambet confirms some of the details and adds new ones:

906 'Tekäči mergän Jaš kalgan,  
Tekäči kula tai kalgan,  
Koşurbai sorgok čal kalgan,  
Oşu Tekäčinin terdäbas<sup>69</sup>  
altin biläk Jes tuyak  
mustakka tūgan kök alaḡ  
kök alaḡ berči! minäin!'

('Tekeči the Marksman was young, Tekeči was a dun foal, Koşurbay was a grey old glutton. Give me Tekeči's [Dapple]-that-never-sweats, with pasterns of gold and copper hooves, your Dapple-grey, born on frozen snow – I want to ride him!')

The echoes between the passage from *K* cited above and the two passages from *AK* are obvious. Further, Tekeči's title 'Mergen' (Marksman) confirms the impression already gleaned that his story belongs to an earlier stage of epic development, since the title 'Mergen' is regularly borne by the heroes of simpler Turkic herotales. In Radlov's *Bok Murun*, 'Kazatar Mergän' (945) plays an

<sup>65</sup> *koşur* has the primary meaning of 'brown', 'dark', 'swarthy', which would offer a colour contrast with the type-colour of spring *ala şalbtı* (870): but Yudakhin, *Slovar* sub *salkın*, renders *küzgüleşür salkın* as 'lögkaya osenyaya prokhlada'; and in the corresponding passage at *K* 201,31 (paraphrased above) Valikhanov translates 'na kholodnuyu osen'. One hesitates to urge points of symmetry, so beloved of the Kirgiz bards, against such authorities.

<sup>66</sup> See note (53), above, for other examples of this topos.

<sup>67</sup> The sense seems to be: 'Since you are such a big man only a full-grown horse of the dimensions of Tekeči's steed could bear you'.

<sup>68</sup> 883 *terdäbas* 'that does not sweat'. Another example of an epithet formed in the same way and becoming almost a proper name is that of Töştük as a foot-racer: *BM* 926 *jerin sekirtpä*s (presumably 'He-who-does-not-make-the-ground-beneath-him-leap', i. e. 'who skims over the ground'); Sayakbay, *Er Töştük*, pp. 132ff *jeppen sekirtpes* ('He-who-does-not-let-the-gazelle-leap'). For discussion see 'Kukotay and *Bok Murun*' – II, p. 563.

<sup>69</sup> *AK* 009; text *tergäbas*; cf 883 *terdäbas*.



even more shadowy rôle in connexion with Töštük than 'Tekeči Mergän' with Kökčö.<sup>70</sup>

Further information on Tekeči and his Dapple comes from a group of episodes recorded by Radlov among the Bugu in 1862, the first of which, significantly, narrates a duel between Almambet's new lord Manas and his old lord Kökčö (V, I, 3). Strangely enough, in the course of Manas's duel with Kökčö, no mention is made of Tekeči's steed: instead, Manas kills Kökčö's Brown (*küröŋ*) (see p. 172, above). But when, later, Manas recounts this duel cyclically to the Padiša, that is, to the idealized Russian Czar,<sup>71</sup> Tekeči and his Dapple are named among the subjects of other threats and boasts. (In his account, Manas encapsulates a narration by Almambet in the first person of Almambet's dealings with Kökčö).

- 3) 411 'Tekäčinin tektir söri kök ala  
suraganda berbägän,  
Tekäčinäŋ alğan daŋ-minän  
altimiš togus mal-minän,  
kara kuiruk nar-minän  
balalū juban küŋ-minän,  
ošu kök ala Alman Bet suragan,  
suraganda ā berbägän,  
Alman Bet taringan,  
ošu Kökčönün özü maktangan,  
"kök alamdi ā berbäimin,  
Tekäčidän oinoš oinop algamin,  
čindasa čindap tartip algamin,  
oinoš oinok algamin,  
okšoš zorduk kilgamin."  
Alam Bet turup aikirat:  
"özü boyuŋdu zordoisun,<sup>72</sup>  
Tekäčini kordoisun<sup>73</sup>  
mā nemāni kilasiŋ,  
"katin alip berdim"<sup>74</sup> dep<sup>74</sup>  
"kairilbaimin katinga,

<sup>70</sup> See 'Kukotay and Bok Murun' - II, p. 564.

<sup>71</sup> The Ak Padiša seems compounded of the fame of the remote Russian Czar and the old Kudai of the Central Asian steppes.

<sup>72</sup> Radlov: *zordoisun*, but 'fügt'st'. See note (79), below.

<sup>73</sup> Radlov: *kordoisun*, but 'beschimpfest'.

<sup>74</sup> For a discussion of this key-line see p. 180, below.



katin joldo bolučū,  
 bala beldā bolučū;  
 men attanip ā ketāmin  
 Nogoilordun er Jamgirčin Sultan bar,<sup>75</sup>  
 ā joldoš bolgomun,  
 anda kalgan bir katin,  
 men teḡdiktā könömün,"<sup>76</sup>  
 seniminān olutumda birgā oltursam,<sup>76</sup>  
 kök alaḡdi berbāisiḡ,<sup>76</sup>  
 kök ala tokpu edā,  
 men bir jilkiča Jokpu ādām,  
 meni jöyü jüröt deisiḡbā ?  
 jöyüdön ölot deisiḡbā ?  
 bir atti kandai mendān ayaisiḡ,  
 kök alaniḡ tiši tük iči bok,  
 alal ölsö bir kazan et,  
 aram ölsö itminān kuška jem.  
 Kök alača bolbodum,  
 köḡülüm kaldi Kökčödön,  
 men Manaska barbasam!  
 barip joldoš bolbosom!  
 Manas akilina jeḡdārip  
 ak sözünö köndörüp  
 attanip sapor jürgöndö."  
 Alman Bet üčün jürdüm men,  
 Er Kökčönün jilkin aldim men,  
 Er Kökčö-minān uruḡup  
 kulḡai bolup Juluḡup<sup>77</sup>  
 Küröḡ atin öltürdüm . . .<sup>78</sup>

('When Almambet demanded Tekeči's Dapple-grey with the back like a hollow in the hills<sup>78</sup> and Kökčö did not give him, when Almambet asked for the steed gloriously taken from Tekeči together with sixty-nine horses, a black-tailed camel and a comely young slave-woman with her child [children], and Kökčö did not grant his demand, Almambet was offended. This Kökčö made a boast: "I shall not give him my Dapple-grey. I took Tekeči's beloved for my sport.

