

ЭПОС «МАНАС»



THE EPOS «MANAS»



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FROM THE AUTHOR

Natural and understandable is the feeling of the respect, which one has to all the best memorials of the spiritual and material culture of one's own people.

It is difficult to overestimate the meaning of «Manas» in the life of the Kirghiz in the past. This composition has its importance and nowadays; for many ages it was the main spiritual treasure, where everything that the people had gained was stored up. The present Kirghiz people treat this unique inheritance of their forefathers with a great respect and appreciate it highly.

For example, Academician Ch. Aitmatov considers «Manas» to be the synonym of the people itself. Nobody is surprised in Kirghizia that the modern Kirghiz, the people of different specialities, various age, different education, read the published texts of the epos with a delight and treat with a thrift everything, connected with it, considering it to be a national pride of the people. The secret of this phenomenon is not only in a traditional tribute of the respect to the best memorial of old times and a natural feeling of pride for one's own people that could create such a composition. Of course, it is meaningful, but it gives no

answer to the question why a present Kirghiz man appreciates «Manas» so greatly? K. Marx wrote, that the difficulty is, however, not in understanding the fact that a Greek art and an epos are connected with known forms of a social development. The difficulty is in the fact, that they continue to give us an artistic pleasure and, in a sense, to be a standard and unattainable model.

A man can't become a child again without being childish. But isn't he glad to see a child's naivety, and isn't he to aim at reproducing his own real nature at a higher step? Doesn't its own character in the simple truth revive in a child's nature in every epoch? And why the childhood of a human society, where it has developed best of all, mustn't have an ever-lasting charm to us as a never-repeating step?¹

«Manas» is not only the memory of the past, even to-day it is alive and continues its active life among the people. Every Kirghiz woman and man reads published texts of the epos with pleasure, listens to oral performances of its numerous narrators as well. The evidence of «Manas» active life is its performance by narrators of a different age — from 5 to 80, and lively disputes about «Manas». It proves that the Kirghiz epos «Manas» is a unique phenomenon and the science knows still not everything

¹ See: K. Marx, F. Engels. Complete Works, v. 12, p. 737.

about its nature, its influence on masses and its many other virtues.

«Manas» is well-known in the Soviet Union and abroad. Through the Russian language its texts became a property of world's culture. There appeared the interest of the widest circle of the reading public to this composition, and the necessity to make familiar with it in a popular form as many readers as possible.

The book "Epos «Manas»" published in 1979 was sold very quickly and it is now a bibliographical virtu. The present edition is a shortened variant of "Epos «Manas»". This brochure is issued in three languages — in Russian, English and German with a view to broaden the circle of readers.

Every people has in its past a rich history and original culture which contributes to world's treasure of human values. The Kirghiz heroic epos «Manas» belongs to them, it ripened as a phenomenon of artistic culture in the deepest layers of the people's world-view during many centuries and, having been passed from generation to generation in an oral form, reached our days in such a high artistic look and a wide scope of people's life that it amazes its listeners and readers.

The Kirghiz people belongs to the oldest peoples of Central Asia. Of peoples living in Central Asia at present there is none whose name was met in old days¹. According to many famous turkologists² this people had once had its own written language which is known to science as orcho-no-yenisei characters (letters). These first dated literary monuments belong to the end of VII century, but evidently they existed

¹ Bartold V. V. Complete Works, vol. 2, part I. M., Publishing House of Oriental Literature, 1963, p. 475.

² Malov S. E. Yenisei Written Language of Turks. M.; L., Academy of Sciences of the USSR, 1952, p. 4.

earlier¹. During its historical evolution the Kirghiz people couldn't preserve and improve its written language the forefathers had. Therefore up to the Great October Socialist Revolution the only manifestation of ideals, the wisdom treasure of working people was its folklore² which in the absence of a written language became an oral masterpiece, very rich in genres and facts.

Everything the people had learned, created, experienced for many centuries was preserved in an oral artistic form. Folklore became the memory of the people, the keeper of all its achievements, ideals and conceptions, knowledge and reminiscence — all the facts about the historical way of its development That's why is oral-poetic creation of the Kirghiz people so rich, especially its epic genre, as Academician V. V. Radlov³ said, having visited the Kirghiz in the 60-s of XIX century.

The highest peak of all the treasures of this people is a great epos «Manas».

«Manas» — a unique literary monument of the culture of the Kirghiz people, its originality; it embodies a freedom-loving spirit of the Kirghiz, their hard long struggle

¹ The History of Kirghiz Republic, vol. 1. Frunze, Kirghizstan, 1968, p. 125.

² Altmishbayev A. October and Development of Social Consciousness of Kirghiz people. Frunze, Ilim, 1980, p. 31.

³ Radlov V. V. Examples of Folk Literature of North Turkish Peoples, part V, Preface. S. Pb., 1885, p. 5.

against foreign invaders. This struggle for own existence is reflected in a heroic spirit, a patriotic idea of this epos.

Every important change in a political, ideological, economical life of the people during its long historical development left a definite mark in this epos. The following main features distinguish it from other works of the Kirghiz folklore.

«Manas» is unique in its size, it has no match even among world-known eposes. Only in one variant, written down from a famous narrator Sayakbay Karalayev, there is over half-million (500553) poetic lines which surpass the volume of «Iliada» (15693 poetic lines) and «Odisseya» (12110) taken together in more than 20 times, «Machabcharata» (about 100000 two-lines) in 2,5 times. At present there are 65 variants of three parts in «Manas», and recording of variants unknown before is still being made.

One more peculiarity of «Manas» is its vast contents and many-sided information it has. «Manas» is great and monumental not only in volume, but in the scope of the people's life. Its content covers all sides of the people's existence from details of its everyday life to important events in its destiny. «Manas» represents such an epos— an encyclopedia, which represents in a poetic form a long history of a political struggle of the Kirghiz people, its many-sided life, its economy, customs, mode of life, manners, esthetic tastes, ethic standards, its medical,

geographic, religious and other notions, its international, trade ties and other information about the Kirghiz. That's why the epos is the fullest original work for researching the history, phylosophy, ethnography, oral art, psychology and other aspects of a mental and social life of the people as many scientists state.

Especially popular «Manas» is among the Kirghiz. For many ages the most common name was Manas, and this name was pronounced with love and pride by the young and old. Not so long ago the cult of Manas was above all cults known to them. They connected his name and deeds with everything that was unusual and peculiar. One can judge about «Manas» popularity among the Kirghiz by such a fact: in spite of its vast volume everyone knows its table, one can list all the main characters and retell the most important events. Practically it is impossible to meet a person, who doesn't remember the most impressing rhymes or couldn't tell some of them by heart. An unprecedented existence of «Manas» in people's everyday life makes the impression that the Kirghiz have the only epos¹. «Manas» is a living epos, it continues its active life among the people, and this is the most undisputable fact of its exceptional popularity. It's remarkable that, as a tradition prescribes, only real facts of the past are inclu-

¹ See: Valichanov Ch. Ch. Selected Works. Alma-Ata, 1961, p. 367.

ded in «Manas», i. e. the people's love to the epos and its characters is so great, that the Kirghiz consider them to be not an artistic composition and artistic images but real facts and real personalities. As a result of such an exceptional attitude to «Manas» for many centuries, many people's ideals were connected with this epos, many ethic standards and conceptions were explained on the examples of actions of «Manas» characters. Youth was brought up on their examples. Such qualities of Manas and his companions-in-arms as love to their motherland, selfless service to the people, love to freedom, courage, battle friendship and others were models or young generations. «Manas» stands out by the perfection of its form, by the high artistic level of its texts.

Many generations of folk talants revised, enriched artistic methods of «Manas» by their own finds, and the epos reached such artistic heights that it became a model of classic poetry for the Kirghiz. Thanks to profound contents, high artistic value of its representation, its rich vocabulary «Manas» gives its listeners and readers a real esthetic pleasure. An intricacy and a diversity of the plot, image riches, the vividness in describing characters and their neighbourhood, grandeur of occurring events come along with a perfection and an original refinement of its form¹. It is the power of

p. 344—345.

¹ Abramson S. M. The Kirghiz and Their Ethnogenetic and Historical-Cultural Ties. L., 1971,

an artistic impression on esthetic requirements that put «Manas» in line with such literary monuments, which continue to give artistic pleasure and in a sense preserve the importance of an unattainable model¹.

Thanks to all these causes «Manas» became the first fiction composition in a written form, published and translated into other languages.

«Manas» in genre is a heroic epos. Its starting point is a reflection of Manas' heroic deeds for joining his people, who suffered from foreigners' raids, was ruined and disunited, for the sake of his homeland liberation from invaders and its defence from enemies. But the contents is much broader than usual «narrow» limits of a heroic epos. In its plot, along with important events about heroic deeds there are not less important episodes concerning a peaceful life of the people. They show an everyday life, customs, moral laws. Various tois (feasts) and commemorations of the dead are depicted very vividly.

In general, one should say that «Manas» is not a separate literary monument, but rather a whole literature in an oral form, for it comprises many genres of the Kirghiz folklore. One can find examples of ritual weepings (koshok), complaints of the fate («arman»), testament songs («kerees»), as well as descriptions of various customs

¹ See: Marx K. Introduction to «Criticism of Political Economy», Comp., vol. XII, part I, p. 203.

(marriages), feasts, commemorations, matchmaking, treatments in honour of coming or leaving relatives, neighbours and so on, an allotment of lands (pastures), passage from one region to another. But still it is impossible to make a conclusion that «Manas» is a random collection of different compositions or a simple stature of various information. It is a high work of art, with a strict compositional unity, in which the life and deeds of Manas himself are a connecting link.

A great popularity of «Manas» and the place, that it takes in a cultural life of the Kirghiz, attracted attention to the epos. The first notes about it in a written form refer to the end of XV and the beginning of XVI centuries. This is a manuscript in Tadjik by Saif ad-din, the son of Achsikan Shach-Abbas. Its heading is «A Collection of Stories» (Madzmu at-Tavarich)¹. This manuscript, aimed at praising Moslem sheikhs, tells not about the epos «Manas» but about Manas himself and events of the epos are not distinguished from historical ones, epic heroes act as real persons. In spite of this the above-mentioned manuscript has a certain significance for the research of this epos as one can draw some news from it about the episodes of «Manas», which were known from old days, and comparing them with those in modern variants make obser-

¹ A Collection of Stories. L., Published by Leningrad University, 1960.

vations of the evolution of the epos. Judging by the fact that the author of the manuscript tries to make use of certain episodes from «Manas» in order to praise Shirkent Sheikhs, one can make a conclusion that the epos was extremely popular with the people even at that time.

Recording «Manas» with a scientific purpose began in the second half of the XIX century.

On the 26th of May, 1856, a famous scientist Ch. Ch. Valichanov, while being among the Kirghiz, met with a Kirghiz narrator and listened to his performance of «Manas»¹. The tale impressed him very much. He writes: «Manas» is an encyclopedial collection of all Kirghiz myths, fairy-tales, legends brought together in time and centered on one person — hero Manas. It is something like steppe «Iliada». The mode of life, customs, models of behaviour, geography, religious and medical knowledge, international ties of the Kirghiz found their expression in this epos². Ch. Valichanov wrote down one of the episodes of the narration having put the beginning to recording of texts of the epos under the heading «Commemoration of Dead Kōkōtey»³, a prosaic translation of it wasn't completed. The first investigator who wrote down all the episodes of three parts of «Manas» and

¹ Valichanov Ch. Selected Works. Alma-Ata, 1958, p. 258.

² Ibidem, p. 112.

³ Ibidem, p. 346—360.

advanced his opinion on various scientific problems of the epos was a Russian scientist, a well-known turkologist Academician V. V. Radlov. In the 60's of XIX century he visited Kirghizia several times and recorded the texts of «Manas», which he published in 1885 in Saint-Petersburg in the Kirghiz language¹, in the Russian transcription. V. V. Radlov considered the epos to be a poetic reflection of the whole life and all the intentions of the people². He published his translation of «Manas» into German the same year in Leipzig³.

