# MANAS the epic vision of theodor herzen





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Edited and with original translations from the Kirghiz by Daniel Prior

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### introduction

In the Kirghiz homeland, a person familiar with the *Manas* oral epic poems has in all probability entrusted at least part of his mental *Manas*-imagery to the remarkable artistic renderings of Theodor Herzen. What reader of English can think of *Alice in Wonderland* without automatically recalling the classic illustrations of Sir John Tenniel? So too it would be no mere exaggeration to say that Theodor Herzen's dynamic and richly detailed engravings have become an integral part of the Kirghiz people's conception of their beloved national poems. And while upholding a distinctly personal style, Herzen has given new life and relevance to two old and venerable strains of illustration — medieval manuscript illumination and the wood-block engravings of renaissance masters such as Albrecht Dürer.

Theodor Theodorovich Herzen was born in 1935 in the village of Orlovka in the Talas valley of western Kirghizia. From an early age he had close ties with Kirghiz people and developed a fascination with the history and folklore of his native republic. In the Talas valley, legendary home of Manas, history literally littered the ground: ancient ruins and relics abounded in Herzen's childhood world. Once the future illustrator of Kirghiz epics was allowed to don a medieval coat of mail which ploughmen had turned up. To this day the artist cites the powerful effect that this early experience had on his imagination.

Theodor Herzen showed artistic talent and zeal early in life and was encouraged by his father, an art teacher. But as an ethnic German in Kirghizia, Herzen had very slim hopes of entering a profession in the arts. Nevertheless, with diligent effort and crucial support from his family and friends (and after a stint working in a coal mine), Herzen gradually got the training he desired. He graduated from the Frunze Art School and then the Moscow High School of Art and Industry. Then, having risen enviably far against great odds, Herzen returned to his homeland and his roots.

In 1972 the publishing house Kirghizstan and the Institute of Languages and Literature of the Kirghiz SSR Academy of Sciences launched a project to publish a new Kirghiz-language edition of the "classic" version of *Manas*, the one recorded from the lips of the great twentieth-century bard Sagymbai Orozbakov. Theodor Herzen received the commission to execute the illustrations. First Herzen was given a word-for-word Russian translation of Sagymbai's *Manas* amounting to several stacks of typescript. After reading these he submitted sketches to the project's consulting artist, People's Artist of the USSR Gapar Aitiev. In all, planning and sketching was begun from scratch three times before Aitiev was satisfied with the young artist's overall visual conception of and approach to *Manas*.

Herzen continued to consult Aitiev closely as the second phase of the project unfolded: research into the customs and material culture of the Kirghiz and into the essence of the epics themselves. The artist's intensive inquiries led to interviews with leading scholars and took him to the collections of museums in Frunze and Moscow. Yet after exhausting these conventional directions Herzen felt he needed to know still more. He decided to set off for the countryside. It was in the mountains and valleys of the Tian Shan, living and sketching among contemporary Kirghiz herders, that Herzen recalled his boyhood experiences and visualized the living, breathing background of the Kirghiz epic world.

Back in the studio Herzen attacked his assignment with near obsessive zeal. The illustration scheme had three main types: illuminations for chapter headings; linked spreads occupying the bottom half of two facing pages and depicting major events; and full-page portraits of leading characters. Other elements had to be created as well, including decorative frames and ornaments in a contrasting color, pictorial endpapers, and wrap-around panoramas for the dust jackets. Each linoleum-block engraving took many hours to fashion.

As years went by, the ambitious publishing project gradually expanded. Since the gross volume of Sagymbai's *Manas* recordings are said to exceed a quarter million verses, even the most severe abridgment would have involved multiple volumes. And as the bookshelf lengthened, Herzen's task burgeoned — while his energy and inspiration grew as well.

The years 1978-1981 saw the publication of the four-volume series under the title Manas: Sagymbai Orozbak uulunun varianty boyuncha, which contained Sagymbai Orozbakov's abridged Manas and Theodor Herzen's illustrations. The books received immediate acclaim — for both editorial and artistic quality — throughout Kirghizia and the USSR as well as abroad. Strictly in terms of the volume of images, the Sagymbai / Herzen Manas occupied a plane of sheer visual abundance which was previously unknown in the Soviet art of adult book illustration.