<sup>75</sup> Radlov: *Jambirčn.*

<sup>76</sup> Radlov: *senimiinān.*

<sup>77</sup> Radlov: *juluḡup.*

<sup>78</sup> Radlov does not translate *tektir sörl.*



If ever one does anything right, I was justified in taking her, and I took his beloved to frolic with, thus did I abduct a woman." Rising, Almambet shouted: "You do violence to yourself,<sup>79</sup> you are insulting Tekeči - how does that harm me? "I gave a woman away in marriage," I thought, "I shall not address myself to her,<sup>80</sup> there are other women on the road, girls at the mountain-pass.<sup>81</sup> There is Er Jamgirči, lord of the Nogoi; mounting my horse, I shall ride away to him, I will be his companion, there is a woman there, I shall come to a fair understanding with her"" Though I sit together with you in one place, you will not give me your Dapple-grey. Has Dapple been fed?<sup>82</sup> Am I not worth a horse? Do you think<sup>83</sup> I should go on foot,<sup>84</sup> and going on foot should perish? Why do you begrudge me a horse? Your Dapple's teeth are hair,<sup>85</sup> his inside is filth. If he dies ritually clean, he is a cauldron of meat; if unclean, carrion for dogs and vultures. If I am not worth your Dapple-grey, my love for Kökčö is at an end, and [damn me] if I do not go to Manas, and, going, become his companion! Manas will subdue [you] to his wisdom, will make you acquiesce in his true utterances, when, mounting his steed, he sallies abroad".<sup>86</sup> I [Manas] have now sallied forth for the sake of Almambet, I have seized Er Kökčö's horse-herds.<sup>87</sup> Er Kökčö and I, giving blow for blow, drubbed each other like slaves, and I killed his brown horse'.<sup>88</sup>

According to *AK* and this last-cited passage, Kökčö took the Dapple-grey from Tekeči 'with glory' (*daŋ-minän*) and by force, and together with the steed a slave-woman having a son (or sons), who in *K* has evidently been converted into part of the price paid for the Dapple by Kökčö, while the sixty-nine horses taken by Kökčö reappear in the price in *K* as nine). (Conversely, we might also conjecture that the yurt included in the price in *K* was taken from Teke-

<sup>79</sup> I. e. 'You are exalting yourself', Yudakhin, *Slovar'*, sub *zordo-*, apparently quoting a variant of this line: *öz boyundu zordoysun*.

<sup>80</sup> *kayrıl-*, not necessarily 'zurückkehren' (Radlov).

<sup>81</sup> The symmetrical style requires *bala* (433) to be parallel to *Katın* (432) and *beldä* (433) to *foldo* (432). *bala*, according to Yudakhin, *Slovar'*, can mean 'woman' in South Kirgiz. Cf Radlov 433 'Bei den Hüften sind die Kinder'.

<sup>82</sup> The interrogative *-pu* (441), and negative *-bä* (443; 444) seem to be reversed in Radlov's translation.

<sup>83</sup> and <sup>84</sup>. See previous note.

<sup>85</sup> The collocation is not cited by Yudakhin, *Slovar'*. Radlov; 'Aussen'.

<sup>86</sup> For the sake of clarity the various speeches have been defined by double and treble quotation-marks.

<sup>87</sup> *ŋikk* 'horse' or 'herd' according to context.

<sup>88</sup> A full period is required rather than the comma of the text.



đi by force in a more violent version anterior to *K.*)<sup>89</sup> Tekeđi was then young and, it might be concluded, unable to defend his property. (On the other hand, if Tekeđi had been too young, there would have been little glory for K k đ. What the Kitay Khan Koņurbay, a traditional enemy of the Nogay-Kirgiz heroes, had to do with this event (if anything), does not emerge. The significance of the juxtaposition 906 *Tek đi merg n ʒaʒ kalgan, | Tek đi kula tai kalgan, | Koņurbai sorgok  al kalgan* (Tekeđi the Marksman was young, Tekeđi was a dun foal, Koņurbay was a grey old glutton) must have been obvious to a Kirgiz audience, but it is not apparent to us. Did the Kitay Koņurbay wrong Tekeđi, too? Or was Tekeđi a young Mongol-speaking prince, as Koņurbay was an old one? (If the latter, there might be point in Almambet's avenging Tekeđi on K k đ, see p. 187, below.) We do not learn what became of Tekeđi.

At 430ff in the passage 3) 411-460 cited above, there is information that may throw light on Almambet and Ak Erkeđ. Radlov has mistranslated 430 *kat n al p berdim dep* as 'Hab' ein Weib er-boutot, sagend'. He was unaware of or had overlooked the fact that *ber-* after *-ip* is used modally in Kirgiz, with the implication that the doer performs the action in the interest of another person,<sup>90</sup> and that in any case the collocation *kat n al p ber-* means not 'to seize a woman' but 'to give a woman away in marriage'.<sup>91</sup> Almambet is therefore saying: 'I thought "I gave a woman away in marriage, I shall not address myself to her, there are other women on the road" . . . (I shall come to terms with one at Jamgir i's)'. There is no woman in Almambet's dealings with K k đ to whom this thought of Almambet's can be applied other than Ak Erkeđ. Is there independent evidence that would support such an identification of the woman who was given away in marriage?

In *AK*, K k đ states that he chose the beautiful Ak Erkeđ and Buudaybek from the Naiman tribe (488). As far as I am aware, the tribal name 'Naiman' occurs only in *AK* of all the mid-19th century heroic poems in Kirgiz. It is true that ethnographically there is a 'Naiman' clan in the great Kirgiz tribe of the Bagi : but there are also 'Mongol' and 'Kitay'; and among the Mungu  tribe there are also 'Tatar'. Further there are Kirgiz tribes named 'Kalmak' and

<sup>89</sup> The taking of Tekeđi's HQ yurt would imply his utter defeat, see below, p. 187.

<sup>90</sup> Yudakhin, *Slovar'*, sub *ber-* III, 2.

<sup>91</sup> *ibid.*



'Kitay'.<sup>92</sup> The precise historical significance of this nomenclature within the Kirgiz tribal structure has yet to be established case by case. Finally there is a 'Naiman' tribe of the Middle 'Horde' of the Kazakh, having numerous clans and located in N. E. Kazakhstan.<sup>93</sup> Nevertheless, there can be little doubt that the name 'Naiman' in *AK* refers to the historical Naiman as transformed by legend, in much the same way as the epic 'Nogay' refers through legend not to the contemporary Nogay but to the historic Nogay of a remoter past.

There is interlocking evidence for this statement. First, as a matter of style, the contemporary internal tribes of the Kirgiz are never featured in the mid-19th century material. Even the name 'Kirgiz' is very rare. If 'Noygut' occurs, it refers to Noygut on the 'heroic' plane. If 'Bagiš' and 'Jediger' occur, it is eponymously as the names of heroes. Second, the sum total of three traits of the Naiman that can be abstracted from *AK*, can all be paralleled from one and same remote period of Mongol supremacy, from the *Secret History* and the *Compendium of Histories* of Rashīd al-Dīn. i) Kōkčō takes his two wives from the Naiman for their beauty. Rashīd al-Dīn observes that the young women of the Naiman are known for their beauty.<sup>94</sup> ii) The Naiman in *AK* are referred to as *kalın bir Naiman köp jurt* (488), i. e. the dense multitude of the Naiman people, implying more than usually large numbers. In the *Secret History*, at the point (para.190) where Chinggis-khan is convinced that he must attack the Naiman, Belgutai asserts that the Naiman have a deal to say about their great empire and numerous people. If the origin of the tribal name 'Naiman', as has often been suggested, is via a literal translation into Mongol of Turkic \**sākiz* = 'eight', indicating 'Eight Tribes',<sup>95</sup> then the 'Naiman' must not only have been numerous but their name will also have kept the memory of this fact alive. iii) If, as is argued here, Ak Erkeŏ was of the same princely

<sup>92</sup> Ya. R. Vinnikov, *Rodo-plemennyi sostav i rasselenie Kirgizov na territorii yuzhnoy Kirgizii*, *Trudy kirgizskoy arkhologo-etnograficheskoy ekspeditsii*, I (Moscow 1956) pp. 144ff.

<sup>93</sup> *Narody sredney Azii (Narody mira)* II (1963) p. 325.