Gathering and studying of «Manas» on a large scale became possible only at the Soviet time. Thanks to a great attention, the Communist Party and the Soviet Government pay to everything that is popular, oral-poetic creations among them, records and publications of «Manas» are of great social importance. Many scientists of different nationalities took part in an investigation of its various problems. As a result, the science about «Manas» became not an amateur subject of separate persons, but the science of all the people. For in «Manas» there is a vast material for solving the most important problems of Soviet science about the people's epos, such as the problem of its genesis, the problem of relations of

¹ Radlov V. V. Types of People's Literature of North Turk Peoples; part V. Saint-Petersburg, 1885.

² Ibidem, Preface, p. XII.

³ Radloff W. Prolen der Volksliteratur der nördlichen Stamme, Theil, V. Spb., 1885.

the people's history and its reflection in poetry; the dependence of the idea of the epos and its popularity upon the peculiarities of class-disintegrating of the society, and the problem of the correlation of an oral poetry and written works of art¹.

Many great researchers contributed to the science of «Manas» — Acad. V. Zhirmunsky, Academician of the Kazach Academy of Sciences A. Auesov, Academician of the Kirghiz Academy of Sciences V. Yunusaliyev, professors A. N. Bernstam, P. N. Berkov, S. M. Abramson, wellknown folklorists M. Bogdanova, A. A. Petrosyan and others. The beginning of «Manas» research at the Soviet time was put by professor P. Faleyev's work «How a Kara-Kirghiz Tale is Made, which was published in the first issue of Tashkent magazine «Science and Education» in 1922. Here the author analyses artistic peculiarities of the epos on the base of materials, written down and published by V. V. Radlov. In this work there are many interesting thoughts about a close connection of epos texts with the lines on a well-known monument in honour of Kul-Tegin. An outstanding Kazakh writer, an expert in folklore, a well-known scientist M. Auesov has taken a special place among many investigators of «Manas». He took an active part in this field of science from the

¹ Petrosyan A. A. On the Problem of National Roots of the Epos «Manas». — In the book: The Kirghiz Heroic Epos «Manas». M., Published by the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, 1961, p. 5.

end of the 20's till the end of his life. His notable work "The Kirghiz Heroic Poem «Manas»"¹ is a result of detailed studies for many years, and belongs to fundamental researches into «Manas».

And K. Rachmatullin worked at the problems of «Manas» fruitfully. His special works published as separate brochures in Russian, in Kirghiz² are concerned with many questions in the epos and put out many interesting conclusions.

In works of Academician V. M. Zhirmunsky on the heroic epos in general³, on traditional events in it, on narrators, as well as in his researches into «Manas» itself⁴ there are many scientific generalizations, which are the results of profound observations and which are based on many facts.

Up to now there appeared more than three thousand large and little articles concerning «Manas». Extremely broad are scientific interests of investigators of this epos; among them folklorists, historians,

¹ *Auesov M. A.* Kirghiz Heroic Poem «Manas». See: Kirghiz Heroic Epos «Manas» M., 1961.

² *Rachmatullin K.* Narrators of the Epos «Manas». Frunze, 1942; *Rachmatullin K. A.* Great Patriot, Legendary Manas, Frunze, 1943; Narrator's art. In: Collected Volume — «Manas» — Heroic Epos of the Kirghiz People. Frunze, 1968, p. 75—147.

³ *Zhirmunsky V. M.* People's Heroic Epos. M.; L., 1962.

⁴ *Zhirmunsky V. M.* «Manas» Process of Setting and Epopee Progress. — In the book: People's Heroic Epos. M.; L., p. 282—329.

writers, philosophers, ethnographers, linguists, geographers, teachers, etc. As far as in the middle of the 30's, problems of the theory and practice while translating the epos into Russian were studied by prof. E. D. Polivanov¹; relations of events, reflected in the epos, with the history were followed by A. N. Bernstam², the importance of all the materials in the epos as an ethnographical source was studied by S. M. Abramson³, connections of «Manas» with Altai eposes — by P. N. Berkov⁴, and ideas and the contents of the epos — by M. I. Bog-

¹ *Polivanov E.* On Principles of Russian Translation of the Epos «Manas». — In the book: «Manas» — a Heroic Epos of Kirghiz People. Frunze, 1968, p. 56—74. Moreover, in manuscript funds of the Institute of Language and Literature there are manuscripts of several articles and translations of some episodes from «Manas» into Russian, made by him.

² *Bernstam A. N.* Historic Past of the Kirghiz. Frunze, 1942, p. 11—13; *Bernstam A. N.* The Epoch of a Rise of the Kirghiz Epos «Manas». — In the book: «Manas» — the Heroic Epos of the Kirghiz People. Frunze, 1968, p. 148—176; *Bernstam A. N.* On the Origin of the Name Manas. Ibidem, p. 177—191.

³ *Abramson S. M.* The Kirghiz and Their Ethnogenetic and Historical-cultural Ties. L., 1971, p. 240—373; Kirghiz Heroic Epos «Manas» as an Ethnographic Source. — In the book: «Manas» — The Heroic Epos of the Kirghiz People. Frunze, 1968, p. 203—211.

⁴ *Berkov P. N.* Altai Epos and «Manas». M., 1961, p. 235—256; The Notion of Motherland in «Manas». In the book: «Manas» — the Heroic Epos of the Kirghiz People. Frunze, 1968, p. 192—202.

danova¹. Of Kirghiz scientists prof. B. M. Yunusaliev occupies a special place in investigating «Manas». Being the author of some serious works² dedicated to different problems in «Manas» he was one of active initiators of the epos publishing. As an editor-in-chief of the Kirghiz text prepared for its issuing in a series «Epos of the People's of the USSR», B. M. Yunusaliev up to the last days of his life helped to solve many problems, concerned with the preparation of the texts for publishing. Such a complex and difficult work as a textological one was realized under his own participation and guidance. Only after the Great October Socialist Revolution there appeared an opportunity to write down the epos texts in the native language with the help of the alphabet, adapted for language peculiarities of this people. At the Soviet time recording «Manas» texts was made by a teacher Kayum Miftakov, who in 1922 started writing down an oral variant of a famous nar-

¹ Bogdanova M. I. The Kirghiz Literature. M., 1947, p. 49—76; On Peculiarities of the Kirghiz Heroic Epos «Manas». — In the book: The Kirghiz Heroic Epos «Manas», M., 1961, p. 197—234.

² Yunusaliev B. M. Preface. «Manas», book I. Frunze, 1958, p. III—XXXX, Yunusaliev B. M. On the Experience of Creating a Full Variant of the Epos «Manas». — In the book: The Kirghiz Heroic Epos «Manas». M., 1961, p. 282—297; Yunusaliev B. M. The Kirghiz Heroic Epos «Manas». — In the book: «Manas» — the Heroic Epos of the Kirghiz People, 1968, p. 212—231.

rator (manaschi) Sagimbai, the son of Orozbak.

Ibraim Abdrachmanov continued K. Miftachov's affair. Great is the merit of this modest person in his recording different variants of «Manas», in putting in order and keeping manuscripts. Among the astonishing reductions of the epos, existing now, it is impossible to find a page this person didn't touch. All the records from Sagimbai's variant to late ones, made by I. A. Abdrachmanov, are distinguished in an accuracy of fixed words and a tidiness in mounting.

From the middle of the 30's when special scientific institutions were organized in the Republic, a great attention is paid to recording the texts of «Manas». As a result, many variants of the epos were written down in the performance of well-known and notable narrators such as Sayakbai Karalaev, Bayimbet Abdirachmanov (Togolok Moldo), Bagish Sazanov, Shapak Irismendeyev, Akmat Irismendeyev, Aktan Tinibekov and others. Recording variants, not fixed earlier, stopped during the first years of the Great Patriotic War and was resumed in 1943. A registration of S. Karalaev's variant (the second and third parts of the epos, i. e. «Semetei» and «Seitek») was continued, recording M. Musulmankulov's variant was begun.

In 1960—70's a registration of these parts of the epos by M. Chokmorov was finished as well as variants of well-known narrators

(manaschi) D. Kochukeev, Dzh. Isaev, S. Moldokeeva and others. The second variant of all three parts of the epos was tape-recorded from S. Karalaev. Recording down the texts, unknown before, is being made.

At the Soviet time along with recording different variants of the epos much attention is paid to publishing of noted texts in order to return the epos to the people in a new form. A small abstract from «Semetei» — the second part of the trilogy «Manas», published in 1925 — was the first material from «Manas» issued in Moscow at the Soviet time in Arabian letters¹ according to the variant of narrator Tinibekov, notable at his time.

In the early 40's a publication of the best examples from recorded materials under a general heading «Series of Manas» has begun. The first, published in 1940, was «Manas' Childhood»², prepared for the publication by Sagimbai Orosbakov's variant. Later a number of brochures was issued, including episodes, popular among the people, selected from different variants of the epos: in 1947—7 brochures³; in 1942—2¹; in 1944—1 brochure². In accordance with results of the All-Union Conference on «Manas», held in Frunze in 1952, 2 books were

¹ The Poem «Semetei» (an abstract) in the Kirghiz language. M., 1925.

² Manas' Childhood. According to Sagimbai Orosbakov's variant. Prepared for publication by I. Abdirachmanov. Frunze, 1940.

³ Chan Alooko. On S. Orosbakov's variant. Pre-

published on the first part of «Manas»³, «Semetei»⁴ and «Seitek»⁵.

An attempt is now being made to issue a full text of the epos on separate variants. 4 volumes of S. Orosbakov's variant⁴ have been already published, 5 books of 3 parts of the epos on S. Karalaev's variant is being prepared for issuing.

pared for the publication by I. Abdirachmanov. Frunze, 1941; Kanikei Races Taitoru. On S. Karalaev's variant, the editor O. Dzhakishev. Frunze, 1941; Giant Makel. On S. Orosbakov's variant. Prepared for the publication by I. Abdirachmanov. Frunze, 1941; Manas' Death. On S. Karalaev's variant. Prepared for the publication by I. Abdirachmanov. Frunze, 1941; Passage of Semetei from Buchara to Talas. On Togolok Moldo's variant. Prepared for the publication by I. Abdirachmanov. Frunze, 1941; Ur-gench. On Akmat Irismendeyev's variant. Prepared for the publication by I. Abdirachmanov. Frunze, 1941.

¹ The First Battle. An abstract from «A Great March». The Narrator Orosbakov Sagimbai. Prepared for the publication by Dzh. Beishekeyev. Frunze, 1942; The Battle (from «Semetei»). Narrator B. Abdirachmanov (Togolok Moldo). Prepared for publication by Dzh. Beishekeyev. Frunze, 1942.

² Orosbakov S. The First March. Prepared for the publication by K. Rachmatullin. Frunze, 1944.

³ Manas, part 1, book 1. An abridged compound variant under the general editorship of prof. B. M. Yunusaliev. Frunze, 1958; Manas, part 1, book 2. Frunze, 1958.

⁴ Semetei, the second part of the epos «Manas», book 3, under the general editorship of prof. B. M. Yunusaliev. Frunze, 1959.

⁵ Seitek, the third part of the Epos «Manas», book 4. Frunze, 1960.

⁶ Manas. On S. Orosbakov's variant, book 1. Prepared for publication by S. Musaev. Frunze, Kirghizstan Publishing House, 1978; Manas. On

Along with «Manas» publication in Kirghiz, much effort was put to its translation into languages of other peoples, in the first place into Russian, and to make the peoples of the world familiar with the epos. With this aim in view, some works were fulfilled. Professor E. D. Polivanov was one of well-known scientists who initiated an artistic translation of «Manas» into Russian and put forward his idea concerning theory and practice of a translation. Since 1935, he took an active part in an interlinear and artistic translation of the epos into Russian, he has written a number of articles on his own impressions and published separate abstracts from translated materials¹.