To this day the illustrations remain a uniquely apt medium for conveying the sense of the Manas epics. They are also a unique source of visual delight in themselves. A warhorse flares its nostrils and bulges its eves as its rider plunges into the agonizing moment of truth. A khan sits in lordly repose in his yurt with his hunting-falcon for company. Doughty herdsmen, beset by enemy marauders, wield only their lassos against deadly scimitars and lances. A beautiful princess moves gracefully through the cool halls of a stone palace, as outside in the beating sun dusty riders approach to bargain for her hand in marriage to a nomad khan. Theodor Herzen has put all of these moments down onto paper with palpable emotion and style. Then there are the objects — the stuff and business of the nomadic world: the clothes, saddles, lashes, blades and harnesses; the draperies, tassels, knots and streamers; the iron, gold, wood, felt, leather, silk, fur and stone of the characters' lives. These come tumbling out of Herzen's carving hands just as they did from the inspired tongues of the epic bards: as if a brightly-colored, bulging saddlebag had been hauled down from a camel's back and upturned for our delight. And in the distance, dust rises up to the sky from the hooves of thundering herds and armies on the move...A wind picks up, and clouds wheel down from heavens aloof to human cares...An eagle soars over a half-seen mountain crest, heading beyond the limits of the imagination.

In 1993 Theodor Herzen was named a People's Artist of the Kirghiz Republic. The honor closely followed the publication in Germany of a special edition of the *Niebelungenlied* illustrated with original Herzen engravings. An artist who has illustrated the national epics of both his motherlands can truly be said to possess an epic vision.

### notes on the engravings and text

**Theodor Herzen made one hundred and thirty-two** *Manas* illustrations, on a total of one hundred and ninety-eight individual linoleum blocks, during the period from 1972 to 1980. One hundred and nine of the illustrations are presented in this book. Herzen's printing apparatus was a 1959 Shadrinsk Printing Machines Factory mark P3-1 hand-press residing in the graphics studio of the Kirghiz SSR Artists' Union. The captions are translations from Herzen's own Russian; in their original published setting the images were uncaptioned. Since presenting all of the illustrations was not possible within the space constraints of the present book, images have been carefully selected to characterize the full range of Theodor Herzen's *Manas*-vision.

I he illustrations embody details of life and war so precisely and vividly that they can practically be "read" by themselves as a sort of visual epic poem. Yet this book of pictures is more than a picture book. In order to bear witness and pay tribute to the masterful eye with which Theodor Herzen captured the sweep, complexity, grandeur and grit of the *Manas* poems, his images are here accompanied with short original prose translations from the Kirghiz epics themselves. These passages in italics, together with the explanatory notes in plain type, are meant to allow readers to orient themselves generally within the main narrative outlines and cast of characters. The translations are also an invitation to experience, albeit at third hand, something of the remarkable verbal art of the Kirghiz heroic epic bards.

Almost all of the translated excerpts were chosen from Sagymbai Orozbakov's version of *Manas*. In certain cases, however, wider searching of the Kirghiz oral epic tradition yielded fitting poetic passages from other bards and other times. These have been woven into the presentation without comment. In particular, such selections have been taken from surviving recordings of anonymous nineteenth-century bards. (Readers of English are blessed to have full access to these priceless early *Manas* texts. The English scholar Arthur T. Hatto has edited and translated *The Memorial Feast for Kökötöy-Khan,* Oxford 1977, and *The Manas of Wilhelm Radloff,* Wiesbaden 1990. Interested readers are encouraged to learn more about *Manas* through these books.)

*Manas* is a vast and complex body of related oral poems. The best bards exercised a great deal of autonomy regarding the contents and length of their compositions. Sagymbai's ambitious version alone is said to represent more than three months of singing! Combine the volume of material with the distinct narrative aims to which oral epic poetry was attuned (as compared with modern notions of plot and character development), and the result is a "storyline" whose threads are at times a challenge to follow. But to past practitioners and audiences of traditional oral epic poetry, our modern-day dependence on the printed, standardized word — and on stories with a beginning, middle, and end — might betray poverty of imagination. It is perhaps well to remember this when approaching the stories on the following pages.