<sup>94</sup> D. G. Maitland Muller, *A study and translation of the First Book of the First Volume of the Compendium of Histories by Rashid Al-Din Fadl Allah concerning the Turkish and Mongol tribes* (Ph. D. Thesis, London, 1957), Introduction, p. 95.

<sup>95</sup> P. Poucha, *Die geheime Geschichte der Mongolen als Geschichtsquelle und Literaturdenkmal (Supplements to the Archiv Orientalni, IV)* Prague, 1950, pp. 59ff.



kindred as Almambet, she was Mongol-speaking like him. Now it has been weightily argued that the Naiman of the pre-Mongol period must have been Turkic-speaking on account of their Turkic names and titles;<sup>66</sup> but, perhaps after their shattering defeat by Chinggis in 1204, they seem to have been 'Mongolized', like their name.<sup>67</sup> The Kirgiz Naiman clan and the Kazakh Naiman tribe of course speak Turkic dialects today; so that if the textual argument that Ak Erkeč and Almambet came of the same Mongol-speaking princely stock is upheld, the implication that the Naiman of epic spoke Mongol derives from the same period as the other two traits. In seeking to disentangle which nomadic tribes cited by Rashīd al-Dīn are Mongol-speaking and which Turkic-speaking, those at grips with the problem enjoin caution, since Rashīd uses other criteria than ours. Nevertheless D. Maitland Muller considers that Rashīd took them as Mongols.<sup>68</sup>

It seems inescapable that the Kirgiz epic 'image' of the Naiman was formed c. 1250-1310 A. D. Archaeologists as unskilled in the study of oral poetry as one hopes they are skilled in their own field have often claimed a high antiquity for this or that element in the content of *Manas* on quite insufficient evidence. But here, at last, there seems to be a group of traits to which one can safely attribute an age of from five to six hundred years. As with the image of the Nogay, the Kirgiz may well have inherited their image of the Naiman from the ancestors of the Kazakh, into whose territory it seems the Naiman were thrust by the Mongols after Chinggis had defeated them.

We recall that Turkic and Mongol marriages were conceived essentially as transactions between families, not individuals,<sup>69</sup> so that Almambet could say: 430 '*katin alıp berdim*' - 'I (as one of a princely family) married off (i. e. gave away as a bride) the woman, thus I shall not address myself to that woman...' The implication

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> A. Róna-Tas, Some notes on the Terminology of Mongolian writing, *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* XVIII (1965) p. 121, note 7, accepts the Naiman of the time of Chinggis as 'Mongolized Turks'. W. Barthold, *Zwölf Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Türken Mittelasiens*, Hildesheim, 1962 (2nd edn.) pp. 121 and 127, had named the Naiman 'Mongols' without qualification.

<sup>68</sup> Maitland Muller, *op. cit.*, Text, (145) p. 124.

<sup>69</sup> L. Krader, *Social Organization of the Mongol-Turkic Pastoral Nomads*, Indiana University Publications, Uralic and Altaic Series, Vol. 20, The Hague, 1963, 342ff.



would be that since Almambet has corporately given away a woman in marriage, it would not only be dishonourable for him to address himself to her as a lover, but also, in certain circumstances, it might infringe the rules of clan exogamy.<sup>100</sup> Like Almambet, Ak Erkeč is the child of a khan (1040 *kan balası Ak Erkeč*). She could be of Almambet's princely clan.

Among the Kirgiz heroic texts furnished by Radlov from the mid-19th cy., there is one, however, in which Almambet is accused of being a cowardly lover of a 'sparse-skirted' gadabout beauty, Ak Erkeč. It occurs in a longer poem *Joloy-kan*, recorded in 1869 from the Soltu tribe west of Lake Issyk Kul, a gusty rollicking, repetitive poem with a Gargantuan hero Joloy, normally an anti-Nogay Kalmak, but here presented amazingly as a Nogay, son of Nogay-kan, yet forcing Radlov at times to bring out his Latin.

4843 'andan ari barganmin,  
Ak Kiyastin-astinda  
Aidar Kandin balası  
Kan Kökčönü sinadim,<sup>101</sup>  
Kökčö Kandin katini  
Ak Erkāštāi sulūsu<sup>102</sup>  
etāgi suyuk kiši ekān,  
Alman Bettāi er minān,<sup>103</sup>  
oinoš bolgon kiši ekān,  
Alman Betti kokčogon,  
öltürüdöi bolgondo,  
Alman Bet Kilič kanga  
kirā kačkan kul ekān,  
Kilič kandan Manaska  
tartip algan ol ekān,  
Alman Betti körbödüm.'

('From there I passed on to where down on the Ak Kiyas I scrutinized Kan Kökčö, son of Aydar-kan. Kökčö-kan's wife, the lovely Ak Erkeč, is a gad-about,<sup>103</sup> she partnered Almambet in a love-intrigue. [Kökčö] assailed<sup>104</sup> Almambet and when he was on the point of

<sup>100</sup> Op. cit., pp. 20; 369.

<sup>101</sup> Radlov: *Kökčönü*.

<sup>102</sup> The purely periphrastic function of *-ai* with proper names is explained above, p. 174.

<sup>103</sup> Literally 'of the thin or scanty skirt'.

<sup>104</sup> *kokčogon*; Radlov 'Griff . . . an', *kokčo*- not cited by Yudakhin, *Slovar*'.



killing him, Almambet fled slave-like<sup>105</sup> to Kilič-kan,<sup>106</sup> and from Kilič-kan he rode to Manas. Almambet I did never meet.)

This would appear to answer the question whether prior to *AK* there was not a cruder stage in the development of the story of Almambet and Ak Erkeč.<sup>107</sup> But caution is advisable. The passage occurs in a poem within a poem. An old woman Koitu Kün reveals to Joloy's son Bolot and Köčpös-bay that she is really a heavenly maiden, Kara-čač, born of a ray of light,<sup>108</sup> who was rescued at the last moment on the nuptial bed from the unclean heathen Khan Nes-Kara<sup>109</sup> by being transformed into a grey hawk. She then flew round the world in search of pure souls. There now follow in the form of a cyclic satirical catalogue<sup>110</sup> her verdicts on various heroes and heroines of Kirgiz epic poetry. Her judgments are often severe, so that the poem might be termed a cyclic 'Spott-, Schelt-' or even 'Schmählid'.<sup>111</sup> The Soltu outlook is in any case different from that of the Bugu, as the presentation of the uproarious yet formidable Joloy as a 'Nogay' shows, and Kara-čač's strictures are no doubt attuned to the Soltu view. Almambet was apparently not one of their favourite heroes, and so the worst possible construction was placed on the bare narrative of his dealings with Ak Erkeč, on the principle that there is no smoke without a fire. We are given to understand that Almambet *did* sleep with Ak Erkeč and that he then ran away from the cuckold Kökčö.<sup>112</sup>

We are thus left with a choice between interpreting the 'source' of this passage in Kara-čač's satirical poem as a cruder composition anterior in development to *AK*; or as a deliberately scurrilous

<sup>105</sup> Although *kul* can 'man', 'fellow', the fundamental meaning would seem appropriate here.

<sup>106</sup> Like other names in the tradition, a type-name: *kılıç* 'sword'.

<sup>107</sup> This question was raised above, p. 103.