In 1936—1940 many poetic abstracts from the epos were published in Russian in the Republican and central newspapers and magazines, according to a Special decision

S. Orosbakov's variant, book 2. Prepared for publication by K. Kirbashev, Dzh. Musaeva, R. Saribekov, O. Sooronov. Frunze, Kirghizstan Publishing House, 1980; Manas. On S. Orosbakov's variant, book 3. Prepared for publication by S. Musaev. Frunze, Kirghizstan Publishing House, 1981; Manas. On S. Orosbakov's variant, book 4. Prepared for publication by E. Abdildaev. Frunze, Kirghizstan Publishing House, 1982.

¹ Almambet's Order to Manas. Translated by E. D. Polivanov. Soviet Kirghizia, 1935, September, 40; The Kirghiz People's Epos «Manas», translated and adapted by E. D. Polivanov. Soviet Kirghizia, 1935, December, 24; *Polivanov E. D.* Fragments of the Kirghiz People's Epos «Manas». Literary Uzbekistan, 1936, № 2; and others.

of the Soviet of People's Commissars of the Kirghiz ASSR concerning the publication of «Manas» in Kirghiz and in Russian.

The Kazakhs¹ and the Uzbeks² read already the Kirghiz Epos in their native tongues.

Great is the interest of foreign scientists to «Manas». Even before the Great October Socialist Revolution (1911) a noted Hungarian investigator G. Almashi published a passage from «Manas» under the heading «Parting of the Hero Manas with His Son Semetei»³, its appeared in the magazine «Keleti Szemle» with comments in Kirghiz and in German. A creative power of «Manas» narrators is compared with aedas from Ancient Greece in the works of an English scientist Dzh. Tomson⁴.

Foreign authors on theoretical problems of the literature science⁵ use very widely

¹ The First Battle. Alma-Ata, 1942; Manas, book 1, 1962; Manas, book 2. Alma-Ata, 1962; Manas, book 3. Alma-Ata, 1962; Manas, book 4. Alma-Ata, 1962; Manas. The Heroic Epos of the Kirghiz People. Preface by M. Auesov, translated by G. Ormanov, T. Zharokov, K. Bekchozhin. Alma-Ata, books 1—4, 1961—1962.

² Manas. The Kirghiz People's Epos. Book 1, translated by Mirtimir. Tashkent, 1964.

³ Keleti Szemle Revue orientale Pour les études ourales altaïques. Budapest, 1911—1912, t. XII. For the translation of this work into Russian see the book: «Manas»—the Heroic Epos of the Kirghiz People, 1968, p. 42—48.

⁴ Tomson Dzh. Researches on the History of Ancient Greece Society. M., 1958.

⁵ Baur S. Heroic Poetry. London, 1952; Monro H., Kershov Ch. Development of Science, vol. III. Cambridge, 1940.

facts from the Kirghiz epos. A Turkish scientist A. Inan¹, a professor of London University A. Hatto² turned very often to the problems of «Manas» in their special works.

¹ *Inan A.* Ideology and Heroes in «Manas». Varlik, 1941, No. 185; *Inan A.* Manasta ideoloji ve kahramanlar. Varlik, 1941, saji 185; *The same author.* Various Layers in the Epos «Manas». Varlik, 1941, No. 188 (Manas destanında görülu muhtelif tabakalvr. Varlik, 1941, saji 188); *The same author.* Ceremonies «ash» and «og» in «Manas». Varlik, 1941, No. 190. (Manasda «ash» ve «yog» merasimi. Varlik, 1941, saji 190); *The same author.* General Outlook on Turkish Destani. The Annual of Researches on the Turkish Language. Ankara, 1954. (Türk destanlarına General bir bakış. Türk dili aratirmaları Viligi belleten. Ankara, 1954); *The same author.* Notes on the Epos «Manas». Annual of Researches on the Turkish Language. Ankara, 1959. (Manas destani uzerine Notlar. Türk dili arastir-lari villigi belleten. Ankara, 1959).

² *Hatto A. T.* Koketai and Bokmurun: Comparison of Two Related Heroic Poems of the Kirghiz — I—II. Published by London University, vol. XXXII, parts II—III; *The same author.* The Birth of Manas. A Comparison of Two Branches of the Heroic Epos in Kirghiz Central Asia, vol. XIV, part 2. London, 1969; *The same author.* Almambet, Er Kokocho and Ak Erkech. An Episode from the Kirghiz Heroic Cycle «Manas». Central Asia Journal. Visbaden, XIII, 1969; *The same author.* The Find of the Kirghiz Original of Koketai. The Bulletin of the Department of Oriental and Asian Studies. London University, 1971; *The same author.* Koz Kaman. Central Asia Journal, part I, XV (1971), part II, XV XV (1972); *The same author.* Semetei. Central Asia, part I, XVIII (1973), part II, XIX (1974); *The same author.* The Memorable Feast in the Honour of Koketai Chan. The Kirghiz Epic Poem. First published from a photo-copy of a unique manuscript

There are, however, the attempts in the works of certain foreign scientists to distort the Soviet reality, to oppose one people to another and to use the epos for disseminating hostile bourgeois fabrications. For example, such attempts are made in the works of S. Bour, A. Inan and, partly, A. Chatto. Separate abstracts and episodes from «Manas» are translated into French¹, German², Hungarian³, English⁴ and other languages of the world.

Talanted individuals from the people were creators of «Manas». They were the epos keepers, who passed on its texts from generation to generation. Thanks to those narrators, «Manas» developed, its contents grew broader, its form improved and «Manas» became such a composition that we know to-day. The narrators of this epos are called manaschi among the people. The term «manaschi» is a new notion, which appeared during the Soviet epoch as a re-

with a translation and commentary by A. T. Hatto. Published by the Oxford University. London, 1977.

¹ Dist kirghiz Traduit par B. Bolislawskaja et Roland Marlaux — Europe Revue mensuelle. Paris, 1937, 15 mars, No. 171.

² Manas — the Honourable. The Kirghiz People's Epos. Berlin, Edited by Folk and Welt, 1974. (Manas; der Hochherzige. Kirghizische Heldenepos. Berlin, Verlag Volk and Welt, 1974).

³ Manas. The Kirghiz Epos. Translated into Hungarian by Anna Bede (Manasz Kirghiz Hösenek Europa Konyveiado. Budapest, 1979).

⁴ Commemoration Feast to Koketai Khan. The Kirghiz Epic Poem. Published by the Oxford University. London, 1977.

sult of a differentiation between the epos narrators and reciters of other genres of folklore. Before the Great October Socialist Revolution the Kirghiz called all epic compositions «jomok», and, consequently, the narrators of «Manas» as well as other eposes — «jomokchu». Though main creators of «Manas» are narrators-manaschi, and their role in the development, preservation of the epos is tremendous, «Manas» is the people's composition for usually the people are not passive listeners of «Manas» performance by different narrators, but active participators of a creative process, main appreciators and judges of «manaschi», the people help to preserve a traditional base of the epos with their advice. The people prompt what is to be added to the text, and what isn't, perceiving the best and the newest what was brought in by the narrator, rejecting everything that doesn't correspond a traditional spirit and the idea of the epos. «Manas» narrators are very respectable persons, they have a great authority and influence on the people. The names of some especially talented narrators who have created its best variants and contributed very much to the improvement of «Manas», are remembered by the people for ages. For example, the people remember the names of the reciters such as Irchi uul, who himself acts as Manas' fellow-champion in some episodes. As a legend tells it was he — Irchi uul — who created first lines of «Manas», carolled heroic deeds of Manas in the

form of a lamentation after his death. Later all the weeping songs were collected by Toktogul, a legendary singer, who lived 500 years ago and who created the epos «Manas» from those separate lamentations. Such a great was his talent, that when he played a komuz and sang songs, he was listened to not only by the people, but even by winds, mountains, and rivers — the whole nature.

The people remember Noorus name, the narrator of the epos, who lived, supposedly, in XVIII century. The people remember very well the names of Keldibek Baribozov, who died about the 80's of the last century; Balik (Bekmurat) Kumarov, who lived at the same time, and many other manaschi. There is much more information about the narrators who lived later. For example, the people keep in mind a well-known reciter Tini-bek Dzhapiev, who was born in 1846 and died in 1902. The people remember him very well and there is much information about him — from legends to details of his life.

Narrators of «Manas» their artistic peculiarities represent one of important problems of the science about «Manas». It's not surprising that so much attention is paid to this item in works of many scientists — from Academician V. V. Radlov to Soviet researchers with M. Auesov and Academician Zhirmunsky at the head.

Due to special manner of their performance «Manas» narrators differ very much from other representatives of an oral art—

they constitute a specific, numerous and highly respected group. They perform only «Manas», this is their only profession, they ought to use only a «ready» plot and follow not only a main line of the epos, but artistic methods, that were elaborated by former reciters and were passed from generation to generation. Therefore the main part in the narrators' performance is played by traditions and not an individuality. A narrator's talent, his mastery depend on his skill to exactly transfer and use traditional elements of the epos, elaborated for ages. But it doesn't mean that every reciter of «Manas» simply repeats the lines learned by heart. The role of an individuality in a manaschi profession is great, for the epos performance is not a mere repetition of a well-known plot. Every real manaschi, manaschi-aed tells traditional episodes, familiar subjects in his own words. He keeps the main line in that form, which it had earlier, but he gives his own details, explains some phenomena, and even treats some images of the epos in his own way. If an individual narrator's contribution to the epos is a success and gets the approval of the majority of listeners, if it raises an artistic level of the epos, then it acquires a recognition and becomes a traditional phenomenon for coming generations. For this reason, traditions and individualities are related so closely, that it is often difficult to draw a line between them. However, traditions have more importance for every

manaschi, than individual peculiarities, and he aims his talent at deep mastering and improving of traditional elements. It is impossible to become a real narrator without one's personal contribution, one's own creative power as it happens in any creative work. Without it there couldn't be so many variants of the epos and «Manas» would loose its lively, creative character, it would stop developing.

A profession of the narrator of Manas is very evolved among the Kirghiz. A strict classification of this speciality proves such a statement. For example, manaschi are divided into four groups according to their creative power, their talent and so on. The first stage — the starting period of the profession — a pupil of manaschi or beginning manaschi (uyronchuk manaschi). During this period a young «candidate», being in a constant contact with one of manaschi, who are already well-known, acquires secrets of the skill. He studies the methods of a performance, learns separate lines and even long abstracts by heart. Interesting and highly-artistic episodes, picturesque poetic lines, neat expressions, pinioned words from a repertoire of a skilled narrator of the epos may be taken and widely used by young manaschi during his own performance before the audience.

The second stage in mastering profession is a narrator-workman (manaschi-rhapsode). They are called «chala manaschi» (lit. not true manaschi). In general, they

learn some well-known and interesting episodes of the epos by heart and perform them with little changes and additions of details. All great and small masters pass through this period. Some of them, who have talent, capacities, go to the next stage, that is they create their own variant and become masters—narrators of the epos; and others, less talented, stay at the same level, executing only separate episodes from the epos by the variants of great masters. The role of narrators-workmen is great in the popularization of the epos. For they constitute the biggest part of the epos narrators and usually perform the most interesting and good passages.

Narrators-masters occupy a higher and more honourable place than narrators-workmen. They are called «chinigi manaschi» (lit. true manaschi). Reciting «Manas» is their profession, they know all the events in the epos from the beginning to the end, they create their own variant.

The most talented manaschi occupy the highest step of the profession. They are called «chon manaschi» or «chon jomokchu» (lit. a great manaschi, a great taler). These people are extremely talented, they know all the events in the epos very well and recite them in detail, they themselves create variants especially popular among the people. Thanks to their art they are highly respected, the people remember their names for a long time. Such were Keldibek, Balik, Tinibek and Choyuke from an older generation.

