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A.T. HATTO

The Kirghiz and the surrounding peoples in mid-

Nineteenth- century Kirghiz epic.

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HATTO: The Kirghiz and the
surrounding peoples...

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L'ASIE CENTRALE ET SES VOISINS

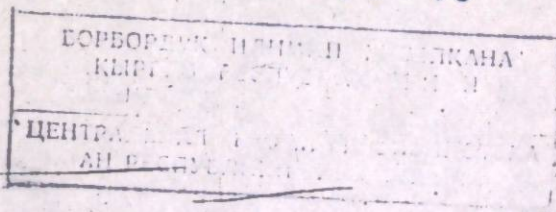
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A.T. Hatto

The Kirghiz and the
surrounding peoples in
~~the~~ mid-nineteenth-century
Kirghiz epic

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SOMMAIRE

R. DOR	Foreword.....	7
I. Langue et littérature		
H. BOESCHOTEN & M. VAN DAMME	The poetry in Rabghuzi's Qisas.....	9
A. BUDER	Quelques remarques sur l'œuvre dramatique de l'écrivain yakoute A.I. Sofronov.....	37
C.F. CARLSON	Vowel raising in Uighur.....	47
R. DOR	Orature and translation. Some reflexions on the Özbek lyric epos Nurait.....	57
A.T. HATTO	The Kirghiz and the surrounding peoples in mid-nineteenth-century Kirghiz epic.....	73
Z. HU	L'ethnie Hui (musulmane) de Chine et ses traits linguistiques spécifiques.....	85
C. SCHÖNING	Classification problems of Yakut.....	91

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O.F. SERTKAYA Mongolian loan words in the Islamic Turkish Uighur texts	103
F. TÜRKMEN Deux épopées entre Turkménistan et Anatolie	121
P. ZIEME Sur quelques titres et noms des bouddhistes turcs	131
II. Anthropologie	
P.A. ANDREWS The evolution of the trellis tent: a middle eastern development	141
F. AUBIN Donneurs ou preneurs, quelques réflexions sur le jeu des transferts culturels entre Chinois, Turcs et Mongols	165
A. DESJACQUES Le problème de la forme dans le chant épique de Mongolie Occidentale	181
J. DURING Tableau comparatif des musiques d'art du monde musulman	185
T. MAJDA Les contacts des Tatars lituaniens et polonais avec les pays turcophones	199
J. PSTRUSINSKA On the origin of vocabulary in the Central Asian secret languages	207
G. TOFFIN Le rôle du commerce transhimalayen dans les royaumes malla de la vallée du Népal (XVI-XVIII siècles)	215
S. TREBINJAC Musique ouigoure de Chine: de l'authenticité à la folklorisation	227

A. T. HATTO

THE KIRGHIZ AND THE
SURROUNDING PEOPLES IN
MID-NINETEENTH-CENTURY
KIRGHIZ EPIC

The extant corpus of mid-nineteenth-century Kirghiz epic falls between the years 1856 and 1869¹, supplemented by a distorted sequence of *Manas* episodes in Persian in two late eighteenth-century MSS of the *Majmūʿ at-Tavarikh* of Saif ad-Dīn². To students of Kirghiz epic poetry, these *Manas* episodes of the *Majmūʿ* have every appearance of being a politically inspired interpolation, that is, forgery, favourable to the politics of the Khanate of Kokand with regard to the Kirghiz tribes towards the end of the Eighteenth Century³. Those who cite the *Majmūʿ* for the purposes of Central Asian historiography, however, have never met the challenge posed by the *Majmūʿ* but on the contrary

1 *The memorial feast for Kökötöy-khan (Kökötöydün asī A Kirghiz epic poem, edited for the first time from a photocopy of the unique manuscript, with translation and commentary by A. T. Hatto, London Oriental Series, 33, Oxford, 1977 from the year 1856; Radlov, V. V. (Radloff, W.) Narechiya severnykh tyurkskikh plemen v (1885) Karakyrghz, St Petersburg from the years 1862 and 1869. The former is here quoted as "Kökötöy" (KO Kirghiz text), the latter as 'Obraztsy'.*

2 "Sobranie istoriy". *Madzhmuʿat-tavarikh*. Fotograficheskaya reproduksiya otrvokov rukopisnogo teksta, vvedenie, ukazateli podgotovili k izdaniyu A. T. Tagirdzhanov, Leningrad, 1960.