<sup>108</sup> Cf the First Wife of Oğuz-khan in the *Oğuzname*, ed. A. M. Shcherbak, *Oğuz-nâme. Mukhabbat-nâme*, Moscow, 1959, p. 27, 6, VI-VII: *Köktün bir kök jaruk tüsti . . . IX kördi kim . . . 7,1 oşbu jaruknuñ aracında bir kiz bar yrdi.*

<sup>109</sup> See 'Kukotay' and 'Bok Murun' - I, p. 350.

<sup>110</sup> Such catalogue-reviews, satirical or otherwise, are an attested feature of heroic poetry.

<sup>111</sup> In the mythological sphere, as with the Old Icelandic *Lokasenna* with dialogue, such poems, however, amusing, are a sign of detachment and probably of decadence. The present instance from the Soltu offers a warning that such is not necessarily the case in the heroic sphere, since intertribal rivalries give rise to scathing assessments of the heroes of others.

<sup>112</sup> 4855 *kačkan* 'escaped', 'ran away'.



distortion of an honourable poem like *AK*. That some more archaic material may in any event underlie it is, however, suggested by the new information that on leaving *Kökčö*, *Almambet* did not seek *Manas* immediately but rode first to a certain 'Kilič-kan', just as at 3) 435, quoted above, there is an intention on *Almambet's* part to ride first to *Jamgirči* (p. 178).

During the pursuit of other themes it emerged that *Manas* attacked *Kökčö* and killed his brown steed (*küröŋ*). In all, there are four such passages that deal with one or other aspect of *Manas's* attack on *Kökčö*.

In the course of a boast to his father *Jakip-kan* in the episode in which *Manas* marries *Kanikej*, *Manas* refers to his attack on *Kökčö*:

3) 524 'Kökčönün bu jilkini kŭp alganda,  
Kötünön kelgän kugunun sayip salganda,  
Altin barin alganda. . .'

('When I drove off this herd of *Kökčö's*, when I pierced with my lance the pursuers coming after it and seized all the gold. . .')

As it stands there is no connexion with *Almambet*. In the long passage 3) 411ff already quoted, there is *Manas's* own claim that he rode out for the sake of *Almambet*, lifted *Kökčö's* herds, fought with *Kökčö* and killed his brown. In what stands in the recordings of *Radlov* as a prior episode, this encounter is narrated in detail. It is presented above all as a contest with marked shamanistic features, in the course of which *Manas* is killed or all but killed, and revived. From the opening of the episode it appears that *Manas* has licence from the Czar to terrorize, subdue and plunder all the surrounding peoples, except Russians – the formula is oft repeated, like a well-learned lesson. Even the sun and the moon stand in fear of *Manas's* refulgence – but, by implication, *not Russians*. Replete with his sense of power, *Manas* attacks the White Tiger *Kökčö* for a whim – in order to grind *Kökčö* into the dust and present to the White Czar *Kökčö's* brown racer (3) 106f), which is evidently a *tulpar* or winged steed, since it lifts *Kökčö* to the sky (237ff). Yet this intention is forgotten before the end, for *Manas* breaks the Brown's back (342ff).<sup>113</sup> It is not said in this episode that *Manas*

<sup>113</sup> - *Kökčö mingän küröŋü / belinän üzä äp saldı*. In view of the shamanistic nature of the contest, the breaking of the back of *Kökčö's* horse is surely significant, since it was customary to break the victim's back in the wide-spread horse-sacrifice, cf *W. Radloff, Aus Sibirien, II* (1893) pp. 25f.



attacked Kökčö for the sake of Almambet. Indeed, Almambet is mentioned only in his due place in Manas' invocation of his Forty Companions (298). In *Bok Murun*<sup>114</sup> there is twice mention of threats to Kökčö by Manas. In the first, out of sheer unmotivated devilment Manas threatens Kökčö by proxy as one of two great heroes whose unique possessions he intends to seize, the other being Jamgirči:

BM 1629 'Jatik tildü Aju-Bai, čorom,  
mindan ari sen barsaŋ, čorom,  
nargi atasi Kambar kan,  
özü atasi Aidar kan,  
Aidar kan ülu Kökčögö,  
kök ala atin bersin del  
kök ala atin berbäsä,  
Kök alasi köskö jetkinčä,  
Kökčödön baška jöm jok.'

('You of the persuasive tongue, Ajubay, my comrade, ride out from here to him whose grandsire<sup>115</sup> is Kambar-kan, his father Aydar-kan, to Kökčö son of Aydar-kan, and demand his dapple-grey steed. If he will not give the Dapple, until that Dapple has met my enemy my enemy will be none other than Kökčö!')

The second passage from *BM* corroborates this:

1705 'Üč karölga barali, čorom,  
kök al'at surap bergän jok, čorom,  
Malga karö čiktir kul čorom,<sup>116</sup>  
Kökčödön baška jöm jok, čorom.'

(Let us go to Üč-karool, comrades, and if, when we demand Dapple-grey from Kökčö son of Aydar-kan, he refuses it, ~~the~~ <sup>my</sup> ~~will~~ <sup>enemy</sup> ~~will be none other than Kökčö!')~~  
Again, there is no mention that the raid is to be undertaken on Almambet's behalf. Furthermore, the expedition for Tekeč's Dapple-grey is distinct from the attack on Kökčö which ends in the killing of the Brown, in one version of which, alone, Manas ~~she~~ <sup>she</sup> ~~will~~ <sup>will</sup> ~~be none other than Kökčö!')~~

<sup>114</sup> Radlov, *Obraztsy V*, 4).

<sup>115</sup> 1631 nargi 'farther off', i. e. at one remove.

<sup>116</sup> Radlov: *Malga karöčik ur kul*.

<sup>117</sup> My rather adventurous rendering is based on Yudakhin, *karoo*: 'malga karoo' = 'avid of cattle'.

*Slovar', sub*



as having acted for Almambet. It must have shocked the horse-mad Kirgiz, as it surprises us, that Manas went for the horse and not the man. Yet the fact that it was the horse that died may explain why Kökčö does not go to battle on Dapple: it would have been too painful for so famous a steed as Dapple to be sacrificed. Like famous heroes of the 'home' team - Kökčö is a case in point - favourite steeds are strictly not expendable.

The situation described, disjointed though it is, could be accounted for on the following lines. At a stage anterior to *AK*, Almambet took his own vengeance on Kökčö as outlined (and preserved) both in Almambet's great threat (956ff) and in Ak Erkeč's prophesy (1050ff): but on proto-*AK*'s being absorbed into the *Manas*-cycle, Manas appropriated Almambet's vengeance. Theoretically, this vengeance ought to have comprised the defeat in battle of Kökčö, the capture of his womenfolk, the seizure of his headquarters yurt (*ak čatır*, of *ak ordo*<sup>118</sup>) and driving away of his herds together with his war-horse; in other words, it ought in theory to comprise the doing to Kökčö of what he had done to Tekeči,<sup>119</sup> with the possibility that Almambet had once known Tekeči as a fellow member of the Mongol-speaking aristocracy (see above, p. 182). This formula would have entailed Almambet's winning not only the Dapple-grey but possibly also Ak Erkeč: - we recall the threat in Almambet's boast 'I shall ravish your old woman (senior wife)' (*AK* 967). Yet (if we concede any force at all to such genetical arguments) there would have been two factors working against preservation of this pattern. Kökčö was fundamentally a Kazakh hero<sup>120</sup> and therefore hard to 'kill'. As often as Kirgiz bards might kill him, Kazakh bards would revive him: and in any case Kökčö is the only one of all these heroes to have a respectable, unchanging three-tier genealogy - Kökčö, son of Aydar-kan, son of Kambar-kan.<sup>121</sup> As a senior member of the club of Kirgiz-Kazakh heroes he could not be removed. Manas' very thin excuse for not finishing Kökčö off together with his Brown is

<sup>118</sup> On *ak ordo* see 'Kukotay and Bok Murun' - I, p. 367.