The *Manas* epics abound in special terms and in names of characters, peoples, and places, most of which are unfamiliar to Western readers. A few remarks are thus in order to introduce some terminology before the narrative presented in this book can speak for itself. Manas and his allies are Muslims, who belong, on these pages, mostly to the Kirghiz and Kazakh peoples. The antagonists are the infidels — the Kytai (that is Chinese), Kalmak (or Oirot), and Mongols. The action starts in the Altai mountain region, under the menace of encroaching infidel hordes, and moves to the Ala Too mountains, including the Chu and Talas valleys. The latter becomes the mature Manas's home. Burut is the infidels' (particularly the Kalmaks') name for the Kirghiz. Er is a title applied to heroes meaning "brave" or "hero". Kumiss is a beverage of fermented mares' milk. A yurt is the circular felt-covered tent-dwelling of Central Asian nomads. A tulvar is the magic winged steed of a hero. An aksakal is a respected elderly man; a *bai* is a wealthy man. In respect for the bards' own words, as well as for the subtlety of scholarly debates, names of characters, ethnic groups, and places have been transcribed from the original into English with no interpretation. Thus, for example, Sagymabai's *Beejin* is here *Bejin*, not the *Peking* of wishful commentators.

> D. Prior Bishkek, June 1995

## MANAS

the epic vision of theodor herzen

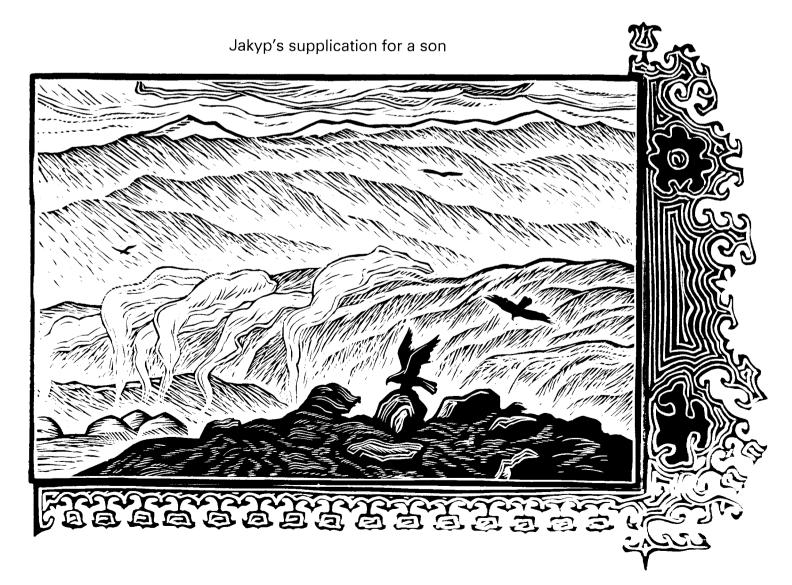


"I have no son to call my own; I am cut off from my line! In the nation there is no wretch the likes of me! I have no son to have and hold; I am cut off from my lineage! Amongst the people there is no wretch the likes of me!"

(Jakyp, a wealthy khan of advanced age, prays for an heir.)