3 *Kökötöy*, pp 90 f.

have naively accepted these passages at their face value, even in the collected writings of V. V. Bartol'd¹.

Before Kirghiz relations with the surrounding peoples as reflected in epic can be examined, a brief word is required on how the Kirghiz saw themselves.

First, the epic Protagonists are not 'Kirghiz' but 'Nogoy', a strand of Kirghiz-epic tradition adopted from the Kazakh. This is not without parallel: one has only to recall Homer's Achaeans. 'Kirghiz' are referred to only rarely in these epics, and even then mostly with irony. In the coda of *Kökötöydün ası2*, the Kirghiz and the Kazakh are named together with the Kitay, Kalmak, Kokanders and Özbecg, as peoples defeated and plundered by *Manas*: 'At the edge of the valley there are yurts, and each head of a yurt is a *biy* (grandee and judge). They train but a single horse, haft but a single spear. -Such are those fellows known as "Kirghiz"³. In the Radlovian *Birth of Manas*, Jakip, the future father of *Manas*, desires to have a son who will 'gobble', that is lay under tribute a similar list of peoples, including 'the Kirghiz that never cease their greed, and who, for all the food they crave, are never sated'⁴. The Chinese chieftain Koñur-bay threatens at the Feast that unless he be given the *tulpar* (heroic winged steed) Maniker, 'the wretched, misborn Kirghiz will become horse-fodder and the Kazakh be turned to grass'⁵ (Strictly speaking, Koñur-bay should have said not 'Kirghiz' but 'Burut', see below. When epic sources become available in bulk again in the 1920's and 1930's, all is changed. The epic Protagonists are no longer 'Nogoy' but 'Kirghiz' and they are megalomaniacs, so vehement

1 V. V. Bartol'd, *Sochineniya*, Moscow, 1963 ff.
2 Vv. 3214 ff.

3 Vv. 3223 ff.

4 *Obraztsy* V, I, 1) 36 ff.

5 *Obraztsy*, V I, 4) 799 ff.

has been the rise of Kirghiz nationalism in the intervening fifty years¹.

The naming of Kirghiz tribes in the older epics is even rarer than that of the Kirghiz people. In fact, only one tribe is named, and on only one occasion. These are the Noygut, with the satirical epithet 'of the boot-thongs long as halters and the blue saddle-covers'. The Noygut, who lived in smaller numbers amid the Bugu, are to be shattered and despoiled by *Manas* grown to manhood². In the older epics, the Kirghiz are four times referred to as 'Burut' by their Sino-Kalmak antagonists. This has a basis in fact. In General Funingga's reports on the operations of the Chinese Emperor's armies against the Dzungarians in 1720-1724, in Manchu, the Burut are referred to repeatedly together with the Hasak³. The term 'Burut' in Far Eastern sources is likely to go back much farther, and is said to run parallel with a Chinese equivalent 'Po-lu'. It was naïf of Ch. Valikhanov to state that the Kirghiz were unaware that the Kalmak called them 'Burut'⁴ and he is belied by our epic texts⁵. At least one early eighteenth-century map gives the Burut separately from the Kirghiz and situated more to the east.

The *Manas* poems of Valikhanov and Radlov were taken down by hand to dictation. Thus it is possible that the bards in both instances diplomatically played down the Kirghiz to the young reconnaissance officer in uniform and the school-teacher

1 See A. T. Hatto, Tradition and change in the Kirghiz *Manas*-epic (in press, Papers of the Central Asian Conference, School of Oriental and African Studies, London, 1988.
2 *Obraztsy* V, I, 1) 28 f.