<sup>119</sup> See above, p. 179.

<sup>120</sup> He is featured in purely Kazakh tradition, see Radlov, *Obraztsy III* (1870), viii, 10; and he is represented as a Kazakh in the Harmonized Version of *Manas I*, pp. 208ff.

<sup>121</sup> It is noteworthy that the great *Manas* has a dubious pedigree: his grandfather's name varies; his father's name Jakip is non-Turkic; and even his mother is given at least three totally different names by the tradition. See 'the Birth of *Manas*', pp. 221 f., cited above in footnote 15.



that it would be a sin in the eyes of Allah (344f). The second factor distorting the proposed pattern could have been the blurring effect of assimilation to the *Manas*-cycle. The defeat of Kōkčö was to the almighty Manas just another conquest, 'mere chicken-feed', in which the details were unimportant. The overlord Manas having 'downed' Kōkčö, it was pointless for the vassal Almambet to do so, or that the specific details should be retained - except that it was something to do with a horse. Kōkčö's *kōk ala* became a stock incitement to ambitious heroes: but successful vengeance was vented on a substitute, the *küröŋ*.

A further point in favour of the conjecture that Manas took over Almambet's revenge on Kōkčö is the shamanistic nature of the contest. Kōkčö is proof against fire-arms, the combatants fly whirling round the sky, and the winner 'sacrifices' the loser's horse by breaking its back.<sup>122</sup> In Kirgiz tradition the figure of Almambet is more obviously of shamanistic origin than that of Manas,<sup>123</sup> so that a shaman-fight with Kōkčö is more appropriate to Almambet.

To sum up this part of the enquiry. *AK* is a self-consistent episode of the *Manas*-cycle as known to the Bugu in 1862. It tells how Kōkčö through his pusillanimity lost the services of the outstanding warrior-in-exile Almambet despite the best efforts of his loyal and discerning senior wife Ak Erkeč, and how Almambet moved on to a more magnanimous lord. It seems reasonable to suggest that there was an independent poem behind it which ended in Almambet avenging himself upon Kōkčö, though not by the permanent acquisition of Dapple-grey. In so doing, Almambet *may* also have avenged a young Mongol-speaking prince Tekeči Mergen, an acquaintance of former days or a kinsman, and owner of Dapple. Since Almambet's people had given Ak Erkeč away in marriage, it was unthinkable that he should seek her love at her husband's court. Yet after the insults he had received from Kōkčö, his severance of his sworn friendship with him and his mighty threat, it is possible that he later took Ak Erkeč as a fair prize together with Kōkčö's other most personal possessions. Such a poem may have ended with Almambet's moving out to find a better lord - a 'Kilič-kan', or Jamgirči, lord of the Nogay, a loose thread which was picked up when the tradition was assimilated to the *Manas*-cycle, with Manas becoming the new lord and

<sup>122</sup> Was the *küröŋ* sacrificed to the Czar conceived as *kudai*?

<sup>123</sup> Almambet in some versions controls the weather; in others he acts auspiciously with the epithet *ordop*. See p. 101, below for his berserk rage.



assuming the duty of vengeance on Kökčö for his vassal, though the details were eventually blurred. Behind this conjectured independent poem there lurks the possibility of yet another and cruder poem in which Almambet and Ak Erkeč were lovers, and Almambet as a great warrior faced it out at Kökčö's court.

If we contemplate such a cruder poem, some of the traditional gestures known from *AK* will require reinterpretation. In *AK* as it stands, Almambet's call for arak on being accused of sleeping with Ak Erkeč would seem to suggest two things. His giving an order as though he were host, not guest, shows his self-reliance and his intention not to be brow-beaten or denied the courtesies due to him. It also suggests silent contempt for the baseless charge. But in a version in which he is guilty of the charge, the former of these two aspects is alone possible. Here his call for arak in his lord's yurt would be but one of a whole series of arrogantly self-assertive gestures, the underlying meaning of which would be: 'Yes I have usurped your place in bed with your wife, usurping your rôle further as host I will call for arak. I will add insult to injury by demanding the sable cap from your head (cf *AK* 887 etc), your battle-corslet (cf *AK* 886 etc) and the famous steed you took from Tekeči! And if you do not give them, I swear I shall take your daughters (cf *AK* 977 ff) and your herds (cf *AK* 988 ff)...' (That the arak belongs to the tradition of old is shown by the uncomprehending Muslim moralizings of the bard Sagymbay, in whose version over-consumption of arak by Kökčö and his nobles at one and the same time accounts for their folly in conspiring against Almambet and their physical inability to carry out their planned assassination of him.<sup>124</sup> It is a

<sup>124</sup> See below, p. 190. Ak Erkeč herself has an intuition that arak might play a part in her story, since on the arrival of Almambet at Kökčö's yurt, when custom requires her to serve arak to the guest (825), she gracefully discharges this duty but then quickly continues with *ak kuiruk čai* (635), which Yudakhin, *Slovar* sub *čay*, glosses as 'black Ceylon tea' (Radlov: 'Thee ... weißgeschwänzton'). Yudakhin's gloss (sub *čay*) 'tseylonskiy čhörnny chay' of course does not mean that this tea of our text (1862 A. D.) actually originated in Ceylon, where the tea-trade only seriously established itself in 1870. To Mrs. Chadwick, op. cit., p. 69, this tea-drinking is but one of the signs of how the 'Uigur prince' Kökčö lives in Chinese luxury. Ak Erkeč's motive is given in lines 644f: *Martūlagan čailari / mas kilbai* '????? tea does not inebriate'. *martūla-* is not cited by Yudakhin. Cf *AK* 136 *martūlap čaidi kainatti* (Radlov 'bereitete den Thee'); 640 *martūlap čaidi kainatai* (Radlov 'Kochte Thee, wie sich's gebühret'). Radlov renders *Martūlagan čailari* (644) as 'Guter Thee'. He evidently attached no definite meaning to *martūla-*. He does not cite the word in his *Versuch eines Wörterbuches*. Can *martūla-* nevertheless be derived from

add:  
Rad. p. 49/1467



common-place of heroic epic traditions that potent symbolic gestures like Almambet's call for arak are clung to tenaciously and are reinterpreted to accord with successive stages in the evolution of tradition.)

A brief look at the later development of this story in the hands of the 20th cy. bards Sagymbay Orozbekov and Sayakbay Karalaev would now be of interest.

The bare bones of Sagymbay's version are as follows.