Rocks of the ages



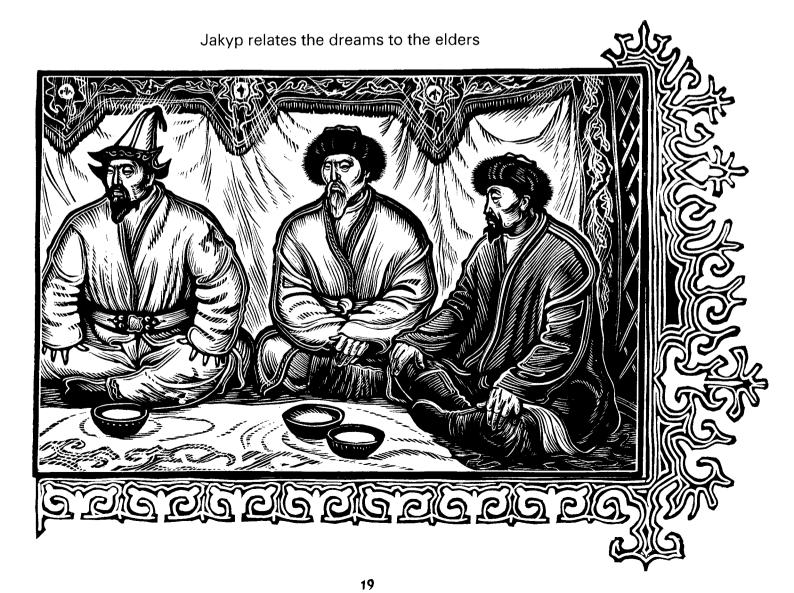
Chiyirdy's dream

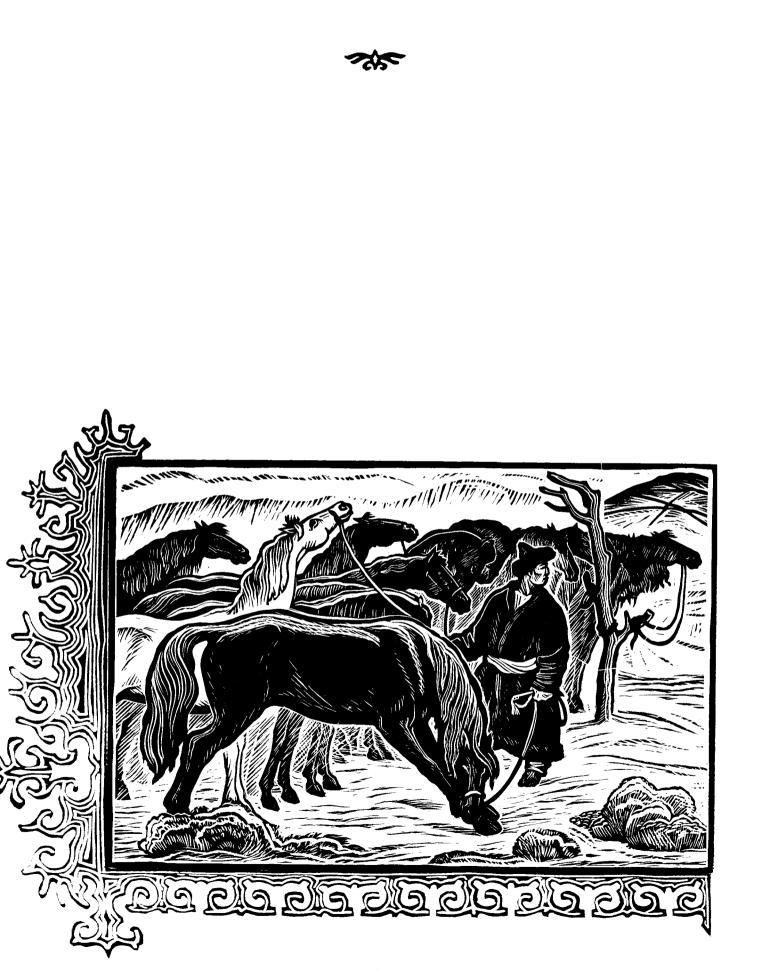
(Jakyp's senior wife dreams that a white-bearded messenger gives her a white apple with God's command to eat it. Doing so she conceives a child.)

