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### **EXPLORING AND DECIPHERING THE PHENOMENON OF THE ‘MANASCHI’ AND THEIR VISIONS**

Kyrgyzstan is a young country with an ancient history, original traditions and spiritual values. Its cultural heritage has been developing for thousand years and has remarkably expressed itself through oral poetic word. Chingiz Aitmatov noted about the specific character of the Kyrgyz spiritual culture: “If other nations have kept their past culture and history in the written literature, architecture, sculpture, theatre and artistic art, the Kyrgyz people... embodied the whole might of their national spirit, their honor and conscience, their heroic fight for freedom and independence, dreams and sometimes the historical facts, daily events of the real life, into the constant traditional genre” [Ch. Aitmatov, 1996].

Poetic tradition of narrative phenomenon has lasted for more than a thousand years. As is shown in the immense contents and form of the epic, “Manas”, which is the Kyrgyz contribution to the treasury of world culture. Since the introduction of the epic by Ch. Valihanov and V. Radlov to the cultural space of mankind, several generations of scientists and writers defined high significance of the memorial. The nation created and immortalized itself along with the spiritual and cultural heritage of the nation acquired in the course of its long history. Today it’s one of the main reasons to be respected by the multinational civilized world. “Pushkin, Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky were those who raised the spiritual authority of Russia in the world. Shakespeare was the exponent of the English majestic spirit. Italy is forever remained in the world’s memory by revelations of Raphael and Dante, Michelangelo and Verdi. Fascination of the German spirit is presented by the creations of Goethe and Mozart, Schiller and Beethoven. All this incomplete and symbolic range of national culture exponents and who formed the world art requires long continuation. The epic, “Manas”, a monument of folk poetic creation worked out by the genius manaschi, for the Kyrgyz, one of the Turkic nations representing nomadic civilization became such a property” [Asankanov A., Bekmuhamedova N., 1999].

A destiny of any manaschi of past times was hard by virtue of tight dependence on social-politic conditions of the whole nation’s life. Old people say that in the time of Jungarian supremacy manaschis were severely prosecuted by the conquerors. A narrator, having been tied to a horse, was torn to piece. Freedom loving songs of “Manas”, resounding everywhere in Kyrgyz settlements couldn’t be suitable for enemies taking care about submission and dependence of captured tribes.

In their mass manaschis originated from ordinary families and their family income was a poor one even in the period of their popularity but what accounts for devotion of manaschis for the course of life chosen by them? Probably, the matter is in “Manas” itself, which having been heard once caused strong emotional compassion to the characters. Taking part in the survival of a character’s most hard sufferings, they experienced deep turbulence of passions, horror and grief what is called, ‘catharsis’, by scientists. Through the catharsis they experienced an overcoming of personal soul conflicts and their own psychological condition was normalized. “Manas’s” central idea is the idea of the unification and solidarity of the Kyrgyz people in the struggle for confirmation of their freedom realized though the tragic destinies of the characters. This became, for them, the top value for the sake of which they were unconsciously ready to overcome any ordinary difficulties and misfortunes of their own destiny. By then, every performance of the epic for the listeners, the manaschis were surviving this condition of

‘catharsis’ when they were realized from inner conflicts of their routine life. Thereby, having risen above themselves, above their prejudices, displacing, lower less kind feelings and obtaining kinder and higher ones necessary for the good of the nation.

High popularity and general affection of the nation for their manaschis was explained, not only by the perfect performance of the epic, deep meaning and poetic beauty of the work stated but also not least of all by the manaschi’s own personality, his inner humane charm, coming from him with features of kindness, cordiality, justice and some attractive simplicity in communication with the people around.

Not everyone could become a manaschi. Only those, who from birth possessed a delicate emotional constitution and feeling of the word, which is a poetic talent, peculiar to singers and poets. Today, relying on words of scientists studying “Manas” [K. Rahmatulin, 1968], we can contour special criteria of the manaschi’s professional art, which were composed in historical experience of the epic, “Manas’s”, narration.

”Preceding from the extent of strength this inspired talent achieved in a narrator’s consciousness and soul, having influenced creative scope of his performance of “Manas”. It is common to distinguish two categories of manaschis-“chong manaschi” i.e. “great manaschi” and “chala manaschi” i.e. an ordinary manaschi [Asankanov A., Bekmuhamedova N., 1999].