Almambet, accompanied by Majik, enters the valley of the 'Kil ɛrtiŝ' and surveys its teeming people. Riding up to a warrior mounted on a dapple-grey [Kökala] he salutes him in the Kalmak fashion. The warrior, who is the Kazakh Khan Er Kökčö, returns the greeting and offers arak. In answer to Kökčö's questions Almambet says he is a Kitay lately emerged from battle. Kökčö sacrifices for him and Majik, and Almambet is given a great welcome by the people. Kökčö's father Aydar-kan takes Almambet into his yurt and entertains him lavishly. After six months Almambet decides to raid the herds of the infidel Koŋurbay and Joloy. He rides beyond the headwaters of the Amur and lifts them. Returning, he shares the herds with the Kazakh people. He makes Kökčö's family prosperous, and with the approval of Aydar-kan and Kökčö assumes the rôle of a just judge of the common people, thereby arousing the xenophobia of the Kazakh begs, who foresee that the power of the khans will be much enhanced at their expense. Sixty of them conspire to link Almambet's name with that of Kökčö's senior wife Akerkeč. Kökčö reproaches Akerkeč privately, and she defends herself and Almambet in a very long tirade, saying that when Almambet tastes his arak he does not spill it—such is his cleanliness. Their feelings for each other, she says, are those of a young son-in-law and an ageing mother-in-law. She explains that the slander is a political stratagem directed at Kökčö's power through his great ally Almambet, from whom he should never be separated. She prophesies that Kökčö's second wife Buudaybek will be corrupted by the Sixty. 'Do not be befuddled by rumours of seduction!' she concludes. Kökčö is mollified, but the Sixty soon have him doubting again. Strong arak is served in Buudaybek's yurt. Already far gone in drink, Kökčö announces that he will clear the matter up. He turns to Buudaybek for her evidence. Lovely, foolish Buudaybek, too, is drunk with arak and fails to understand that the Sixty are plotting against Almambet. She inculpates Akerkeč with an innuendo. Kökčö thereupon breaks into a hysterical speech in which he lays plans for Almambet to be summoned into his presence and treacherously cut to pieces—a decision, the bard un-

*bartoo*, which according to Yudakhin, *Slovar*, means 'make-weight of poorer quality thrown in to sweeten a bargain', which would however militate against the notion that this is a *sine tea*? (Initial *m* and *b* tend to be interchangeable in Kirgiz).



derlines heavily, which was due to incontinent guzzling of arak, and of kumys and wine as well. Almambet answers the summons, suspecting what is afoot. His magnificent allure on entry robs the conspirators of the power to move. Lolling on his cushions, Kökčö drunkenly reproaches them for not keeping their word and so divulges the plot. Almambet accuses Kökčö of giving way to arak and calmly asks him to state the charge. Kökčö blurts it out. Almambet is enraged. He protests his innocence and reminds Kökčö that he is drunk on arak. Kökčö appeals again to the conspirators, but in vain. Not a man moves. Almambet now demands the Dapple-grey and Kökčö's corselet, and lays hold of the unmanly 'Lion-heart'. He reminds Kökčö of the oath of friendship they swore and threatens to destroy Kökčö's yurt and take Dapple. Almambet's berserk rage is now on him and he shouts his 'Aygay!' so that Buudaybek's yurt trembles. The Sixty, the points of their unused weapons peeping from their sleeves, dread instant destruction. Akorkeč now appears. She reminds Kökčö of all that Almambet has done for him and his tribe. All Kökčö can do is upbraid her and slump down on his pillows. He again eggs on his men. But now flames spurt from Almambet's mouth. He draws his sword, reflects, and goes away, leaving them all unharmed. Akorkeč waylays him publicly in an attempt to avert his departure. 'Wife of my friend [ayašim]', he replies, 'if I have been splashed how can I be dry? ... I can no longer serve Kökčö.' He demands payment for his services. She reproaches him with being unbending and asks how he could fend for himself, to which Almambet replies that he will accept his fate as an exile. She then bursts into tears and counsels him that if he will not stay with Kökčö he must seek out Manas. Almambet assents and slowly rides away, thinking that Kökčö will recover himself and summon him. He lingers for two days. Waking from his delirium, Kökčö receives contradictory advice from two of his grandees. Sound advice prevails, and he sets out on the trail for Sari Arka to find Almambet, with Dapple curbed with gold. But Almambet, his heart full of sorrow for his friend Kökčö and with many a vain backward glance, has moved out of range. The episode ends with Almambet's mournful prayers to God to have pity on a homeless warrior.<sup>125</sup>

There is a great contrast in style between this episode conceived by Sagymbay and *AK*, a contrast that can be most briefly characterized as a contrast between 'epic' and 'lay' form, with the caveat that although *AK* may descend from an independent lay, as it stands it is a true episode of *Manas* in a terse archaic style. The speeches in Sagymbay's version are very long, even when they are by minor characters. They tend to be very passionate and they make everything explicit. The chief motives of action are Almambet's loyalty towards Kökčö and his success among the Kazakh, arousing

<sup>125</sup> (The Harmonized Version) *Manas I* (1958) pp. 208-226.



the envy and perfidy of the Kazakh grandees who exploit Kōkčō's pusillanimity and Buudaybek's shallowness despite the political far-sightedness of faithful Akerkeč. Thus the only major difference in Sagymbay's version as compared with *AK* is in the rôle of arak, on which Sagymbay constantly harps, an emphasis well in accord with his strong adherence to Islam.

Kōkčō's Kazakh seem to be located on the River Irtysh<sup>126</sup> in its broad valley somewhere between Semipalatinsk and Omsk. Almambet has entered from the Altai region to the east, and when he leaves Kōkčō, Kōkčō assumes that he will have ridden south-westwards, since Kōkčō takes the path to 'Sari Arka' (lit. 'Yellow Range'), the epic name for the region of present-day Kazakhstan north of the line L. Aral - L. Balkhash and otherwise known as the 'Kirgiz Steppe'.<sup>127</sup> (It will be seen that on entering Kōkčō's tribal area in Sayakbay's version, Almambet comes into the broad plain [*ravnina*] of Sari Arka, so that if Sagymbay and Sayakbay situate Kōkčō's Kazakh in roughly the same region, the epic 'Sari Arka' will perhaps also include the adjacent stretch of the Irtysh Valley.) When Almambet raids the herds of the Sino-Kalmak Koņurbay and Joloy beyond the source of the River Amur [*Dariya Amur-sic!*], he must ride to the north-east region of Mongolia east of the present-day Ulan-Bator, no doubt retracing his steps through the Altai at least for part of the way.

Sagymbay's version preserves the importance of the theme of 'arak' in this episode, but, as was remarked above, with an entirely different motivation. Far from calling defiantly for arak as an answer to a foul accusation, Almambet is depicted as a moderate or even abstemious partaker of strong liquor. It is the unmały Kōkčō who is so utterly befuddled with it. And arak otherwise recurs as a leit-motif, underlined by heavy moralizings from the pious Muslim bard. (There is only a touch of this in *AK*, at the point where Ak Erkeč after serving arak to the new guest Almambet as custom required, quickly served tea lest they should get drunk (633ff).) Kōkčō's repentance and longing for Almambet on regaining his sobriety emphasize his loss and with it the gain that will accrue

<sup>126</sup> The text has both *Irtyš* and *Kil-Irtyš*. The only meaning I can attribute to 'Kil' is 'famous' (Yudakhin, *Slovar'* sub *kil* II. 2). Not having traced it as a geographical name I stand open to correction. But note that 'Sari Arka' in Sagymbay and Sayakbay occurs in epic not scientific geography.

<sup>127</sup> Yudakhin, *op. cit* sub *arka*. See previous note. In the 19th century, 'Kirgiz' = present-day 'Kazakh'; 'Kara-Kirgiz' = present-day 'Kirgiz'.



to a more magnanimous lord who may avail himself of the services of Almambet.