The most famous reciters, who lived at the Soviet time, were Sagimbai Orosbakov and Sayakbai Karalaev.

A characteristic of a creative power of «Manas» narrators can't be complete without mentioning the role of «selectivity» in this profession.

All manaschi, without exception, relate their gift with a prophetic dream.

Academician V. V. Radlov marked that Kirghiz reciters explain their performance vocation by an inspiration from the heavens. Since then almost all scientists, who study manaschi art, regard this question.

The explanation of one's vocation and talent by an inspiration from the heavens is a well-known phenomenon in a folklore science, at least, among Turkic peoples. According to E. E. Bertels' opinion, this is a traditional phenomenon existing from time immemorial¹. The conception of «selectivity» is developed not only among the Kirghiz epos narrators, but among many peoples in general, and it plays an important role in their art. Along with a scientific analysis of this phenomenon some investigators of the epos consider, that the fact of a dream cannot influence a manaschi creative power and information about manaschi dreams is mentioned only by a tradition in order to raise oneself in the eyes

¹ See: Bertels E. E. A Novel about Alexander. M; L., Published by the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, 1948, p. 137.

of listeners. So, K. Rachmatullin writes: «Legends about dreams are nothing else than an extreme glorification of Manas, when he turns into a spirit-protector, and narrators are turned into his choice. All this confirms once more a great authority of the epos among people's masses, who consider Manas to be a great patron and a symbol of happiness and kindness¹. Without denying a correct idea of the scientist concerning the origin of the trust in «selectivity» and its role in a practical life of reciters, it is necessary to mention the fact that not always manaschi stories about dreams are legends or tales invented on purpose. Indeed, there can be narrators who perhaps haven't dreamed, but they say about it on mercenary purposes. It should be remembered, that all the narrators of «Manas», without exception inform about dreams. One can draw a conclusion: of course, one cannot deny the importance of the tradition, but one must consider the fact that the dream itself could help a narrator to choose his profession, he could begin to perform «Manas» at once. For it is possible that the dream could strengthen a belief of a young man into his own abilities to become manaschi, to give an impetus to his talent. Here, of course, the fact is not in a supernatural strength of the dream, but in a per-

¹ *Rachmatullin K. Creative Power of Manaschi.*— In the book: «Manas»—the Heroic Epos of the Kirghiz People. Frunze, «Ilim», 1968, p. 96.

son's belief in such a thing. Secondly, as the dream tradition exists not only among manaschi, but among narrators of other peoples, one can make a conclusion, that the dream is not only a tribute to traditions of the past among the Kirghiz manaschi, but a phenomenon, concerning peculiarities of manaschi creative power, which are related with his psychology, the character of his talent—his natural abilities.

During the performance of «Manas», besides rendering the text of the epos, of great importance are its original tune (the melody of this epos), discriptive gestures of manaschi, his facial expression. Every movement, pose are not arbitrary, they are intentional and correspond to the meaning of a poetic text. In other words, they help the listeners of the epos to better realise the sense.

The acquaintance with manaschi life and their artistic biographies plays an important part in revealing professional secrets of «Manas» reciters. Today the science knows artistic biographies of more than forty epos narrators (the list of manaschi is much longer). More or less fully are studied variants and a creative power of two great manaschi—our contemporaries—Sagimbai, the son of Orosbak and Sayakbai Karalaev.

Sagimbai Orosbakov (1867—1930) is an outstanding narrator of «Manas», who has created one of unique variants of the epos. S. Orosbakov's creative power is interesting

to us by the fact, that he was the last great master of an old school of reciters, whose creative course had a classical form: travels to ails, a close contact with listeners. It was a natural way for narrators. Other reciters, whose compositions we know very well and who are our contemporaries, couldn't pass the same natural creative course in connection with changes in people's life.

Sagimbai began to perform «Manas» at the age of 15—16. He related his creative power with the dream, as well as other narrators of the epos. The first true teacher of a future reciter was Chonbash (Narmantai), a well-known narrator of his time. But even before the meeting with Chonbash, Sagimbai probably was familiar with the epos, for his own elder brother Alisher was considered to be a good narrator of «Manas». From his childhood S. Orosbakov had a gift of composing verses — there are poems, composed by young Sagimbai. Having become a well-known manaschi, Sagimbai continued to create his own artistic works, he was a great expert of people's songs and many types of Kirghiz folklore. S. Orosbakov was a professional narrator. Recording «Manas» texts from Sagimbai was begun in the summer of 1922 by K. Miftakov. I. Abdirachmanov proceeded and worked with the narrator till August, 1926. In the end, the record of the first part of the epos was completed — «Manas» itself. To a present knowledge, Sagimbai performed all three main parts of the epos. But because

of his illness, it was impossible to go on with the last two parts. They say that S. Orosbakov performed «Semetei» in a more complete form and on a higher artistic level than «Manas», for he considered Semetei to be his patron, who came to him in his dream before performing the epos.

It is generally accepted that Sagimbai Orosbakov's version of «Manas» is a classical one, the fullest and the most picturesque in artistic respects¹. Such a unique position of this variant is connected with some objective causes. First of all, it is a result of a vigorous native talent of the narrator, multiplied by hard long labour. Secondly, when recording the «Manas» texts was made by his variant, S. Orosbakov was 55—57 years old. It was a period of maturity and blossoming of manaschi genius, as he was a professional reciter already for about 40 years. During this period his variant was approved by people's masses, and manaschi made his text more precise, polished it, improved the system of events in view of advice and decisive notes of listeners. In the third place, many of now well-known narrators of the epos were Sagimbai's contemporaries. He has taken much from them: he imitated a narrator's skill, with some of them he «worked» while going from ail to ail. Such a contact influenced Sagimbai's own variant very favourably, for in such a

¹ Zhirmunsky V. M. People's Heroic Epos. M.; L., 1962, p. 284.

way he had an opportunity to become familiar with the best artistic finds of outstanding manaschi of his time and their predecessors, to intercept the best they have achieved. Still S. Orosbakov's variant has its drawbacks. It reflects some religious notions in more details than other variants, there are some ideas of a pan-turkic doctrine as well as episodes which have nothing to do with traditional events of the epos.

Sayakbai Karalaev (1894—1971) is one of the most popular and talented narrators of «Manas», the creator of the fullest variant of the epos (his variant of three parts of «Manas» has more than 500 thousand poetic lines). S. Karalaev's life is similar to that of many Kirghiz poor people: before the October Revolution he worked for the rich, after the Revolution in 1918 he joins the Red Army as a volunteer and becomes one of active defenders of a new life. On returning home in 1922, he worked as a chairman of a village council, he was one of the first who entered the kolkhoz, from 1935 he is an actor of the Kirghiz State Philharmonic Society. A creative way of S. Karalaev is of great interest for the science by the fact, that he is an outstanding representative of new epoch narrators, who lived and worked under quite different conditions than S. Orosbakov and other manaschi, Sayakbai's grandmother, a great expert of the folklore, often told him everything she knew and even passages from the epos «Manas»; thanks to her Sayakbai be-

came interested in the epos from his childhood. But he began to perform the epos comparatively late, according to his own words, when he was a soldier of the Red Army. He became a true narrator since 1924, when he met a well-known reciter Choyuke Omurov, and while working with him he intercepted the secrets of manaschi. Recording the epos texts from S. Karalaev was begun in 1935 and finished in 1947. S. Karalaev died in Frunze, in 1971. His variant is distinguished by the fact that it includes all three parts of the epos and depicts battle scenes very widely and impressively.

One of main problems in the science on «Manas» is a question about the time it appeared. Scientists unanimously state that the epos reflects a long history of the Kirghiz, historical events interlace in it with ancient legends, fairy-tales, myths. And still the question concerning the time and conditions of the appearance of the Kirghiz epos «Manas», historical events and persons it describes constitutes a complicated problem and at the present level of our knowledge the question can be raised only as a preliminary hypothesis¹.

In general the science knows to-day three hypotheses about the time of the epos origin:
1) As prof. M. O. Auesov and prof.

¹ Jirmunsky V. M. Introduction to «Manas» Research. — In the book: The Kirghiz Heroic Epos «Manas». M., 1961, p. 138.

A. N. Bernstam consider, main events in «Manas» are related with the period of the history of the Kirghiz when they had contacts with the Uigurs¹;

2) Prof. B. M. Yunusaliev makes a conclusion on the reason of the epos analysis, historical facts, ethnographical, linguistic and geographical information that the basis of the epos is connected with events in IX—XI centuries, when the Kirghiz fought against the Kidans-Kara-Kitais²;

3) Academician V. M. Zhirmunsky thinks that a historical layer of the epos renders the events of XV—XVIII centuries though it contains many materials which reflect ancient notions of the people³.

The present level of studies on «Manas» doesn't permit to agree fully with any of the above-mentioned hypotheses, rejecting others as not correct. A deep acquaintance with the epos contents brings one to an indisputable conclusion: events that constitute the plot of «Manas» represent many layers showing that the composition was being formed for a long time. Therefore while solving problems connected with the

¹ See: *Auesov M.* The Kirghiz People's Heroic Poem «Manas».—In the book: The Kirghiz Heroic Epos «Manas». M., 1961, p. 51—65; *Bernstam A. N.* The Epoch of the Rise of the Kirghiz Epos «Manas».—In the book: Manas—the Heroic Epos of the Kirghiz People. Frunze, 1968, p. 146—176.

² *Yunusaliev B. M.* Preface. «Manas», book I. Frunze, 1958, p. IX—X.

³ *Zhirmunsky V. M.* The People's Heroic Epos. M.; L., 1962, p. 296—317.

genesis of this epos there appears a necessity of exact revealing and attentive study of every layer, beginning from the oldest ones to those having a great importance in the following years during a historical progress of the Kirghiz people.

Such archaic layers were maintained in «Manas» texts, they can be related with the life of the Kirghiz long before the formation of the state. Some scientists consider the images of Manas himself and his enemy, hero Joloi, to be the oldest elements of the epos¹.

Even older elements of the epos are traced in heroes' actions, connected with survivals of matriarchy views, in traditional reasons of a hero's match-making, as well as in taming a hero girl, in a wonderful birth of a hero and others. Whole episodes in «Manas» refer to a fairy plot—such as an episode with Makel-Doo (cyclop Makel), Koshoi, the struggle of hunters with a one-eyed cyclop and others. To archaic layers one can refer elements of the epos, which are connected with ancient beliefs (totemism, fetishism—worship of wonderful qualities of things, animals, heavens, earth, fire, a white colour and so on).

No doubt, the plot of the epos maintains traces of important events, experienced by the ancient Kirghiz during their yenisei-or-

¹ *Radlov V. V.* Examples of People's Literature of North Turkic Tribes, part V. Preface, p. XI—XII; *Zhirmunsky V. M.* People's Heroic Epos, p. 310.

chon and altai periods, traces of their interrelations with other peoples and the way they have passed. Without doubt there is also information in the epos about jungar epoch, which is nearer to our times and impressions about it are better preserved in the memory of the people. Moreover, there is «to-day's» information in the epos: about quick-firing weapons, about a gun of an enormous size and others.

The analysis of steady main events in the epos shows that the highest stage of a tribal order is the epoch of the so-called military democracy. A classical characteristic of this epoch is given by F. Engels. He wrote that a military leader, a council, a people's meeting constitute organs of a tribal order, developing to a military democracy. It is military because war and an organization for war become now regular functions of the people's life¹.

The position of the members of the society, their interrelations, their rights and obligations, their views and ideas, their labour and tools, the relation of the people to tools and means of production denote the fact that the mode of life of the Kirghiz people at the highest stage of a tribal order is reflected in «Manas» contents.