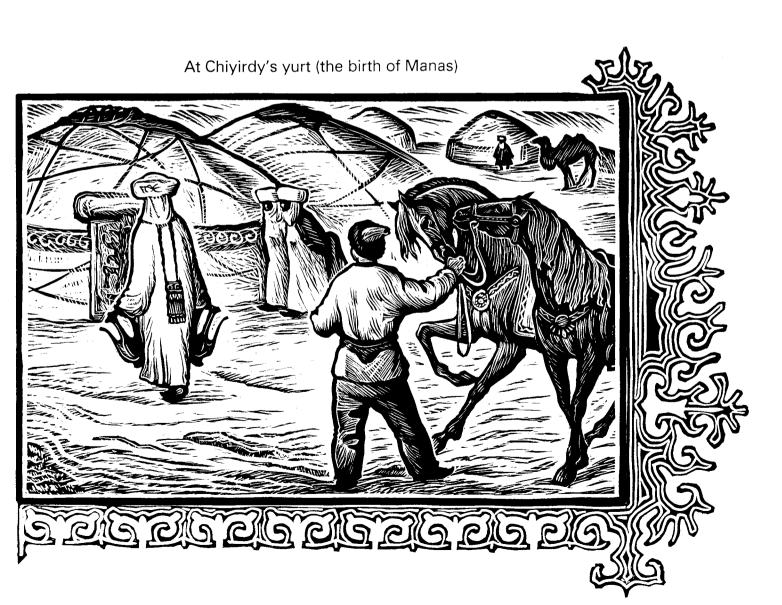
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"My poor lady had a dream — saw an exceedingly wondrous vision! She ate an apple and her womb was filled; then a sixtyfathom dragon came up hissing behind her and went to the horses' hitching-post! What would that be? Please interpret this dream! And then my younger wife had a wondrous dream! She saw two hunting-falcons inside her yurt, with black bellies and necks two cubits long; with talons of steel and leashes of copper! She set up perches by the wall of the yurt; my wife tied up both [birds]! What would that be? Please interpret this dream!"









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Manas is born



The labor lasted eight days — who has ever had such a travail? The arms of all the women who pulled became powerless with exhaustion. [Chiyirdy] said to the exhausted young women, "Try and pull on my waist!" Twelve women pulled and tugged mightily, crying "God, put it right!" The water gushed, and a baby's voice was heard!





News of Manas's birth

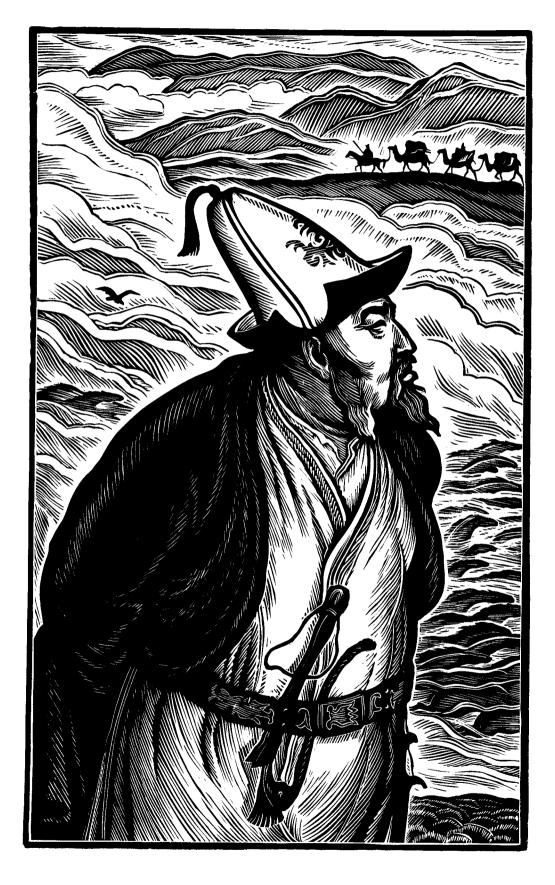




Bringing meat

<sup>44</sup>I will slaughter five hundred mares, for God has given me herds," [said Jakyp]. On Sunday they slaughtered fifty, on Monday they slaughtered fifty, then on Tuesday they slaughtered fifty...They had four hundred camels loaded up with all kinds of fruit, and everyone came together feeling carefree...Six hundred Argyns and Naimans were assigned to carry meat, while they made the Kalmaks hang the cauldrons and the people from Jergent dig all the fire-pits.

(Jakyp throws an enormous feast to celebrate the birth of his son.)



Jakyp



The dervish

"Let him be named Manas! And may Allah the Most High keep him safe from all misfortune!" he said, and all of them, young and old, pronounced a blessing.