The whole episode is clearly reared upon the complete loyalty of Almambet and Ak Erkeč to Kōkčö and it achieves a certain nobility through the display of their high-mindedness. They and Kōkčö and indeed also quite minor characters tend to express themselves in lengthy and often vehement monologues – regular tirades – in which they develop their themes and present them from various angles with much and at times drastic rhetoric interlarded with pungent proverbs.

It will be seen that compared with the version of Sayakbay, the general outline of Sagymbay's version is much nearer to that of AK. The name and rôle of Buodaybek recur, with the typical feature that the bare fact of a co-wife's spite is accounted for as the outcome of arak. The traditional formulæ that deal with Almambet's enrichment of his Kazakh hosts in AK and in Sagymbay's version bear comparison:

AK 703 Kōkčönün jabiginan mai kildi,  
 Jami Jurtun bai kildi,  
 tündügünän mai kildi,  
 tūgāl Jurtun bai kildi,  
 tomogosun kaitti,  
 tom ayagin baitti,  
 keliḡā ketā bailatti,  
 kempirgā kuiruk čainatti. . .<sup>129</sup>

'He hung fat in Kōkčö's *jabik*,<sup>129</sup> he made the whole people rich; he hung fat from his *tündük*,<sup>130</sup> he made the entire people rich; he stitched their falcon-hoods,<sup>131</sup> he made waifs prosperous; for the

<sup>129</sup> Cf the parallel passages 467ff and 770ff. For Radlov 470 *tūgōlbōi* (left untranslated – it is untranslatable!) read *tūgōldōi* = 'counting all', from *tūgōldō* 'enumerate', 'draw sum, total', cf 706 *tūgāl Jurtun*, 773 *tūgāl Jurtun*, 'the/ thy whole people'.

<sup>130</sup> The cavity formed by the bend of the *tuurduk* and the *üzük* of a yurt, used for keeping all kinds of small household goods in. (The *tuurduk* are four pieces of felt with which the *kerege* – the cylindrical lattice of the yurt – is covered. The *üzük* are two pieces of felt going between the *tuurduk* and the *tündük* – the uppermost wooden hoop of the yurt-frame.)

<sup>131</sup> See the end of previous note.

<sup>131</sup> This no doubt means 'he mended their hoods', i. e. 'set their affairs to rights'. The parallel passages are: 471 *Tomogo oḡdap kaitamin*; 707 *tomogosun kaitti*; 774 *tomogoḡdu kaittim* (Radlov: 'Will die Köpfe ihnen ordnen');



young women he had precious stuffs bundled, for the old women he had tail-fat, chewed . . .'

Compare *Manas I* (1958) 209, 65:

Tuurdugu may boldu,  
Turgan ayli bay boldu,  
Keregesi may boldu . . .

212, 27

Kelinge taylak baylatti,  
Kempirge kuyruk çaynatti . . .

'His [Kökçö's] *tuurduk*<sup>132</sup> was made fat, his standing aul grew prosperous, his *kerege*<sup>133</sup> was made fat . . .'

'For the young women he had young camels tethered, for the old women he had tail-fat chewed . . .'

Sayakbay's version of 'Almambet, Kökçö and Ak Erkeç' remains as yet unpublished. What follows here is abstracted from the Russian translation of L. Pen'kovskiy, one of several poet-translators who made a harmonised Russian version of *Manas* entitled 'The Great Expedition'.<sup>134</sup>

Almambet wandered with the hero Majik<sup>135</sup> until they came to the plain of Sari Arka, where they were met by Khan Kökçö mounted on Kökala. Almambet offered a choice between sworn friendship and battle. Kökçö swore that it should be peace. Almambet then lived with him in the kubitka for six years of devoted service, enriching him and sub-

'Richtoto zurecht die Köpfe'; 'Richtoto dein Haupt doch auf'). Radlov seems deliberately to have substituted 'head' for 'hood', since his *Opyt' slovarya tyurkskikh narechij* of 1905 (III, 1, 1235) gives "*tomaga 2* (Kir). *Kolpak, nadevaemyy na golovu okhotnich'ikh ptits*". This may well have been due to an uncertainty as to the meaning of *kait-*. The rhyme-words 472 *baitamin*; 708 *baitti*; 775 *baittim* from (modern orthogr.) *bayit-* 'to make rich [*bay*]' show that *kait-* is to be taken as (modern orthogr.) *kayit-*, factitive of *kayit-* 'stitch together'. This is fully confirmed by the scansion of the line 707 *tomosogun kaitti*, in which *kaitti* fills the trisyllabic cadence to make a regular 2 + 2 + 3 = 7. It is also confirmed by the meaning of line 471 *ondap* (read *ondop* from *ondo-*) which here means 'mending'. Thus 471 'Mending their falcon-hood, I will stitch it together'. Radlov's *Opyt'* (II, 1, 3) shows *kai* = (modern orthogr.) *kayit-* 'to hem', but he apparently did not connect *kait* with it.

<sup>132</sup> See footnote 129, above.

<sup>133</sup> See footnote 129, above.

<sup>134</sup> See footnote 35, above.

<sup>135</sup> I reconvert Russified forms into Kirgiz automatically.



duing his enemies. Kōkčö did nothing for him in return. He failed to give Almambet a wife. In his meanness he did not once ask Almambet 'How did you come to Sari Arka from Great Pekin?' Despite this bad treatment, Almambet was planning to make Kōkčö lord of all China. But Kōkčö surrendered to gossip that Almambet was conducting an affair with Kōkčö's wife Akerkeč. Returning from a distant reconnaissance, Almambet found the people in uproar. He told Majik that he feared trouble-makers had come from his former lord Karykhan in Pekin—they must lend aid to the Kazakh. They galloped to Kōkčö's aul and saw 'ayaš' ['friend's wife'] Akerkeč coming towards them with a shawl. Weeping, she halted and addressed Almambet, telling him how Kōkčö believed rumours that they were lovers and had bound her wrists and thrashed her, with threats of mutilation and divorce to come. As to Almambet, poisoned boza awaited him and a deep pit concealed by a bear-skin. He should ride away and seek the rich Katagan tribe; but if there were trouble there owing to the enfeeblement of their aged Khan Košoy, he should pass between Andizhan and Kokand to Samarkand and thence to the Uzbek in Bukhara. Nor should he tarry there, but continue to the blessed Talas Valley that gladdens hearts and eyes.<sup>136</sup> There the incomparable Manas held sway.<sup>137</sup> Manas would value his services, and Almambet's cares would vanish. He would reward him with a handsome bride. 'Do not shilly-shally, ride out to Talas', concluded Akerkeč, 'ride to the famous Khan Manas!' But Akerkeč had not done. She went on to review the marriages of some of her eleven sisters to well-known heroes of the *Manas*-cycle. Kanikey, the fairest and wisest, was married to Manas. Kanikey had written Akerkeč a letter begging her to send Almambet as a gift so that he could be Manas's 'joldos' or companion. If she did not comply, Kōkčö, she knew it as a clairvoyant, would disgrace, mutilate and kill her, and Almambet would be powerless to save her. Akerkeč then bade Almambet ride off to Kanikey. Almambet now deliberated with Majik, his ever-silent listener. For the sake of honour he went in to Kōkčö, who was at that moment plotting with his nuker to murder him. The nuker fled, leaving Kōkčö to face Almambet alone. Almambet tried to calm Kōkčö and persuade him of his innocence by recourse to their sworn friendship. If enemies had come from Mecca, Kōkčö must give him Kōkala to ride against them, if enemies had come from China, he would ride his own Sarala. He was ready to lay down his life for Kōkčö . . . But Kōkčö declined to be turned from his unclean thoughts. Almambet asked: would he, Almambet, really lay a rough hand on Kōkala, or steal Kōkčö's wife from his embraces? Failing to reach Kōkčö with his vows, he returned Kōkčö's written oath of friendship in his shawl—and spared his life. What profit or honour was there to be gained from taking it? With that he rode off

<sup>136</sup> There follows a lyrical evocation of the beauty and abundance of the Talas Valley.