Historians call the period of a military democracy, experienced by every people on

¹ See: Engels F. The Origin of Family, Private Property and State,— Marx K., Engels F. Comp. vol. 21, p. 164.

a historical way of mankind progress «a heroic period» in the history of the peoples, which is characterized as the time of constant wars, courageous raids and distant military marches in the struggle for grasslands and cattle, in pursuit of rich military plunder¹.

As scientists consider, just such a life, fruitful in events, gave rise to the appearance of people's heroes — brave and strong fighters, daring and powerful leaders, who were glorified and in whose honour the first heroic poems were versified².

As well as other types of people's eposes «Manas» is a multi-variant composition that is explained by its oral existence. At present there are 65 records of three parts of «Manas», which are kept in manuscript funds at the Institute of Language and Literature of the Kirghiz Academy of Sciences. There are 33 records of the first, the main part of the epos, i. e. «Manas» itself. Apart from 3 records, written down before the Revolution, the texts of «Manas» were fixed on the territory of present Kirghizstan from epos reciters — manaschi. Of 33 records of the first part of Manas the following variants are distinguished by the volume and the completeness of described events:

1) The variant, written down by Acad. V. V. Radlov. The exact date as well as the

¹ Gryasnov M. P. The First Pazirik Burial Mound. L., 1950, p. 5—6.

² Ibidem, p. 5—6.

narrator's name from whom the records of the texts were made are not indicated.

A full volume of «Manas» (without «Semetei and Seitek») is 9449 poetic lines.

Though almost all traditionally-constant episodes are given in a very shortened form and some are absolutely absent, this variant is of great importance in studying the epos «Manas». The presence of poetic lines, episodes similar to later records in the variant, written down by V. V. Radlov, proves a constant character of not only the plot of the epos, but of many artistic-picturesque means, which are inherent in a given composition.

2) Sagimbay Orosbakov's variant was written down in 1922—1926 in various places of the present Narin district of the Kirghiz SSR in Arabic letters by K. Miftakov and I. Abdirachmanov, it is kept now in manuscript funds at the Institute of Language and Literature of the Kirghiz Academy of Sciences (stock No. No. from 200 to 211). The whole volume of the manuscript is 5505 pages (180378 poetic lines), the sheet size is different. Up to now a given variant isn't published in a full form, separate episodes are published in a shortened form, four books of this variant were issued in an abbreviated form for a mass reader.

3) Sayakbai Karalaev's variant was written down in 1935—1937 in Latin letters. K. Dzhumabaev, I. Abdirachmanov and others took part in it. The volume of «Manas» on S. Karalaev's variant is 84830 poetic

lines, it is kept in manuscript funds at the Institute of Language and Literature of the Kirghiz Academy of Sciences (stock No. No. from 911 to 924). From S. Karalaev the second and the third parts of the epos were also written down in 1940—1947, that is «Semetei» and «Seitek», which are also kept in manuscript funds at the ILL (stock No. No. of «Semetei» — from 925 to 953, those of «Seitek» — from 954 to 967). There are three parts of the epos there, tape-recorded in 1968. (The volume of «Manas» is 11 cassettes by 350 metres — 17948 poetic lines).

4) The variant of a noted narrator, Shapak Irismendeev, was written down in 1935—1948. Recording was made by Kurman Kidirbaeva, Tashim Bayzhiev, Osmon Kishtoobaev, Zhanek Namatov and Ibragimov.

The materials, written down from Sh. Irismendeev, are kept in manuscript funds at the Kirghiz Academy of Sciences (stock No. No. 49, 50, 51, 37, 38, 39). A full volume is 24588 poetic lines. Manuscripts are in Latin and Russian alphabets. Sheet sizes are different.

Sh. Irismendeev is one of well-known reciters of the epos. He performed all three main parts of «Manas». The volume of «Semetei», written down from Sh. Irismendeev (stock No. No. from 865 to 878), is 42338 poetic lines, and that of «Seitek» (stock No. 973) is 14718.

Sh. Irismendeev's variant covers all tra-

ditional episodes of the epos, but they are given in a shortened form, and in the contents they are very close to Sagimbay's variant.

5) Togolok Moldo's (Bayimbet Abdirachmanov's) variant. Recording the variant was made by the narrator himself in 1936—1941. «Manas» (stock No. No. 829a, 830, 831, 832, 833, 834, 835, 836, 837, 1032, 1025) and «Semetei» (stock No. No. 838, 839, 840, 841, 1025) were written down. All the materials are kept in manuscript funds at the ILL of the Kirghiz Academy of Sciences. The volume of «Manas» is 53045 poetic lines.

Togolok Moldo's variant is very close to the variant, performed by S. Orosbakov, many passages are very similar in detail. It is explained by the fact, that both manaschi were trained by one master — an outstanding narrator of the epos Tinibek.

6) Bagish Sazanov — one of noted reciters of «Manas». «Manas», «Semetei», «Seitek» were written down from him in 1938—1949 in Frunze and in his homeland — in the kolkhoz «Kizil-Tuu», Dzhumgal region of Narin district. Bagishov Muchammed, the son of the narrator, Abdirakov Toktaaly, Musaev Inayat, Toktogulov Belek and others took part in recording. Materials, written down from B. Sazanov, are kept in manuscript funds at the ILL of the Kirghiz Academy of Sciences. «Manas» (stock No. No. 160—164, a full volume — 1920 pages, 41147 poetic lines), «Semetei» (stock No.

No. 165—175, a full volume — 67704 poetic lines) and «Seitek» — (No. No. 176—177, a full volume — 5594 poetic lines).

B. Sazanov's variant differs by many features both from Sagimbay's variant and that of Sayakbay, especially the first episodes of the epos. A major part of the materials in this variant is constituted by «A Great March», which is very close to that of S. Orosbakov's variant.

7) M. Musulmankulov's variant. His variants of «Manas» and «Semetei» were written down from a well-known narrator, akyn and composer Moldobasan Musulmankulov by K. Kidirbaeva in 1935—1945. The texts cover all the materials of «Semetei», the volume 43102 poetic lines in Latin letters, kept in manuscript funds at the ILL of the Kirghiz Academy of Sciences (stock No. No. 77—89). «Manas» was written down in 1944—1945 in Russian letters by S. Baysalov, A. Taigurenov, I. Abdirachmanov. The volume of «Manas» — 57718 poetic lines, the record is kept in the same funds (stock No. No. 65—76). Recording of both parts of «Manas» was made in Frunze.

The description of events and methods of narrating, the materials in this variant have some peculiarities; but, in general, it is rather close to Sagimbay's variant.

8) I. Abdirachmanov's variant. In 1946—1952 a noted folklorist and narrator Ibraim Abdirachmanov himself wrote down his variant of three parts of the epos and gave it

to the ILL of the Kirghiz Academy of Sciences.

Recording was begun in 1946 from the last episode («A Commemoration Feast on Manas») — the first part of the epos (the volume — 3731 poetic lines). In 1947—1948 materials on «Semetei» were written down and put into funds (stock No. No. 991—997, the volume — 23364), the same, 1948, year recording «Seitek» was begun and completed (stock No. No. 998, 1158, the volume — 7839 poetic lines). In 1952 the rest episodes of the first part were written down from the beginning (stock No. No. 190a, 196b, the volume — 14983 poetic lines).

I. A. Abdirachmanov's variant covers all main episodes of the epos in a shortened form, and in its contents it is very close to S. Orosbakov's variant.

9) M. Chokmorov's variant. In 1959—1972 all three parts of the epos were written down in Bokombaev, Ton region, Issyk-Kul district. Investigators of «Manas» sector of the ILL took part in it. A full volume of all written down materials is 148557 poetic lines besides 28 tape-recorder cassettes — 9700 metres. All tape-recordings on Manas are those episodes, which are not fixed on paper. All the materials are kept in manuscript funds at the ILL of the Kirghiz Academy of Sciences (stock No. No. «Manas» — 212, 214, 215, 216, 217, 219, 224; «Semetei» — 218, 221, 222, 223; «Seitek» — 220, 225; tape-records — 213, 225a, 225b).

Mambet Chokmorov is one of noted reciters of the epos, his variant is the second in volume after that of Karalaev.

It covers almost all main traditional events of the epos, methods of performing also correspond to those of great manaschi. But in separate episodes, details, explanations it is far from Sagimbay's and Sayakbay's variants; it stands apart.

Of existing materials just these variants can be considered the variants of «Manas» in a true sense of the word.

Variants of Sagimbay Orosbakov and Sayakbay Karalaev differ from others in many respects. Each variant has its merits and drawbacks, its peculiarities and common features that make them closer to each other. We give a short narration of the events in both variants for a clearer idea of common and distinctive features.

On Sagimbay Orosbakov's variant main events look like this: the composition begins, according to accepted traditions, from enumerating Manas' ancestors and mentioning the fact that a foreign Khanate had occupied the Kirghiz lands, and Nogoï's sons were exiled. Banished to Altai lands is Dzhakip who has no children of his own. He is very upset by the fact. And as last his son was born. The boy is named Manas. Manas is a disobedient child. In order to teach him life parents give him to «drudges». When he is 9 years old Manas begins to oppose Kalmik violence and shows his daring. Under Manas' command the Kir-

ghiz conquer the Altai Kalmiks and giant Nescara with his numerous troops who wanted to defeat Dzhakip. Spies of Esenchan as well as athletes, sent by eleven duu-du who wanted to capture Manas, are also defeated. Guarding against hostile alien tribes and against a danger to be smashed by them, the people decide to unite and proclaim Manas a khan. Manas gathers large troops and liberates his homeland from enemies. The people wander to Ala-Too. Next events tell how the Kirghiz were attacked by Shooruk Khan who wants to take power over them, but he is defeated and is obliged to make peace and to give his daughter Akilai as a gift to the Kirghiz.

Almambet's story represents an independent part. He is a Chinese by nationality, takes Islam and leaves China. At first he serves Kazakh hero Kakche, then goes to Manas. The next narration is about Manas' marriage with Kanikei and events with «Kozkaman». Sagimbay sang a large separate episode — «A Commemoration Feast on Koketei» as the next part of the epos. In Sayakbay Karalaev's variant this event is narrated not in «Manas», but in «Semetei» as a recollection. This tradition may be traced in variants of other semeteichi. It is probable that at first Sagimbay also performed «A Commemoration Feast on Koketei» not in «Manas» but in «Semetei», for in this episode he mentions such names of heroes as Chinkodzho, Toltoi and others, which could be met only in «Semetei». Most

likely, this episode was transferred by Sagimbay from the second part into the first, when the epos was written down, in order to fill in proper spots in Manas' biography. Such transferring, made by Sagimbay, was approved by other manaschi. Sayakbay Karalaev recognized this fact. Being asked, why «A Commemoration Feast on Koketei» was performed in «Semetei», he answered that he had forgotten this episode while performing «Manas», and having recollected he put it into «Semetei». Virtually, the matter is not in the fact that manaschi had forgotten such a great event, but in the fact that there existed a generally accepted tradition from which Sagimbay receded. Nevertheless, Sayakbay didn't reproach Sagimbay in this breaking the tradition, but, on the contrary, considered himself «to be guilty». Here we see that some traditional events can be changed if these changes are grounded and serve the aims of improving the epos. They may be positively accepted by other reciters and even become a tradition for future generations.

The next episode on Sagimbay's variant is «A Great March» against Konurbai; it is completed by the victory of the Kirghiz in a great battle by making peace after presenting gifts to winners. Manas returns to his motherland with his troops and trophies. On returning from the war, upset by the fact, that he has no child of his own, his inheritor, Manas plans to make a pilgrimage to Mekka to ask for blessing. Most of

his relatives, with Bakai at the head, do not approve it. But Manas intends to go, incited by Kirgil who was always known as a mischief-maker. Those, who don't want Manas to go to such distant places, try to dissuade him and send their people to his wives and learn that Kanikei is pregnant. They persuade Manas to remain, as now there is no necessity, but Manas doesn't want to refuse from his words and yielding Kirgil's flattering he still leaves for Mekka. Numerous enemy troops attack the Kirghiz during Manas' absence. He returns from Mekka when the war is in full swing. The enemies are defeated, but Manas is wounded on the battle field and dies of wounds. He is buried in Kum-Aryk, in the steppe Bayan-Talaa, where a mousoleum was erected to him. This place was named after Manas.