3 Kraft, E. S., *Zum Dsungarenkrieg im 18. ten Jahrhundert*. Berichte des Generals Funingga, aus einer mandschurischen Handschrift übersetzt und an Hand der chinesischen Akten erläutert, Leipzig 1953, e.g. pp. 71, 82, 84.

4 Ch. Valikhanov, *Sobranie sochineniy*, v pyati tomakh, Alma-Ata, I (1961), p. 301.

5 *Obraztsy*, V, I, 1) 38; 2) 1162; 3) 721, 1051; 4) 721, 799, (1453).

respectively. Yet the references to the isolation (on remote summer pastures) and the rapacity of the Kirghiz in the epics vividly catch the precarious situation of the Bugu tribe, among whom the bulk of this poetry was collected: much raided by their more powerful neighbours the Sarıbagış and the Solto, they were out to turn the tables on them should a good opportunity offer. Guaranteed chances they hoped to have under Russian protection, but they were of course soon disillusioned; for the Russian High Command foresaw that they would need to have the allegiance of all the Northern Kirghiz tribes in order to achieve a frontier against Kokand and China that would assure them domination of the great East-West and North-South caravan routes. It was in the general area of the intersection of these routes that the Bugu had their being¹.

The Bugu - dare one say 'Kirghiz' - epic world was also structured by two main axes: dynamically a West-East axis stretching from Mekka, mythically conceived, to Bar-köl north of Hami, also mythically conceived. A North-South axis stretched from Kızıl-jar (Krasnoyarsk) to Kashgar². Tradition, however, laid the venue for Khan Kökötöy's Memorial Feast to the south of the route to Bar-köl in the Karkara region in the Kegen' Basin, while to flatter Valikhanov's archaeological interest, his bard laid the Feast in the Altai, somewhat to the east of the North-South axis³.

The Antagonists of the Nogoy are overwhelmingly the Kalmak and the 'Kitay' or Chinese, the two more or less merged notionally in my terminology as 'Sino-Kalmak', with 'Kalmak' varied by the alliterating 'Kapir' (Heathen). The Sino-Kalmak

- 1 Dzhamgerchinov, B., *Prisoedinenie Kirgizii k Rossii*, Moscow, by passim.
- 2 Hatto A. T., Die Marschrouuten in der älteren kirghisischen Heldenepik, in *Fragen der mongolischen Heldendichtung* V, hrsg. W. Heissig, Wiesbaden, in press.
- 3 Kökötöy, commentary on vv. 279-349.

group are formidable and loathsome, with the Kalmak typified above all as poisoners. That this propensity, in Kirghiz eyes, is due to their heathenish life-style is brought out with the utmost clarity by the fact that the Muslim leader's bosom friend Almambet is by descent an Oiroi prince, destined before birth for Islam¹. Apart from their treacherous ways, the Kalmak are despised for riding with a leg of pork at their saddle-bow², for pasturing on flattopped mountains³ and setting their cauldrons on trivets of three stones⁴ - whereas the Kirghiz sought wild and dizzy pastures, the highest in the world, and slung their cauldrons on frames with cross-bar! The pent-up Kirghiz hatred, reflected and fostered by the epics, was vented with fury on the Kalmak on at least two major occasions after the Manchu had broken the Dzungarian power in 1759:

1) in 1771, when together with the Kazakh, they fell on that section of the Volga Kalmak that was returning to the Chinese limes;

2) when Chinese power broke down in the Ili Province as a result of the Taranchi Uprising in 1864-1866. This hatred of course went back to the days when the Kalmak had had the upper hand in the region and made full use of it. Having broken and partly wiped out the Kalmak in 1759, the Chinese settled the remnants on their Western Frontiers as guards and horse-herds⁵, and indeed, the Kalmak *arwn sumn* (Ten Tribes of the Ölöd) and *zuryān sumn* (Six Tribes of the Dörbet) are featured in the epic of *Kökölöydün ası* (vv. 2672 ff.). Moreover, in this poem and the parallel Bok-murun collected by Radlov, the young khan-aspirant *Bok-murun* fraternizes with the Kalmak grandees of the Karkara region as a means of obtaining salt (KO 285 ff.; BM 222