Famous manaschis in the middle of the past century were Keldibek Baaryboz uulu (1800-1880), Balyk Bekmurat Kumar uulu (17999-1887), Nazar Bolot uulu (1823-1893), Choodan (1835-1900). According to the latest data their contemporaries, narrators of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were Tashmat, Kasymbai, Toichubek, Kojek, Beki., Syrdybai, Musa, Tash, Chomo, Kazybai usta, Isagul, Kokkoz, whose names were preserved due to dynastic tradition and legends.

The most eminent manaschis, creating at the turn of the century-during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were : Choiuke Omur uulu (1863-1925), Akylbek (1840-1920), Tynybek Japyi uulu (1846-1902), Togolok Moldo (Baiymbet Abdurahmanov (1886-1942), Naimanbai Balyk uulu (1853-1911), Kenje Kara Kalcha uulu (1859-1929, Sagymbai Orozbek uulu (1867-1930), Janybai Kojek uulu (1869-1942).

Their contemporaries were narrators Almbek Toichubek uulu (1887-?), Bekboto Itike uulu (1868-?), Borubai Sultan uulu (1897-1940), Diykanbai Toichubek uulu (1873-1923), Jakshylyk Saryl uulu (1880-1943), Jandake Baibolot uulu (1853-1917), Jugoru Nazar uului (1864-1941), Kydyraly Kainazar uulu (1850-1920), Matisak Akbai uulu (1877-?), Masha Kydyr uulu (1900-?), Toktogul Kalmamat uulu (1854-?), Erkebai Berdibai uulu (1876-1930), and many many others.

Among the outstanding manaschis in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century whose creative mastery and recognition by the people fall already to the first half of the century one can distinguish Sayakbai Karala uulu (1894-1971), Mambet Chokmor uulu (1896-1973-), Moldobasan Musulmankul uulu (1883-1961), Bagysh Sazan uulu (1878-1958), Dunkana Kochuke uulu (1863-1973), Ybrai Abdurahmanov (1888-1967) and many others.

Among the followers of “Manas” narrative tradition, whom we can hear today, are the respectful manaschis: Shaaba Aziz uulu, Kaba Atabek uulu, Seidene Moldoke kyzy, Nazarkul Seidrahman uulu the greatest masters of oral narration. The art of the prominent manaschi Urkash Mambetaliev (1934-2011) will always be remembered by the people once had a chance to hear his performing.

In the range of professional “manaschis” outstands the huge talent of Sayakbay Karala uulu. The recorded version of Sayakbay accounts for almost half a million lines. It was entered the Guinness’ book of records as the biggest epic in the world. His version is the most complete

record of the trilogy: “Manas”-84830 lines, “Semetey-316157 lines, Seitek”-84697 lines. Another prominent manaschi Sagymbay Orozbek uulu’s version only first part almost twice exceeded the volume of Sayakbay’s version. Unfortunately, the whole version was not recorded because of the death of the narrator. “Sagymbay and Sayakbay created their own original versions of the epic on the basis of general epic materials, improvising within the limits of the narration itself, as well as in frames of wide common-Turkic tradition” [Mirdabalayeva A., 1996].

The profession of manaschi often took the shape of a dynastic nature. Most of them said that during the formation of their creation an important role was played by their parents and closest relatives who, themselves, were performers of the epic: manaschis, semetiechis, seitekchis. Thus, father, grandfather and great grandfather of narrator Janybai Kojek uulu, born in Tjan-shan, were also manaschis and in this case observe evident tradition of dynastic procedure. A remarkable singer and outstanding manaschi from Chui Balyk Naimanbai’s son also achieved great popularity of the real manaschi. A famous narrator from Issyk-Kul, Choiuke’s brother, Aziz Omur uulu also performed the epic and passed his knowledge onto his son Saabai. A famous manaschi from Issyk-Kul such as Mambet Chokmor uulu started to tell the epic with his uncle manaschi Donuzbai Eshimbek uulu’s influence. A Southern narrator, native of the Uzgen region, Lappaz Kokkoz uulu was also a successor of dynastic tradition of nine generations of his direct ancestors dealing with the narration of the epic “Manas”. Succession didn’t always mean the passing of the narrative mastery through the relative line. It used to turn up that a novice narrator often came to a distinguished master by himself to pass a kind of training course with him.

