

Kökötöy's Memorial Feast¹

(Translation from the Kyrgyz by Dr. Helen M. Faller)

1. In those times when Khan² Kökötöy³ left this life for the other world,
For the place from which there is no return,
His son Bokmurun⁴ had just turned 12 years of age.
Ignoring the behest of his father and the counsel of his elders,
Bokmurun moved far away to the valley of Üch Kapkak,⁵
On the banks of the Ükürchü, in the Karkyra⁶ expanse.
2. Without permission Bokmurun decided to host a memorial feast for his father.
And he did not invite the knight Manas⁷ to the feast.
And he did not listen to the wise Koshoi⁸ Khan.
To the four corners of the earth he sent his horse Maaniker,⁹
To gather the people for the memorial feast in honor of Kökötöy.
3. Guests came to the feast from Orchun, Kokand, and Margilan.
Shayik Kök jeke and split-bearded Synjibek from Andijon came.
From Margilan Malabek,
From Kokand Kozubek,
Representing six cities, Alybek,
The Bukharan khan Temir Khan,
The Afghan khan Aqunkhan,

¹ A memorial feast is a feast held in honor of someone who has passed away and occurs at certain intervals after that person's death.

² Khan – “king” in Kyrgyz and related languages; here, a tribal leader.

³ Kökötöy – khan of the Nogai Tribe, one of the many Kyrgyz tribes in ancient times.

⁴ Bokmurun – the son of Kökötöy.

⁵ Üch Kapkak – a valley on the River Tekes located in southeastern Kazakhstan surrounded by steep mountains.

⁶ Many of the place names mentioned here are still in use today.

⁷ Manas – the main hero of the *Manas* epic, the ancient leader of the Kyrgyz people, and the khan who united the numerous tribes of the Kyrgyz and played a progressive role in the founding of the Kyrgyz nation.

⁸ Koshoi – one of the main positive figures in the *Manas*; a wise and just old leader and a strong, unbeatable knight, despite his great age.

⁹ Maaniker – a horse of unsurpassable strength and speed passed down to Bokmurun by his father Kökötöy.

From the Kazaks Khan K kch 
All came to the feast.

4. Summone**d** by the knight,
From Urumkan came K kb ru,
Master of the clay lands,
Raised in the sands of Kara-Kum.
Armed to the teeth,
From Budaikhan’s territory came Muzburchak.
Er  rb , the son of Eititkhan,
Whose land occupied two peaks of the Kemin Mountains,¹⁰
Came with a pair of raven-black horses.

5. Shigayikhan, the khan of Tekes, Jamgyrchy from the people of Eshtek,
The khans Edigei and Teyish from the mouth of the wide River Ile,¹¹
Tuuchu khan, elected by the people of China,
Arrayed in all his finery, Kongurbai, khan of the Kechil tribe,
Neskara, the leader of the Manchu,
Joloi, the Kalmyk khan,
And Orookyr from the Soloon people
They all came.

6. All the khans came accompanied by their innumerable troops,¹²
And then still far from the valleys of  ch Kapkak and Karkyra,
A countless number of the Chinese and Manchu people gathered.
In  ch Kapkak there was so much meat,
It stood as high as the mountains of Ala-Too,¹³
And enough gravy to fill Lake Ala-K l,¹⁴
And then Khan Neskara, who ruled the Manchu, said these words:

Transition from recited prose to musical performance

1. “Ah, cruel fate, Bokmurun,
Heed my words, foul Kyrgyz.
Your mount Maaniker,

¹⁰ Kemin – a particularly mountainous region in Kyrgyzstan.

¹¹ Ile – a river that flows in Kazakhstan and China.

¹² Khans are not supposed to arrive at a memorial feast with soldiers, since it is a peaceful gathering. Since they brought their troops, it means that they planned to attack the Kyrgyz, not honor their great hero, K k t y.

¹³ Ala-Too – A mountain range in Kyrgyzstan considered to be the symbol of the Kyrgyz people.

¹⁴ Ala-K l – a mythical lake.

- Give up Maaniker, foul Kyrgyz!
2. “He is like winged Pegasus.
His mane and tail are simply luxurious,
The like of which are not found among mixed breeds.
Such a steed would increase the stature of our dignity.
 3. “There is a good place for livestock in Beijing,
In good hands, in the care of knights.
Heed my words, foul Kyrgyz.
Give up Maaniker, foul Kyrgyz!
 4. “If you will not give up Maaniker,
I will not argue with you long.
I will not eat your proffered meat.
 5. “I was born in Bakburchun
About the glory of Maaniker,
As the mount of K k t y, I heard there.
 6. “Foul Kyrgyz, the grievance against you is big.
Lead Maaniker, standing here,
To the khan of Beijing.
Or give me grounds for my grudge.
If you will not give me the steed,
I will take the horse by force.
I will destroy your people,
And I will take away your horse.”
 7. Bokmurun, son of K k t y,
Took fright at these words.
His heart was pounding – it did not bode well.
His native Talas¹⁵ was not close.
And the great-souled Manas was far away.
 8. Bokmurun suddenly sees then,
Black clouds in the heavens,
Sixty dark thoughts – all his fear.
 9. And at that very moment,
Wise Koshoi took action.
 10. Without letting anyone sense it,
Without letting anyone know,

¹⁵ Talas is the name of Manas’ homeland, located within Kyrgyzstan’s borders to this day.

Koshoi harnessed Maaniker,
And sent the young messenger Aidar,
To request help from Manas.

11. In the distant land, in the valley Talas,
To the knight by the name of Manas,
Aidar took the important news.
12. While the Kyrgyz were preparing the memorial feast,
At the same time, on the banks of the Ükürchü,
In the valley of Üch Kapkak,
The many troops of Chinese,
Wanted to destroy them all,
And increase suffering of the people.
13. And at this very moment, look you,
The *dobulbas*¹⁶ began to thunder,
And the *kernei*¹⁷ and the *urnai*¹⁸ began to resound.
Unexpectedly, like an encroaching mist,
Leading his forty *choro*,¹⁹
Appeared the hero,
Manas himself.
Together with him came Almambet and Chubak,
And the young knight Syrgak.
14. To the valley of Üch Kapkak,
In the expanse of the Karkyra,
To the memorial feast of Kökötöy,
Valiantly came Manas himself.
15. And when Manas arrived,
All the Kyrgyz were filled with joy,
And all the Kalmyk troops were enraged.

¹⁶ *Dobulbas* – a traditional Kyrgyz drum used as a signal to begin battle or the hunt.

¹⁷ *Kernei* – a traditional Kyrgyz wind instrument, which is also used as a signal instrument.

¹⁸ *urnai* – a traditional Kyrgyz wind instrument.

¹⁹ *Choro* – a collective noun used to refer to the hero Manas' forty best knights and bravest fighters.