Traditionally, Sayakbay Karalaev's variant also begins with enumerating Manas' ancestors. After Karakan's death the Kirghiz were captured by khans Motto and Alooche and endured many disasters. Karakan's sons who try to resist are exiled to various places. Dzhakip, banished to Altai lands with forty Kirghiz families, mines gold and becomes very rich, but he constantly grumbles at his fate—he has no children. Ensenkhan's prophets denounce to their lord, that a boy named Manas is to be born among the Kirghiz and he will ruin Ensenkhan. The Khan orders his servants to find and bring this boy to him. They find

Dzharmanas, the son of Samarkand Chonshen, and take him with them considering him to be Manas. At the time Dzhakip dreams that he would have a robust son, as his dream interpreters explain. And soon a boy was born and named Manas. The boy is very disobedient. His father sends him to his shepherd Oshpur to look after lambs. There Manas stays till he is 12, but still he is disobedient. The victory over Kalmik troops enumerating 700 men is the first great deed of Manas. Having got a message about Manas from Tagilik, who himself hardly survives after this battle, Ensenkhan sends against Manas ten thousand warriors with Dongu and Dzholoi at the head. Manas conquers Dzholoi's troops who hardly fled away.

As Akbalti advises Manas starts to look for his people and hero Koshoi. Having met him near At-Bashi and having consulted with him, Manas goes with his ail to Talas valley. Offended by his father, who abuses him as if he squanders cattle, Manas leaves his home and goes to a steppe. There he meets an old man, magician Babadiykan, a patron of tillers-dehkan, and on his advice Manas begins to sow corn and buys a horse Akkulu for the gathered harvest. Then he meets sacred Chizr, who presents him six swords fallen from the heavens. While looking for his relatives Manas meets Bakai, Adzhibai and Shuutu who become his choro. He returns to his ail.

Manas fights against a violator Alooche,

conquers his troops, and divides his riches among the people. The people choose him their khan. Then he goes against Kalchin khan Shooruk and defeats him. Frightened Shooruk presents Manas his daughter Akilai.

Chubak's story in Sayakbay Karalaev's variant is narrated in a separate section. Chubak is an adopted son of Akbalti, who found him in the field just at the time when he grieved very much about the absence of a son. From the age of 6 Chubak studied in Medina. Manas came to him in his dreams. Manas finds kumayik¹ while he was hunting and wants to find a person who would care for it and train the cub. Manas decided to marry Kanikei as Chubak and Bakai advise him; Kanikei is matched and she is given kumayik to be trained.

In Sayakbay Karalaev's variant «A Great March» follows next. During Teshtyuk's feast¹ 12 Kirghiz khans having come to an agreement and not listening Koshoi's advice, decide to ruin Manas. Having come to Manas they get frightened and when as-

¹ Kumayik, as the legend says, is a snatching hound from whom no animal can escape. It is born from a griffon (lammer-geyer) and hatches from an egg. For some time it lives as a cub, then becomes a bird. If one finds it when it is a cub and trains it, kumayik remains a dog—a hound who can catch any animal.

¹ A giant Teshtyuk arranges a feast in honour of his exit from an underground world. There is a separate epos about his story.

ked «what have you arrived for, Khans?», they answer that they have decided to go against Konurbai. Manas agrees and all go off. Almambet is chosen the chief of the troops. After forty days and nights the troops stop to have some rest. As Manas and Bakai advise, Almambet rides on a reconnaissance, having taken Sirgak with him as a companion. After their departure Chubak, incited by Kirgil, makes scandal, being offended that he was not taken. He goes after Almambet and Sirgak. Having got a message about it from Bakai, Manas follows them. Chubak overtakes Almambet and not listening to his reasonable words, begins to offend him, calling him a stranger. Manas has come in time when they have already unsheathed their swords, he stops them and expresses his outrage for their behaviour. Almambet and Chubak reconcile, and ask Manas to forgive them. The four climb together the top of Tal-Choku and observe enemy lands through a spy-glass. At Manas' request Almambet tells about the state of affairs of the Chinese. Here Almambet's life story is narrated by himself in his own words. His father is Asiskan, his Mother — Altinai, Sooronduk's daughter. He quarrels with Chinese khans who intended to kill him; at his mother's advice he took Islam and left his motherland, having murdered his father. He lives with Kokcho, renders him many services, but parts with him when Kokcho, having believed slanderers, began scolding him.

Then Almambet makes a pilgrimage to Meka, from there he returns to Bokhara, where he meets Bakai, who takes Almambet to Manas.

Chubak with Manas stay on Tal-Choku pass, Almambet with Sirgak go further; they go past the place where Almambet was born, meet Karagul, a head keeper of a drove of horses. Almambet and Sirgak drive horses away. Getting a message about it, Khan Konurbai with his troops pursue and overtake them. One by one a fight begins. Almambet and Sirgak rescue each other. Manas had a dream about this and hurried with Chubak to a battle field. Fighting together four heroes make the enemy run. But the enemy gets a reinforcement, and the battle becomes hotter. At last the enemies are defeated, Manas turns the khan of Far Beydzhin. With a slyness and cunning tricks Konurbai hits Manas. Manas loses many of his companions and having returned home he dies of wounds. Kanikey builds a mausoleum to him.

Above-mentioned schemes show distinctly the existence of many common passages in these two variants of the epos, as well as some differences between them.

Some peculiarities and deviations in the form and the plot in different variants of the epos are explained not only by the will of the manaschi himself but rather by the fact, that they belong to different schools, which are connected with creative power of some especially talented manaschi.

Every school has its traditional tokens which make representatives of a certain group closer to each other, separating them from another similar group.

Differences connected with various schools of manaschi, as well as an individual contribution of every manaschi to the epos, do not deny traditional events accepted earlier. Consequently, a token of school is, first of all, a distinction from other such group in arranging events, in the performance of this or that episode, in treating the system of images. For example, one manaschi narrates some episode in detail, and another gives it as a reminiscence or it is absolutely absent. It happens that a basis of some events is brought to one origin, but their essence is treated differently, and so on. Both Sagimbay Orosbakov and Sayakbay Karalaev say about Manas' death and building a monument to him, but each of them narrates this episode in his own way.

Almost every investigator of «Manas» notes a unity of a common plot, after he becomes familiar with various variants of the epos. M. Auesov reminds, that this token refers not only to materials we have today, but to variants of manaschi who lived before. He notes the following. Speaking about a common plot of the poem, it is necessary to say, that, if we want to believe older listeners, Najmanbay, Akilbek and Tinibek began their narration from Manas' birth. They told about Almambet, Ko-

choi and Dzholoi in the same sequence as they described «A Commemoration Feast on Koketei», «A Great March» and a number of other episodes. Both Orosbakov and other singers gave a great many geographical names, the names of peoples unknown to us, as well as those of heroes and khans. In addition, all the singers would mention the same heroes and unimportant persons and even the same names of episodic figures¹.

Among the investigators of «Manas» the term «Stable pivotal events of the epos» is now used very widely. A group of traditional episodes found in every variant is understood under this term. They are: the defeat of the Kirghiz by foreign invaders and their banishment; the birth and childhood of the hero; his first heroic deeds; the migration of the Kirghiz from Altai to Ala-Too; events concerning Shooruk, Alook; Manas' marriage with Kanikei; events with «Koskaman»; Almambet's story; a commemoration feast on Koketei; a great march; Manas' death and the erection of a monument to him. Methods of narrating these stable core events and their sequence stay, in general, constant.

A central idea of the epos is patriotism, an appeal to uniting the people in the strug-

¹ Auesov M. The Kirghiz People's Heroic Poem «Manas». — In the book: The Kirghiz Heroic Epos «Manas». M., 1961, p. 20.

gle against foreign invaders. A long struggle of the Kirghiz people for their existence is reflected just in this heroic spirit, a patriotic idea of the epos.

Heroes fighting for peace and the people's independence constitute a group of positive persons. They are persons who won a great popularity due to their clever mind, their capacities, their insight and sagacity, who serve the people with all their hearts. There is also a large group of persons in the epos, who embody all negative features.

Main heroes are, in general, real people whatever fantastic force and qualities they possess; however vividly they are depicted and however strong and mighty they are considered. Along with positive features they have drawbacks too. As real people, they rejoice at success, they grieve in failure, they regret about misfortunes and feel losses badly.

The main hero of the epos is Manas, all events center on him and a progress of the plot is closely connected with his life. Manas with all his merits and drawbacks is, in general, a person of his time, of definite historical conditions. As the epos reflects not only the pictures of days, gone away, but it represents people's hopes and dreams of a bright future, Manas' image, naturally, embodies the people's ideal of «it was so» and «it will be so» together.

According to accepted traditions Manas has most of the best qualities, which are characteristic for the main positive hero of

the people's heroic epos. First of all, he is a fearless hero, an unsurpassed athlete, a generous and just man and so on. But he is not only an athlete, but the athlete-leader, a guider, playing a decisive role in uniting the Kirghiz people, banished and scattered by a strong enemy; in liberating the suppressed Kirghiz people from disgrace and tortures; in acquiring their motherland, lost before. There are many athletes in the epos, who do not yield Manas in courage, might, clever mind, and even surpass him in some qualities. But the epos, noting that all of them are lower than Manas in their role and position in the society, emphasizes Manas' role in the people's life, his great importance as a leader. Many heroes acknowledge Manas' significance in all respects as a leader of the people, esteem and honour him. These heroes are Koshoi who is older than Manas and doesn't yield him in strength and might; Bakai who is even cleverer than Manas, he knows people's traditions and human qualities as nobody else; Chubak and Sirgak, though young, are as courageous and fearless as Manas himself; Almambet who possesses tremendous knowledge, mastery and foresight, and he equals Manas in heroism and physical strength.

Many different artistic methods are used for depicting Manas' image and other persons in the epos. Hero's actions, his struggle are of paramount importance for revealing main qualities of his character. Here

his words and monologues, his attitude to other personages, their opinions and thoughts about the hero, their evaluation of his actions and qualities—everything is very significant. At last, according to traditional methods of the epos, much attention is paid to a description of the hero's appearance—from his dress and weapon to the equipment of his horse. Of great importance is also the name which is given to a person at his birth, it is not a formal name; as the people consider it is closely connected with a person's inner virtues and qualities.

Manas is not only a beginner and organizer of many important deeds, he is their active executor. Manas' gift to conduct people with himself is stipulated by his belief in the legitimacy of his behaviour. He puts the people's interests on the first place. His every action, all his heroic deeds are explained by the care of the people. He seeks neither personal profits, nor rewards, he requires neither special privileges nor exceptional rights.

Manas is called «khan» in the epos. But he is depicted, first of all, as a warrior, as an ordinary soldier, who goes ahead of others. At different moments he carries other people along by his personal example, and being the bravest he heads an advanced detachment, i. e. forty the most courageous soldiers. Manas is a leader not as a khan, but as the bravest person.

It goes without saying, Manas is always

there, where it is necessary to be at the moment; being mighty, bold and firm, he fights against the most dangerous and strongest enemies. For his enemies he seemed to be an athlete who attacked them with a leopard on one side and a short-tailed lion, ready to jump, on the other. In front of Manas there was a dragon 60 kulach¹ long and above — a fantastic gigantic bird Alp kara Kush. There were forty-eighty riders with spears on the left and on the right of Manas. As the epos tells his might was equal to that of one thousand warriors-athletes. When Manas got angry «from his eyes a flame flew hissing, from his mouth a smoke came in thick clouds, and the hair on his body pierced through his armour». If somebody dared to stare at Manas he sank dead with fear.