The manner of “Manas’s performance is original enough, however, it considerably differs from the majority of middle Asian Turkic Mongolian nation’s narrative mastery. First, a manaschi is not accompanied by any musical instrument the only exception is Kenje Kara, which was accompanied by playing a kyak, a national stringed instrument. Secondly, the whole text of the epic is mainly kept in the form expressed in verse, that’s why “Manas” is sung, to be more precise, recited. Thirdly, a manaschi acts as an actor, his hands “speak” the language of gestures, and his face the language of mimics.

“Unlike some “small epics”, the trilogy has a melodic symbol peculiar only to itself, which enjoys wide popularity, as written by a famous musicologist V. Vinogradov. As soon as somebody solfeggios, whistles it, a listener, will define at once that it is a melody from “Manas”, its leitmotiv, its call-sign” [Vinogradov V.]. Vocal side, melos is another peculiarity which characterizes the performance of the epic. A manaschi should possess musical talent as well. In his performance Sayakbay Karala uulu combined acting, singing and composing talents. Manaschis’ performance has been characterized as a ‘theatre of one actor’. Thus, academician A. Saliyev noted: “He sings as if he is making a confession, as if he himself had experienced all the trouble of the great dramas. What a variety of intonations, how the melody varies, how the rhythm and tempos change and the recitatives are built! All nuances of voice, every mimics or gesture or solid, strong figure of Sayakbay speak. You get captured by the tension of the described events as if they are concerned directly to you and you get excited” [Asankanov A., Bekmuhamedova N., 1999].

A large amount of the epic “Manas’s” plot if to consider the volumes of other parts of the trilogy required the well developed memory from a manaschi. A narrator’s talent, his mastery, depended on the knowledge of the plot development of an action, on the ability to exactly

convey and use his version of numerous ready-made traditional elements. Individual improvisation is usually displayed in composing separate details, motives in interpretation of some characters. Still, his further professional creative growth in many aspects depended on a manaschi's good memory. A manaschi performed an episode desired by the listeners immediately without any preparation. Here we open another secret of narrative tradition's phenomenon, which served as a guarantee for strength and eternity of manaschi's occupation.

In the scientific exploration of "Manas", an explanation of their talent with the help of a dream has been an object of ancient and rapt attention. The rationalistic nature of the dreams' explanation is linked with the fact that a dream is a phenomenon of human sub consciousness reflecting the work of psychological feelings as a result of a deep creative process. Almost all gifted people were exposed to prophetic dreams or experience "altered states of consciousness" [Molchanova]. 'Spontaneously arising hypnotic state - the transient state of reduction of wakefulness, accompanied by the emergence of bright, dream-like experiences that are so believable that most people who have experienced such states tend to remember them as real events, but not the stuff of dreams', was pointed out by Vaitl [Vaitl et al, 2005].

These states, first described by J. Muiiller called "fantastic visual phenomena» (Muiiller: 1826/1967), usually but not always arise before going to sleep, on the border between sleep and wakefulness. Often, but again not always, visual images, sounds and bodily sensations experienced during these states, perceived as induced from the outside, not created by your mind, but someone else's will. In contrast to dreams, hypnotic states are more static, the main character can be quite passive, while involved in his experiences characters are seen as actively manipulating him or her. Similar to the description of the state, when they may have to wake up and are accompanied by the same signs. It is interesting that the experiences in these 'altered states' of consciousness are often clearly symbolic and are of a religious character; in particular periods of life are regarded as signs or clues to guide the right path. For example, the widely known description of the state by August Kekule, an outstanding chemist, discovered the hexagonal structure of the benzene molecule. Albert Rothenberg (Rothenberg: 1995) gives the great chemist's own description of the circumstances of scientific insight: "During my short stay in Belgium, I took an elegant apartment on the main street of Ghent. Its only flaw was the almost complete absence of sunlight. However, for the chemist, conducting all his time in the lab, it was not a serious problem. There I was sitting and working on a book, but that day my head was filled with anything, but chemistry. Being tired, I turned the chair to the fire, I was overcome by apathy, did not want to move. Suddenly, before my eyes twinkled the image of the atoms. My inner eye was directed to a variety of configurations of the atomic rows, and the sequences of fantastic shapes. Long chains of atoms suddenly appeared very clearly, they are always on the move, twisting and turning like snakes. And ... God, what is it? One of the snakes seized its own tail, and the image whirled mockingly before my eyes. I sat like pierced by light. Suddenly everything vanished. When I regained consciousness, then spent the rest of the night, working through the hypothesis of a closed ring of the benzene molecule ..." Compare the great chemist's description of prophetic dreams with the description of prophetic dreams experienced by Urkash Mambetaliev: "... One day ... later in the morning I strongly wanted to sleep. In my dream I was by the River Tup, somewhere in a hurry to. Suddenly appeared to me surprisingly beautiful, as white as a gull yurt, the size of six panels kerege (folding wooden cells which form the bottom of the frame of the yurt). The door of the yurt was open. Thirst forced me to go inside. At the place of honor sat an old man in a white high-kalpak with wide, the entire breast, white-silvery beard.