- 1 Obratztsy, V, I 2) 1-15.
- 2 Obratztsy, V, I 3) 709 *cočkonun sanın kesip alıp/kanjıya-ya bailaʔan...*
- 3 ibid. 708 *jalpuk tō cıʔıp jailaʔan...*
- 4 op. cit. I, 5) 1051 *Üc tas tulʔa bir ocoč...*
- 5 Hatto A.T., *Köz-kaman I, Central Asiatic Journal* 15 (1971), p. 85.

ff.) In Radlov's second episode (I, 2)), 'Oïrot' varies 'Kalmak', especially where the Oïrot Khan is concerned.

Another collective ethnons in the epics was that of 'Sart', but the rare term 'Cürçüt'/'Sürsüt' first requires examination. If the rôle of the Kalmak in the epics is to effect slaughter and plunder, that of the Chinese in the Sino-Kalmak amalgam is to extort tribute, the verb for which activity is *bura-* (screw or twist). The term 'Kitay' merges the Chinese and the Manchu, though the Manchu are also once referred to pejoratively as 'Sürsüt' (I.3) 33) - evidently from the Tungusic 'Jürçät', who were widely known centuries before the Manchu, with whom they tended to be identified. 'Sürsüt' is a Kazakhizing form of Kirgh. 'Cürçürt', which alliterates with the character-epithet *cüldürögön* (mumbling, lisping), *ibid.*

'Sart' were in general men of the plains in antithesis to the Kirghiz men of the mountains, but specifically settled mercantile and agricultural people of the Kokand Khanate and the Bukharan Emirate. The epic characteristic of the Sart is to be perverse, a characteristic enshrined in what I have elsewhere termed 'caricature-epithets'¹ 'they who helve their mattocks on willow, who rate old men as youths, who train grey asses as dapple-grey steeds, who bring the dead seemingly to life and guard them, and pile bread into clay ovens!² It would be a crowning indignity for Manas's mother, fallen on evil times, pattering like a partridge to glean ears of Sart wheat³, or his father 'to advance head-down like a bustard, reaping Sart

1 Hatto A.T., Kirghiz. Epithets in Kirghiz epic poetry 1856-1869. in: *Traditions of heroic and epic poetry II* (1989), edited by J.B. Hainsworth, London, p. 84.

2 Kökötöy (KO) 3232 ff.

3 *Obraztsy V, I 3* 1855... *baibicä/kekilitkäi kedäñdäp/ Sart masayın terbäsin.*

harvests!¹ It is significant for the evolution of Kirghiz epic poetry that in *Kökötöy*, before Manas usurped the leadership of the Nogoy from Bok-murun, the latter refers to Manas as the man who 'grew fat there in Anjiyan, who (perversely!) gnawed unripe apples of Anjiyan and fattened on unbaked bread, that wretched Sart of Samarkand, Manas...!', which is supported by a similar Kalmak insult 'Let us lance the Sart Manas!² For it is in any case clear that Manas was originally no 'Nogoy', suggesting that the *Manas* passage in the *Majmūc*, which makes Manas a Kipçak captain-of-war³, had Sart antecedents to build upon. This in turn is consonant with Manas's other residual aspect as a bakhshi with Forty *Çilten* (Spirit-helpers), later his Forty Companions (*Çoro*)⁴.