However, the best qualities of Manas which are appreciated in the epos and draw one's attention are not his physical strength and terrible appearance, but his humanity and combination of all positive qualities. Among them his generosity and justice are especially notable, much place is given to their exposure.

Manas is distinguished from other personages of the epos by his uprightness and simple-mindedness, his high honesty and generosity. Only his justice to everybody, his wish to forgive one's drawbacks and to encourage one's kind deeds, his incom-

parable generosity help him to unite broken tribes, to join the people and to raise them for struggle against inner and foreign enemies, «to gather black kites and to make them falcons», «to gather people from different families and to make them united». A vivid example of it is Manas' uniting forty soldiers — athletes, who came from various places, and making them his reliable, stable support. It was a great merit during a tribal government and not every person could do it.

In a full characterization of Manas a great part is played by the description of his horse, dress, arms and so on.

Manas' horse, his dress, his weapon match his enormous physical strength, his athletic constitution, help to show his unique qualities from all sides. In a word, Manas is an ideal image of the people's hero. Therefore his constant picture-cliche in narrators performances is like this:

As if from silver
And gold is he cast,
As if from the earth and
The heavens is he made.
As if from the sun
And the moon is he created.
The earth supports him
Because it is solid.
As if from sea waves, which are
under the moon, is he born.
As if from cool clouds is
he created,
As if from the beams of the sun and the moon,
which are on the heavens, is he created...

Bakai and Kanikei occupy a special place

¹ Kulach equals about 6, 5 feet.

among his close friends and companions. These images have much in common, they resemble each other. To begin with, both of them are clever. This similarity is, first of all, the wisdom inherent in them.

Bakai is a close relative of Manas on his father's line and the epos pays attention to him not as a hero's relative, but as a sage, adviser and teacher of the main people's hero. Bakai embodies the Kirghiz' notions of wisdom, justice, cordiality, sober mind. The epos says about Bakai: «He'll find the road in the darkness, and the right solution at a difficult moment».

An appeal to a soldier's honour and virtue, blame of plunder and other edifying words are passed in the epos mostly through Bakai's mouth.

Kanikei is a wife, a nearest adviser, a true assistant of Manas. This image is treated according to a tradition, accepted in the folklore of many peoples — what a beloved and true wife ought to be like, the closest person of the main people's hero. Kanikei possesses all the necessary qualities: she is clever, sagacious, kind and, in addition, a nimble-fingered woman.

Though in those historical conditions, about which the epos says, a man was a sovereign master, and a girl wasn't considered to be a child and had no right to inherit her father's property, in «Manas» women's role and importance are rather high and they occupy a notable place in a social life. And Kanikei's image is an affirmation.

Kanikei is the only person in the epos, who is equal to Manas and sometimes even higher.

Her great mind is especially emphasized among her qualities. First of all her wisdom is seen in estimations, that she gives to this or that event, having a great social meaning; in her correct actions in extreme situations; in her ability to give a right value to important and unimportant things, paying no attention to trifles for the sake of reaching a high goal. Even epic enemies and athletes such as Konurbai and Dzholoi say only good things about Kanikei, feeling a bit of envy to Manas who has such a wife-helper. Nobody can be compared with Kanikei in the foresight and sagacity. Even such popular sages as Bakai and Koshoi often listen to Kanikei's opinion, and when their opinions do not coincide, it often turns out that she is right. So, she gave a right evaluation of enemy's forces and might before a great march.

Kanikei's virtue that distinguishes her from others, is her exceptional skill of a nimble-fingered woman. All Manas' dress is sewed by her, beginning from a famous coat of male Akolpok. Before a great march Kanikei makes presents to every of forty Manas' choro (in S. Karalaev's variant — to all the warriors, who go to a long, difficult and dangerous campaign against a strong and cunning enemy. These presents are: various clothes for battles, for everyday life and holidays, for winter and sum-

mer, for rain and snow, wonderful remedies, immense stores of food, ammunition and many other things — down to wicks for rifles and so on.

Much attention in the epos is paid to Kanikei's mental qualities: her humanism, justice, courteousness, hospitality, generosity, care, lavishness.

Kanikei's image is that of an ideal woman in the people's notion. With this image the people connected their moral ideals which surpassed a social reality of that order of government. Almambet occupies a special place among positive characters about whom the epos tells.

Almambet is a Chinese, he is a son of a famous khan.

He is one of the closest companions-in-arms of Manas, his forster-brother. Almambet is devoted to the Kirghiz with all his heart. He is a man, for whom an honest service to the people is above all. Justice, veracity, a well-known honesty do not permit to consider him a person of other people, an alien. He isn't a stranger for the heroes, among whom he lives and acts. A deep respect of all Kirghiz athletes to Almambet, with Manas and Bakai at the head, is a vivid example.

Almambet is a person of an extremely tragic fate. He had to leave his people and to live as «a foreigner» all the time. It was a great grief at the time when every person was supported by his tribe and felt himself strong only thanks to his people's aid. The-

refore in spite of the fact that Almambet is a forster-brother of Manas, respected and honoured by everybody, a famous hero, he often feels lonely, a vagrant-fugitive without kith or kin, he often complains of such a condition. However greatly he respects the Kirghiz people, however honestly he serves them he never forgets, and always sincerely loves his people and land, he deplores and longs for them. Kirghiz athletes, with Manas at the head, respect these sacred, innermost feelings and do not consider them to be treacherous towards the Kirghiz people. Almambet's yearning for his people, for his native land deepens positive features of his image, contributes to their revealing. Almambet's tragedy, the causes for his leaving his homeland are explained by his taking Islam. This is a rather widespread plot in the eposes of many Central Asiatic peoples.

A people's idea of one's ties with one's family, of an impossible existence without one's tribe is shown on Almambet's example. A loneliness felt by the man, who was torn from his family, is quite natural. At the time of a tribal formation, the fate of every person was connected with the fate of his clan; an individual had some influence and strength only within his generation and with its support.

Besides the above-mentioned names there are many vivid and original personages in the epos. They are: wise giant Koshoi, a very strong and courageous old man, whose

«ears are like a shield, and eyes are burning like a star Venus»; hot-tempered athlete Chubak, «who can be overcome by nobody in the battle, even lion's teeth seem not to take him»; young knight Sirgak, who was «too light for a horse and suited (by his weight) only a two-years-old foal, he was always awake and watchful during a march; if enemies counting seventy thousand soldiers appeared, he attacked them with his dress unbuttoned»; eloquent Azhibai, who «knew sixty different languages and was quickwitted» and others.

A remarkable feature common for all these personages is patriotism, an honest and sincere service to the people. Everyone occupies a special place in the society, everyone has one's own functions and plays a definite part in the events progress of the epos. Each of them is original in the appearance, the character and innermost qualities. For example, Koshoi is an acknowledged head of the family, a «core» of the people. At the time, when the Kirghiz were disunited and scattered over foreign lands he with his tribe did not yield to numerous enemy hordes and continued to live in the Kirghiz lands, fighting with enemies all the time, up to that moment when all the Kirghiz tribes, with Manas at the head, returned to their motherland. Koshoi has both a profound mind and an enormous physical strength. His justice, clever mind, sound sense, general respect and honour set him above Bakai himself. Koshoi is so sage that

he is considered to be saint. Therefore, the epos estimates him as a man, whose «blessing enriches the people». Even Semetei, the son of Manas, was born thanks to Koshoi's blessing. Only Koshoi has the right to blame Manas' drawbacks frankly, before the people and if necessary for a common affair — to scold him for his errors.

Athlete Chubak is characterized as a trustful, honest, forgiving, but a hot-tempered man. Young Sirgak is a pet of the people, he differs from the heroes of that epoch, when physical strength and endurance were appreciated above all other qualities. Sirgak is appraised at his humanity, deep feelings and sound innermost qualities. The head of forty choro Kirgil; wit Serek, who «can give sixty clever advices for the time necessary for a fallen horse to rise»; Toshuk who was respected by Manas himself and was called a «master» (törö); quarrelsome Bozuul and others — all of them have their own visages and their individualities in the epos.

Much place is devoted to a Chinese athlete Konurbai, one of negative personages of the epos. He doesn't yield a bit in strength; athletic qualities to any of the Kirghiz heroes, with Manas at the head, and surpasses many of them in cunning, shrewdness, craft. From the camp of epic enemies only Konurbai can be compared with Manas in athletic abilities and can resist him. Konurbai's appearance is depicted as vividly as Manas':

«His nose is straight, his eyes are red,
His arms are powerful, his breast is like a
tiger's (wide).
His eye-pits are deep, his speeches are threatening
His flanks are wide, his height, is enormous,
Such is the knight, whose name is Khan Konurbai».

Konurbai's main features are pretence, shrewdness, craft.

In a moral respect he is lower than Kirghiz heroes because he has no belief in the integrity of his deeds. He is a violator and an enslaver, therefore heroic actions which the Kirghiz heroes accomplish are inaccessible to him. They lead a just struggle for the people's independence, for their honour, for the liberation of their country.

An inward poverty, a moral meanness, which are natural for negative personages of the epos, are vividly and brightly depicted in Dzholoi's image, who was considered as the strongest athlete next to Konurbai in the enemies' camp.

A close ally of Konurbai is Dzholoi, a khan of the Kalmyck. Nobody can be compared with him in strength among the main characters of the epos. Only a Kirghiz giant Koshoi can compete with him. At the time when a physical strength—a might of a fist was the only «argument» in solving many vexed questions—a possession of it was of great importance. However, an enormous physical strength of Dzholoi is considered to be a vain quality in the epos, because it isn't aimed at the people's welfare.

A common characteristic feature of all negative personages is the following: in physical strength, in a frightening appearance and other qualities they do not yield to positive heroes. But in an open fight they are always defeated, because they are poorer spiritually than positive characters, who believe in their right deeds and rely on the people's support.

An artistic standard of «Manas» corresponds fully to solely rich contents.

High artistic merits of «Manas» are explained, in the first place, by the fact that its artistic methods rest on findings, made by talented people of many generations for more than thousand years. At the same time all the opportunities of an artistic narration of the rich Kirghiz language, which is one of the oldest languages in the Soviet Union, are widely used.

An enormously great volume of the epos required from the reciters working out special models of the structure and rendering to the listeners events, episodes, included in it. As a result, each of large episodes in «Manas» is composed as an independent, completed work, which has all the necessary technical signs of the plot, i. e. an action of every large episode begins, develops independently and is completed by deductions. This is explained by the necessity to give every known episode in a form, ready for an independent performance, since too much time is needed for reciting the whole epos from the beginning to the end. A spe-

cial mode which can be conditionally called «a short repetition» of the contents of previous episodes was practised in order to give a consistent perception of events, their interrelations, and to help listeners not to lose the main line of the plot during a prolonged performance of the epos especially if it was made with intervals. The volume of such a «repetition» is not constant and depends on listeners' acquaintance with the facts narrated before. The duration of intervals in performing the events for a given audience is of great importance too.

A transition from one action to another, from one little event to the other in the same episode or a continuation of the story about some episode after a short interval is made with the help of several prepared poetic lines, pronounced on behalf of the narrator himself and addressed directly to the listeners:

«Leave it for the time being,
You'd better listen to the news about (Manas)».

The text of constant lines is preserved almost unchanged, only a substitution of names is possible. This artistic method is characteristic only for the epos «Manas». Even the reciters of «Manas» do not use it in performing other epic compositions.

The author's narration and monologue speeches of the characters are used especially often in the epos. Great is the role of a description too. Interrelations of the characters with each other, their estimations

of this or that event as well as their innermost feelings, their actions and deeds are given through monologues. The author's narration is used mostly in depicting heroes' collisions, their battles and everyday life of the people. Natural phenomena, landscapes, a person's appearance, portraits, as a rule, are reproduced through a description. However, it is impossible to draw a sharp line between these principal methods. For example, one cannot affirm that some episode is to be told just in this way, and other methods can't be used here and so on.