His healthy, rosy face radiated kindness and generosity. He beckoned me, as if to say: "Come, my son." I guess it was a wise parent of Kyrgyz Bakai ata. A young, white-faced, statuesque woman came out of kitchen part of the yurt, fenced off by woven twigs with beautiful ornaments. She lay a small tablecloth and put a thin white bread, a small wooden bowl full of honey and a cup of kumyz. I realized that it was Aichurek, the daughter of Bakay. With a huge difficulty overcoming the confusion, I sat down near the tablecloths and tried the offered treat. Suddenly, in one instant, all those vivid visions vanished, as if there had never been before..."

Despite the different content of the above narratives, they are similar in the form, their appearance is preceded by drowsiness, vivid visual images in the symbolic sense, represent the most significant in a given time, the end of the experience accompanied by a sharp sense of understanding. States, qualified as hypnotic, led to significant changes in the personal stories of people who experienced them. It should, however, be noted that these altered states of consciousness become a destiny in the case when the period of hard work not only preceded their appearance, but also followed them. The above features are the characteristics of ecstatic states experienced as a state of strong emotional recovery, strength, creative flight. Altered perception of time in the trance state of consciousness, decreased sensitivity to pain, slow and uniform rate for all physical processes, as well as intense positive emotions affect the duration trance - it can take hours or, in some cases, days, replaced by a deep sleep.

The process of initiation of young manaschi Ulan Ismailov, who was reciting "Manas" for seven days without a break at Manas Kumbaz (tomb) is an example of a long trance. Below is a description of the first Ulan's performing of the epic "Manas": The initiation of young manaschi Ulan Ismailov took place from 27 August to 4 September 2004, at the Manas Ordo. A young man came with his family especially to undergo the process of initiation. According to the boy, one of the Mazars of Issyk-Kul ancestral spirits told him that he should come to Talas, the place of origin of the great Manas, to sacrifice a lamb, and recite the epic for 7 days from sunrise to sunset. In the case of successfully passing the test, Ulan was to receive the permission to become a manaschi and to tell the epic in public.

On the first day of Ulan recited the epic 12 hours 20 minutes (from 7.20 am to 7.40 p.m). He didn't stand up, didn't eat and only drank sometimes. All the time he was sitting under a young apple tree. His clothes, quite plain - white shirt, white skullcap, white socks and a gray-blue jeans, was seen as a ritual. He sat in classic pose of Kirghiz men - maldash tokunup. To his right on a white cloth lay the Koran, and komuz kalpak (male headwear Kyrgyz). And to his right was sitting one of the male relatives: father, uncle, grandfather. The 27<sup>th</sup> of August was not very hot, but sunny. When the sun lit on his face, the relatives hung a blanket on the apple tree. On a white tissue there were two bowls: one with melted butter and another with water. Because of the heat the butter melted and it was replaced by another every time but he hardly ate, he swallowed one teaspoon of butter every four hours. He didn't even drink water. As it got warm by the sun, it was changed. He talked and talked. Sometimes he seemed to be tired, exhausted and get almost asleep, but then again he 'woke up' and began to speak with new energy. At noon his voice weakened but the rhythm and rate remained the same. By four o'clock in the afternoon the narrator was whispering and then he said:

My throat is torn apart,  
My ribs are curved.  
People fell into grief,  
Watching what is going on with me.