The third large ethnons on the horizon of the Kirghiz epic world is that of the Russians. Apart from one particular bard, the singer of Radlov's Third episode (I, 3), who has a political axe to grind, the references to Russians are vague and sparse. The reflection of secular fear, hatred and loathing that informs the terms 'Kalmak' and 'Kitay' is absent from 'Orus'. Indeed, 'Orus' cannot always be safely pinned down as to its ethnic connotation. But in I, 3) Manas is introduced almost simultaneously as a dread world-conqueror and as one who has 'eaten the White Padishah's (the Czar's) food' and so become his subject. This opening pattern is repeated later in detail: Manas may make the Galcha groan, and destroy the Chinese; shake up the Sart, terrify the Kokanders and grind the Tajiks, but as to the White Padishah's people, the 'Orus with hairy mouths and flowing locks', Manas must never brush up against them! For, Tiger-like Padishah, where can your knout not strike? When you ride out, no grass grows on our

1 *ibid.* 1858... *Japik-kan/tödak kuslai tonkonop/Sart orayun orbosun*

2 *Obraztsy, V, I, 5* 1670.

3 "*Sobranie istorii*" (ref. 2, supra), pp. 23 f.

4 *Kökötöy*, pp. 260 ff.

tracks...¹ It is touching how, later, the White Padishah opens his White Saddle-bag to find coin for Manas to bestow on his bride's senior kinswomen as a ritual Bribe-for-the-Groom-to-be-laid-clandestinely-on-the-Bride's-breast!² Radlov thought all this was introduced to please him as a Russian official³. Yet these passages look too well practised to be impromptu. One infers that this episode was taken down among the Bugu tribe in 1862, thus seven years after they had submitted to the Russians by treaty in January 1855, though with backslidings when Russian protection failed to materialize. In 1862 the bond was firmer, and it is likely that in order to warn a still recalcitrant minor group of Bugu chieftains (manap), either a chief of the "pro-Russian" majority or even a Russian political agent had hired our singer to enlighten epic audiences as to the new state of affairs. A very minor reference to the Orus nevertheless throws light on Kirghiz perceptions: whereas Manas's impenetrable surcoat Ak-olpok had been fashioned by Chinese master-armourers with their skill -kin- and by Kalmak masters wheezing guttural spells -kaikap- the Russian masters had done so with the cunning -oi-, that is, with technological knowledge⁴. The Orus are lumped together with the Chinese as powerful auxiliaries of the Oirat Khan when he takes the field against his son Almambet⁵. And the Orus are merged with the Kalmak in two passages in which the traditionally Kalmak giant Joloy is named 'Orus': 'Though he was an Orus, he was a khan, chief of a numerous people'⁶. This link with the Russians might be due to three factors:

- 1 Obratztsy, V, I, 3) 461 ff.
- 2 Obratztsy, V, I, 3) 1075 ff. and Hatto, A. T. The marriage, death and return to life of Manas, *Turcica* 12 (1980) pp. 76 ff.
- 3 Obratztsy, V, p. xiii
- 4 Obratztsy, V, I, 2) 1227 ff.
- 5 Ibid. 260 ff.
- 6 Obratztsy, V, I, 4) 144; 1536.

- 1) the Kalmak of the Altai had in part submitted to the Russians;
- 2) to the Kirghiz, the Kalmak and the Russians were heathen (*kapiir*);

3) Joloy's huge frame and appetite for food and drink may have reminded the bard of a certain type of Russian colonist. But none of this can be seen as binding when we recall that the hero Orok (from the historical Nogoy mirza Urak, fl. earlier part of the Sixteenth Century) is named 'Orus' for no better reason than alliteration. As to Valikhanov's *Kökötöy*, its singer avoided all mention of Russians, perhaps deeming it wise, with his young patron a member of Colonel Khomentovskiy's reconnaissance party of 1856¹.

The remaining ethonyms occurring in the mid-nineteenth-century epic corpus are more or less incidental. The Kirghiz inherited the Nogoy heroes via the Kazakh from a past so distant that the individual heroes - Jamgürči, Agäs, Orok and others - are utterly devoid of historical features bar their names. A truly archaic use of an ethonym is that of the Naiman, to indicate the provenance of Er Kökcö's lovely wives Ak-erkeč and Buuday-bek - the Naiman women were already celebrated for their beauty in the days of Rashid-ad-Din². The Kazakh neighbours of the Kirghiz receive but a single characterization "with their soft-leather saddle-cloths and white lances"³. More contemporary with our bards were the Galcha, whose widely acknowledged finer features are caught with the caricature-epithet "of the narrow noses, cavernous eyes"⁴. Like the Kirghiz and the Kazakh, these Galcha are to be shattered by Manas⁵.