Monologue speeches of the heroes are the most «active» and varied. They are used more often than others. For example, a short narration of fore-going events in the epos is often told as the hero's recollections or as his own words in the form of an announcement. Even descriptions of nature which are given in most cases as a direct speech and are addressed to listeners, are often recited as the character's remembrance or his estimation of what he had seen. In general, there are many forms of heroes' speeches in «Manas», rich and varied are their functions, as prof. M. Auesov justly noted. One can find various types of speeches in the poem: consultative speeches during a gathering and a counsel (Manas' and Almambet's speeches before going to Beidzin); bellicose admonitions (Manas' speech on ash); speech threats (Manas' messages to seven khans); hearty speeches, expressing regret, distress (a notable speech of

Almambet in «Chon Kazat», which at last turns into a personal recollection and autobiography); speechestestaments («koroz» of Koketei); friendly advices, reproaches (Bakai's, Koshoi's speeches, addressed often to Manas). Besides these and other kinds of speeches, which are plentiful, simple talks, jokes, witticisms are met in the poem.¹ Even from this incomplete list of speeches one can clearly see their importance as an artistic method.

The hero's description begins in most cases with his appearance, his picture, his strength, his equipment and so on as an epic tradition dictates. But the description of the hero's appearance does not reveal his image, it is only a preparation for characterizing his innermost qualities through his actions. Not a single image is formed only by an outward description. Innermost qualities of not only main characters are shown, their actions which are of importance are appreciated. The same is done concerning personages who appear only in separate episodes.

Revealing heroes' appearances in close connection with their innermost qualities, what is often encountered as an artistic method in eposes of other peoples, is also characteristic of «Manas». Therefore, characters with an ugly appearance commit bad

¹ Auesov M. The Kirghiz People's Heroic Poem «Manas». — In the book: The Kirghiz Heroic Epos «Manas». M., 1961, p. 68—69.

deeds, and their souls are ignoble. Positive heroes, on the contrary, have a pleasant appearance. Even a tremendous strength, inherent in positive characters, is usually displayed only as a reflection of their innermost qualities at the most decisive moment. A severe, threatening, sometimes even frightful, appearance showing their mood, isn't a constant feature of their image; it is a temporary state, the result of the influence of an environment, circumstances, situations. For example, when Manas is seriously angry, «a smoke comes in thick clouds from his mouth, and a flame rushes from his eyes hissing»; a person, seeing him in such a state, has his heart in his mouth. But this is not his constant picture; in everyday life «as if from gold and silver is he made», that is, he is a very pleasant man, even with a charming appearance.

Ready cliché, constant portrait features are also used very widely in depicting heroes in «Manas». Sometimes separate actions of personages are described with the help of ready constant poetic lines (for example, heroes coming to action, a single combat, a course of general battles and so on). But such ready poetic lines are not to be considered as destined only for the description of one action; every time they represent, in spite of their constant character, various actions and events and, therefore, they are changed a little bit, they are renewed and complimented, that is, similar, but not identical actions and deeds, are

rendered with the help of such ready poetic lines. Not only a description of fighting actions, but portrait cliché of some persons are not still but alive images characterized by an original development. In addition, they compose not whole portrait riches of the epos, but a comparatively little part of it. A fundamental share of a portrait gallery of the epos is changed and enriched in accordance with innermost feelings of the characters, with their mood in the course of events. For example, a picture of the hero at peaceful times is quite different from that during the war. Even the same state of a person's mood can be given in various ways. Though in such instances an action or an event seems recurring, it gets, as a matter of fact, new features due to individual details.

Heroes of «Manas» are rather individualized, they differ from each other sharply by their appearance, dresses, equipment, features of their characters, their actions. Here is how some of main personages look like.

Almambet:

«Сакалы кызыл сенселип,
Сарала ат минип теңселип,
Алтын кемер курчанып,
Айдай бетни нур чалып...»

«With a fluttering red beard

He is swinging on his red, skew-bald horse,

He is girt with a gold belt,

Like a moon his face shines...»

Chubak:

«Көк ырапыс тон кийип,
Көк ала тулпар ат минип».

«He in a dress of a blue repps,
Is sitting on a gray, skew-bald racer...»

Sirgак:

«Атка жеңил, тайга чак,
Уйкусу жок, жолго сак,
Жекени белге курчаңган,
Жети түмөн кол келсе,
Желбей кирип кол салган...»

«Light he is, though fit for a two-years-old foal,
Not hodding, being on alert during a march.
He is girt with a belt «dzheke»¹.
If seventy thousand enemies attacked him,
He sprang at them in his dress unbuttoned (with
an open breast)...

Heroes differ from each other not only by their appearance but by their innermost qualities, features of their characters and by their behaviour. For example, Almambet has a witty mind and many good human qualities; Chubak is a simple-minded, trusting, in a sense somewhat course, straightforward and hot-tempered. Sirgак distinguishes himself by his gentleness, courtesy and cordiality. One of the most important artistic methods in «Manas» is a detailed description of people's appearance, a disclosure of their innermost peculiarities. This is affirmed when the same person is depicted

¹ Dzheke — a battle belt, heroes put it on as a token that they are ready to a single combat; that is, this belt is a token of a challenge of the enemy.

differently in various conditions (for example, one can follow Manas' picture in everyday life, in joy and sorrow, in anger, etc).

«Manas» consists mainly of 7—8 complex syllabic rhymes characteristic of Kirghiz oral compositions. They are very rhythmical, last words in a line are rhymed.

There occur multiform rhymes in «Manas» which do not obey a specially worked out system, but have their own character. Rhymes in the epos are not divided into couplets; their groups, called to reveal a certain thought and stipulated by the number of rhymed words, are the nearest to tirade verses. Therefore, verses in the epos can have from two to twenty lines and sometimes even more. Groups of rhymes are formed not only by paired lines, usual for the Kirghiz—by two, four, six and so on, but by three, five, seven, etc. A rhyme in odd groups of verses as well as in even groups, is not subordinated to a definite system and has a free character, that is, it often represents a mixed rhyme.

Alliterations and assonances along with rhymes are of great importance for increasing a musicalness and an expressiveness of poetic lines. Inner and outward alliterations are rather often met in «Manas», as following:

«Кан кылгын дедим киниңди
Калдым келдим диниңди».

«Whom of you did I ask to make me a khan?
I wished your religion, therefore I came (by my
own will)»;

and assonances, where several poetic lines begin with the same vowel, as, for example:

«Эрди калын, көзү үңкүр,
Эр мүнөзү көрүнөт».
His lips are thick, his eyes are deep,
One can see a hero's character in him».

In the epos various types of tropes (figures of speech) are also widely used as a descriptive means in creating portraits and artistic characteristics of heroes. Their simple forms are met especially often—comparisons, constant epithets; and complex forms—hyperboles and metaphors.

In general, comparisons are made as confrontations of exceptional and general, uncertain and famous, complicated and simple and so on. Well-known events constantly met in everyday life are especially often used as a principal means for comparisons.

In «Manas» main instruments of comparison are events and things, widely used in everyday life of the Kirghiz and connected tightly with conditions of their nomadic way of life. Therefore, a girl is often compared to a Siberian stag, her eyes—with large languid eyes of a little camel, her teeth—with a pearl necklace, her waist—with a twig and so on.

For deep, exact and brief characteristics of personages' essential qualities of great importance are epithets, especially constant, which occur in a great number.

Epithets are widely used for showing both positive qualities of the character (such as generous, athletic, giant-like, brave) and negative ones (cunning, greedy, crafty, avid and so on).

Epithets are widely used not only to people and their deeds; there are a great many epithets designating peculiar qualities, merits, advantages and distinctions of main characters' weapons, their equipment, horses, harness. For example: sir naiza (a smooth lance), ach albars (a sharp sword), akalpok (a white coat of mail), etc.

In «Manas» especially plentiful are epithets-characteristics, which play an important part; they became one of principal rendering means. Epithets-characteristics, which comprise a lot of various meanings, giving an opportunity to tell exactly and convincingly the qualities of this or that event; persons' virtues are valuable not only due to their esthetic influence as an artistic descriptive means but they deserve a special attention as a means of short, exact rendering of sapid information.

Constant epithets allow to give exactly, clearly and brightly principal features of the image, to reveal qualities, inherent only in this or that personage. An individual character of the hero is defined more accurately through them. Great is the importance of such an artistic means in epic compositions where more attention is paid to general, not individual for representing the reality.

If in «Manas» outward properties are, in general, revealed by means of comparison, epithets serve, in most cases, for showing the contents and the significance of the events, innermost properties of the hero. Of course, it does not mean, that epithets are of no importance. On the contrary, the most exact features are very often given in the epos just with the help of epithets and especially vivid and accurate portraits of the heroes are painted with their help. For example: «Атка жеңил, тайга чак, уй-кусу жок, жолго сак эр Сыргак» (Too light he is for a horse, but quite suited (by his weight) only a two-years-old foal, brave Sirgak is always awake and watchful during a march); «Алышса адамдын алы жетпеген, арстандын тиши өтпөгөн Чубак баатыр» (If he begins to fight, nobody can overcome him, even lion's teeth seem not to take athlete Chubak) and so on. Here the cheerfulness, the vigilance, the firmness, as well as the appearance of young hero Sirgak are reproduced exactly and vividly without any comparisons. Just in this way an enormous strength of giant Chubak, his firmness, his thick frame are also rendered without comparisons, only with the help of perpetual epithets. But at the same time, in general features, epithets in the pos «Manas» help to show, first of all, qualities and properties, characteristic of the heroes; comparisons help to give an appearance of things and events.

A hyperbole is rightfully considered a

widely spread means of rendering in «Manas». The hyperbolization of almost everything—beginning from characters' strength to their appearances, from their equipment and weapons to separate actions—is a usual thing in the epos in general and in Manas particularly. And still such a wide hyperbolization, however important it was in artistic-descriptive methods of narrators, has its limits. Any hyperbolic representation usually is not divided from the reality. In cases, when the hyperbolization crosses boundaries and, tearing away from a real life, converts into a grotesque, the narrators themselves feel it and inform listeners beforehand: «There is much truth and falsehood here; there is no person who has seen everything; there is a half of truth and a half of lie here; there wasn't a person who was standing then side by side with those heroes».

In spite of the fact that reciters of the epos were illiterate they used poetic methods skillfully, as well as multiple artistic ways of giving events and composing the plot. As a result, most of the variants of the epos leave an impression of compositions thoroughly thought out and then written down.

Indisputable is the fact, that «Manas» played a great part in the life of the Kirghiz for ages—not only in an artistic-esthetic relation, but in political, educational and perceptual too. And thanks to its great popularity «Manas» didn't loose its

importance nowadays. This epos has played a significant part in the process of settling of the Kirghiz professional literature, in developing and enriching many kinds of the Kirghiz art. Leading Kirghiz poets, writers and other creative workers often turn to these treasures of people's wisdom, using ideas, images, thoughts from this epos in their compositions.

Ideas of «Manas», its heroes' images inspire creative workers of Kirghizia for making new compositions. Operas «Manas» and «Aichurek», founded on the epos, are performed for a long time at the theatres of the republic and are of great success. A number of films on «Manas» and on the genius of its reciters were made, one of them received the First Prize at an International Film Festival of full-length documentary films in 1966. In 1981 a sculptural ensemble, dedicated to the heroes and narrators of «Manas», created by People's Artist of the Kirghiz Republic, Lenin Prize Laureate T. Sadikov, was erected in one of the city's squares.

«Manas» which for a long time served the Kirghiz People as a treasure where the best, that was created by the people, was collected, is a historical memory, coded in poetic lines for ages and will be a summit of all kinds of Kirghiz arts as Academician of the Kirghiz Academy, Hero of Socialist Labour, a Laureate of Lenin and State Prizes Ch. Aitmatov says.