<sup>137</sup> There follows an extravagant eulogy of Manas — to whom, of course, Almambet is recounting Akerkeč's words. (A bard who makes a lord lavish *tulpar* i. e. winged steeds on his followers cheapens such steeds and himself.)



to Manas, accompanied by faithful Majik. (In this version as it stands in translation there is no thought of Akerkeč and her fate.)<sup>138</sup>

Sayakbay's version is more remote from *AK* than is Sagymbay's in both content and treatment. Whatever his source-material for the episode – and Sayakbay was a great collector – he shaped it to fit into the extremely lengthy autobiography of Almambet, narrated to Manas and his followers, which forms the centre-piece of his Great Expedition to Peking. As at Kökčö's court, so at that of Manas, Almambet the Sino-Kalmak intruder is the object of suspicion and envy on the part of the Kirgiz and their allies. Sayakbay develops the pathos of Almambet's situation to the full with his original device of making Almambet himself tell of his misfortunes and struggle against odds, and the bard does not always stop short of melodrama in so doing. In Almambet's relationship with Kökčö it is enough that Kökčö should listen to slander. Unless the translator has foreshortened unduly, Sayakbay saw no need either to name the conspirators or to describe their conspiracy; Buudaybek and arak are dispensed with; there is no struggle in Kökčö's soul between loyal and treacherous impulses; and his obdurate belief in the slander he has entertained serves only to underline Almambet's loyalty, patience and magnanimity.

Almambet's friend Majik the shepherd occurs in Sayakbay as in Sagymbay, and he is as silent and inactive, despite his greater prominence as the recipient of Almambet's tirades. Whether his occurrence in Sayakbay is due to a harmonizing tendency on the part of the bard or of his translator does not appear from the material available. In the mid-19th cy. *AK* and elsewhere in Radlov's recordings, when Almambet is on his own he has no Majik to accompany him. Thus the 20th cy. tradition may owe Majik to Sagymbay.<sup>139</sup>

In Sayakbay's version, too, there is a passage parallel to one in *AK*, suggesting the part-preservation of an old formula.<sup>140</sup> We have seen that in *AK*, Ak Erkeč twice halts the mounted Almambet and addresses him,<sup>141</sup> the more important occasion being when she waylays him in her effort to preserve his friendship for Kökčö:

<sup>138</sup> *Velikiy pokhod*, pp. 216–224.

<sup>139</sup> Kirgiz scholars working in the *Manas*-Archive may be in a position to confirm or deny this.

<sup>140</sup> Cf the parallel *AK* 703ff and *Manas* I, 209, 65ff on p. 193, above.

<sup>141</sup> See pp. 165f, above.



1047 'atıñnin başın bura tur!  
oşu Jergā tura tur!'

'Turn your horse's head! Rein in at this place!  
Something of this kind comes through the Russian translation:

Konya syoego, synok, osadi,  
Kak raz na tom meste menya podezhdi,  
Blizhe ne podezzhay syuda!<sup>142</sup>

'Halt your steed, my son, / await me there forthwith, / ride up  
no nearer!'

'My son', a form of address used by the wife of a senior towards his juniors, corresponds to the title 'my husband's friend' [*ayaş: ayaşım*] with which the citation from *AK* begins (1045), and it implies a similar social distance between the two people concerned.

The memory of strong liquor, though not of arak, haunts Sayakbay's version, too, for Kökčö plans to murder Almambet with poisoned boza.

The demand for Kökala the Dapple also only survives vestigially - if enemies had come from Mecca, Kökčö would have to give (lend?) Kökala to Almambet, if enemies had come from China, Almambet would ride his own Sarala. Sayakbay no doubt felt that the provocative demand for Kökala was incompatible with the great-hearted figure of Almambet he was creating, and it is interesting that this modern Soviet bard, who also performed on the local broadcasting system, had to take sufficient account of his listeners at least to mention a polite request for Dapple in certain circumstances. The pathos wears very thin when Almambet at the end asks rhetorically 'Would I really have laid a rough hand on Kökala, or stolen his wife from his embraces?' Thus far has a stirring heroic motif fallen.

The process of cyclization is more in evidence in Sayakbay's than in Sagymbay's version of this episode. Not only does Sayakbay have Almambet cast back in thought to his family enemies in China when he is faced with Kazakh unrest, but he also traces marital connexions between prominent warriors both friendly and hostile to Manas through Akerkeč and her many sisters. Indeed, one might hazard

<sup>142</sup> *Velikiy pokhod*, pp. 218a, 3ff.



the guess that Sayakbay has invented many if not most of these marriages.<sup>143</sup>

Finally, one wonders whether in the unpublished original of Sayakbay, Almambet at all bestirred himself to shield Akerkeč from the brutal treatment said to be in store for her. If he did not, then his raising up of Almambet<sup>144</sup> to sublime heights rings false and Almambet stands there as a monument of melodramatic plebeian art.

The three versions of the episode of 'Almambet, Kōkčö and Ak Erkeč' which have been examined above show greater or lesser signs of assimilation to the *Manas*-cycle. *AK* is still recognizably an heroic episode – almost an independent heroic poem, minus the Revenge – in a robust archaic manner that relies much on formulæ, standing epithets and pregnant gestures, only traces of which recur in the two 20th cy. versions. Of these latter two versions, both of which recount the plot on the whole in a fuller and more explicit epical style, Sagymbay's offers character-studies through speech even of minor figures, as viewed by a mind in which conventional moralizing is relieved by a vivid sense of comedy; whereas Sayakbay's version explores pathos at times enhanced and even overshadowed by obduracy, callousness and brutality. Thus in the modern age, in which *Manas* has come increasingly under the influence of the book and of opera, this episode is seen to be in danger of disintegrating. The stage of development at which the archaic manner known from *AK*, 'The Birth of *Manas*'<sup>145</sup> and *Bok Murun*<sup>146</sup> gave way to the more ample and explicit manner of the 20th cy. with its large-scale cyclization and harmonization, was a stage which presaged high (but not highest) achievement in the genre of epic poetry, and also its decay.

<sup>143</sup> Wolfram von Eschenbach, whose manner of fabulation in some ways resembles that of Sayakbay Karalaev, superimposed a taut structure of dynastic relationships on the subject-matter of Chrétien's *Perceval* when recreating it as his *Parzival*, inventing *ad lib.*, though logically, as he went.

<sup>144</sup> And also of Kanikey, who threatens her sister through Kōkčö in her ruthless desire to obtain Almambet as a friend for *Manas*. Sayakbay's world is one dominated by men, in which women in the last analysis do not count – a perceptible decline from the admittedly very rough ethos of the mid-19th century poems.

<sup>145</sup> V, I, 1).

<sup>146</sup> V, I, 4).