- 1 Valikhanov, Ch., *Sobranie sochineniy*, I, p. 250; 304.
- 2 Hatto, A.T. Almambet, Er Kökcö and Ak-erkec, *Central Asiatic Journal* 13 (1969), p. 181, note 94.
- 3 Obratztsy, V, I, 1) 34 f.
- 4 op. cit., I, 3) 1752 f.
- 5 ibid. 376.

The people of Balxh and Badakhshan are merged as an entity¹. The Kizilbaş are partly associated with the Afghans, thus it is uncertain whether they are Shi'ite Turks of Afghanistan or Persians. The Tajiks are conceived of separately - and Manas has smashed them! The Indians, too, have been smashed, but nothing else is said of them².

On the outermost horizon of this epic world were the Goat People (*Erkeč eli*)³ the Dog People (*It eli*)⁴ and the Sunrise People (*Kün-tūmus*)⁵, recalling such Medieval European geographies as that of Wolfram von Eschenbach.

In conclusion it can be said that mid-nineteenth-century Kirghiz epic preserves generalized memories of the Kalmak from a time when they had the upper hand, that is, prior to 1759, but doubtless also after that date in a small way on the Chinese Frontier. Fused with the Kalmak were the Chinese of any period, not least times of the more recent past up to 1862, for the Kirghiz of the frontier region were frequently laid under tribute by them. Thus the 'Sino-Kalmak' Antagonists symbolize the threat to the 'Nogoy' (idealized Kirghiz) from the East. Only once do events on the Chinese Western Frontier become specific: the intrinsically ancient hero Koşoy in the guise of a ghazi is credited with having released Jangit-kojo's son 'Bilirek' from Chinese captivity, by implication from Kashgar c. 1827 A.D., thus within living memory of older men in the bard's audience. The threat from Kokand seems less fraught with fear and loathing, however extortionate the Khans of Kokand were. After all, the Kokanders were fellow-Muslims, and various Kirghiz chieftains played a prominent and at times decisive part in their politics. In the

1 op. cit., I, 4) 1032; 1466.

2 op. cit., I, 4) 1052; I, 3) 1767.

3 op. cit. I, 4) 132

4 ibid.

5 ibid. 120.

traditional epic uses of the term 'Orus' no dark shadow is cast by the steadily advancing Russian power. Thus the way was clear for the innovation in which Manas submits to the Czar, who, after warning Manas sternly, gives him paternal friendship. In fine, the Kirghiz epic poetry of those times mobilized the will to survive, and, in favourable circumstances, to plunder one's neighbours.

This precipitate of a past major existential struggle against the Kalmak resembles that of the Ainus' secular struggle against peoples of the Okhotsk Culture as reflected in their epics, furnishing the dichotomy People of the Land (the Ainu) versus People of the Sea (the Repunkur). Doubtless the Ainu abominated the advance of the Japanese from the south, yet the Japanese are not featured in the epics as Antagonists, only the Repunkur¹. It is thus possible to argue that in the last resort all dangerous foes of the Kirghiz may have been symbolized by and subsumed under the hateful name of "Kalmak"; rather like the Paynim in *Roland*, or even the unchanging, many-headed mangus of Mongol heroic song. This seems confirmed antithetically by the Solto epic-cummockepic of *Joloi-kan*, for, wishing to narrate a boisterous poem with the traditionally Kalmak Khan Joloy as its gargantuan central figure, the bard harmonizes him by the making him a 'Nogoy'.

1 Philippi, D., *Songs of Gods, Songs of Humans. The Epic Tradition of the Ainu*. Princeton/Tokyo, 1979, p.3 ff.

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