For today it's probably enough.

Let me continue tomorrow.

The last words he uttered twice, and then lay down under the tree and fell asleep instantly. Relatives quickly covered the boy with a blanket and read the Koran over him.

It should be noted that such an "anatomical" analysis of the signs that get manaschi and trance states experienced during performing, carried out with one purpose - to demonstrate that similar cognitive processes underlie creative states of many talented people. Sufficiently important to the fact that professional manaschi have a special brain organization, which, on the one hand, is a prerequisite for the development of talent, on the other - feature that separates them from other, ordinary people. This feature determines the fate of manaschi, causing periodic return to the experiences of ISS, bringing relief. A similar brain organization leads to increased stability in relation to life troubles, on the contrary, and does not contribute to the preservation of mental health.

The narrators themselves didn't explain this way the appearing of such dreams. But it is definitely a precondition for a future manaschi to start his narrative art. In Kyrgyz folk history it has become a tradition. Thus every manaschi has a vision in which the characters of "Manas" usually Bakay or Kanykey offer him millet, wheat or sand. Wheat symbolizes the endless lines of the epic "Manas" and the sand or a stone means the burden and responsibility. We can provide here the dream of an outstanding manaschi Sayakbay. Sayakbay with one of his friends were returning late to their village. As they lived on different sides they went apart to their homes. Sayakbay went through the kapchigay, it was dawning and he heard the noise and fell unconscious on the ground. In his dream he was riding a young horse and happened to see a huge black stone. As he came up it turned to be a big white yurt (national house of Kyrgyz). Sayakbay wondered how there could appear a yurt in an empty field as someone with a black beard, in a black skullcap approached him. He told Sayakbay he was his ancestor Bakay and had some food to give him from Manas and ordered manaschi to open his mouth. Sayakbay, astounded, obeyed him and Bakay filled his mouth with taruu and told him "chew and swallow it up and if don't swallow it you will suffer..." Z. Freud marked it as 'an identification of symbolic characters'.

A dream as an explanation of an epic singer's vocation existed almost with all nations. V. Jirmunsky in this connection mentions the Anglo-Saxon singer Kadmon, narrator of Turkic nations of Central Asia, nations of South Siberia who after a dream obtained a wonderful gift of singing and telling. With Kazakhs dream was a necessary attribute in the practice of an akyn-poets formation. It is remarkable that in oral singing-telling tradition of the Kyrgyz the attribute of a dream is connected only with the profession of manaschi and never occurs while telling other epic creations or exceptionally in profession of akyns.

Apparently, the "dream ritual", particular only to the performance of the epic "Manas", took place on early stages of its existence and has contributed to strengthening of manaschi's art among other creators and keepers of rich folk-poetic, epic repertoire of the Kyrgyz. "Manas's" peculiarity helped through centuries to develop its narrative tradition, this way having served as a pledge for genre and taking place by stages in the evolution of the epic, historicism and "swelling" of its plot fable up to enormous sizes, which we can observe in the versions of Sagymbay and Sajakbai.

Narrativeness with its unchangeable ritual of dreams with its source is closely connected with archaic mythic-ritual complex-magic of shaman ceremony. Commonness of separate categories of cultural activity of a shaman-reproacher and a narrator is brightly enough reflected in explorations of later times. Thus in the

work of K. Sydykov a dream is regarded as “regularly conditioned stage in formation of a narrator, necessary for him to obtain new status: from “non-existence” to appearance of a manaschi after a dream is similar to incest in the process of formation of a shaman. When the latter from the condition of “illness,” e. d. torture by spirits, is reanimated in a different quality of a shaman. Hence, in professional cult of manaschis motives of the epic ignorance before the dream had wide prevalence, i.d. experience of “non-existence as a manaschi. Motives of selection is a feeling of their compulsion to the mission of manaschis by “supreme spirits,” Who were associated with epic character’s pantheon.

Manaschis are preservers of the rich oral heritage of the Kyrgyz people, one of the Turkic nations. Summing up we can point out that the simple of origin, dynastic character, seeing a prophetic dream, the initiation and special brain organization are characteristic features of the process of becoming a manaschi.

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