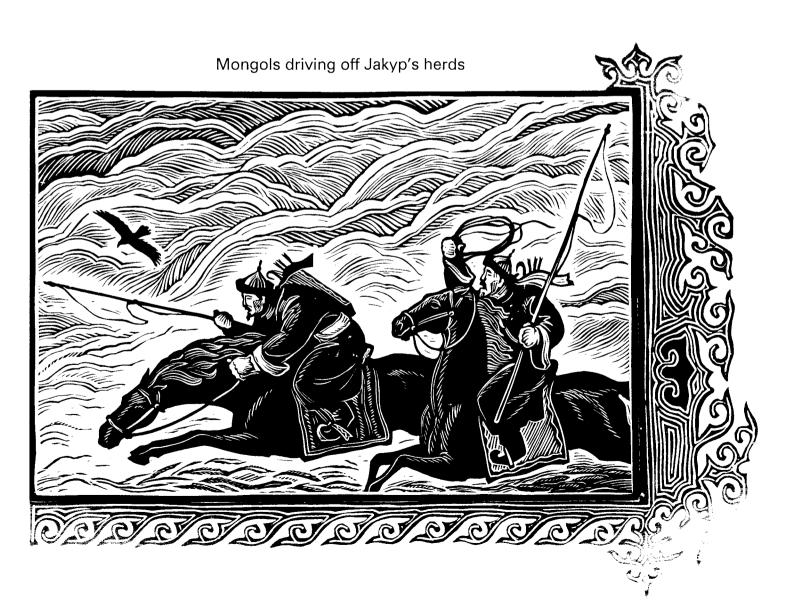
(The wise men of the people, unable to name the newborn hero, are visited by a mysterious seer who bestows the name Manas.)

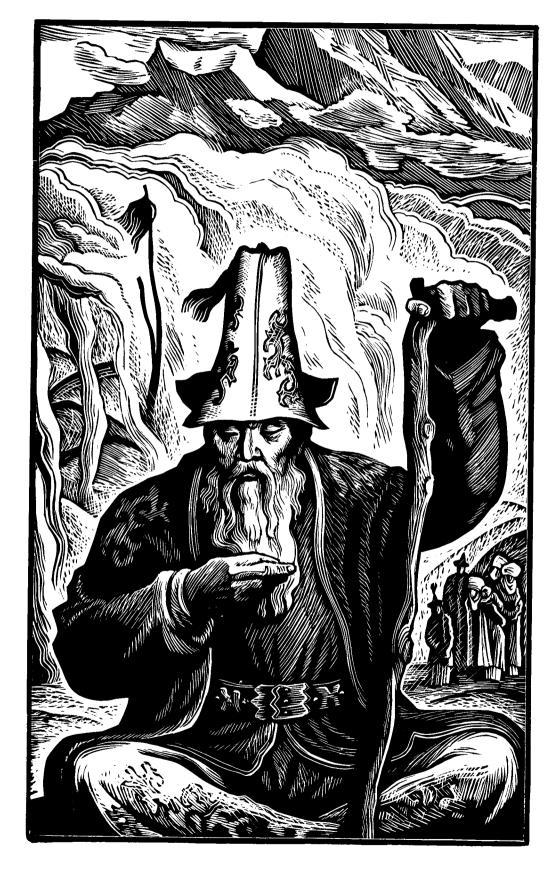


(Jakyp's wealth is constantly menaced by infidel raiders. As Manas grows up his adventures revolve around protecting his father's herds and territory.)



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Bakai meditates

"This son of mine Manas —," [Jakyp said,] "Would you be the friend at his side, Bakai? Hang the pot and light the fire? Would you show him the things which he has never seen? Walk as one behind him? Teach him the things which he does not know? Rove with him as one?...When he fills out and becomes a man, Bakai, when he grabs a horse's mane and rides, when he grows up and becomes a man, when his beard appears on his chin, Bakai — do find him a horse to ride! Find him a coat to put on! Take a Koran as big as a horse's head, a book as big as a sheep's head, and be together on the path to Judgment Day! Be the light-gray horse in the midst of his horse-herd, Bakai; be a friend to Manas unto Judgment Day!" And Bakai, son of Bai, said: "It is well! So it shall be! Let us mount up and roam; let us open the path of Islam! Let us make tracks for Bejin — and if God so grants, let us eradicate [the Kytai]!"

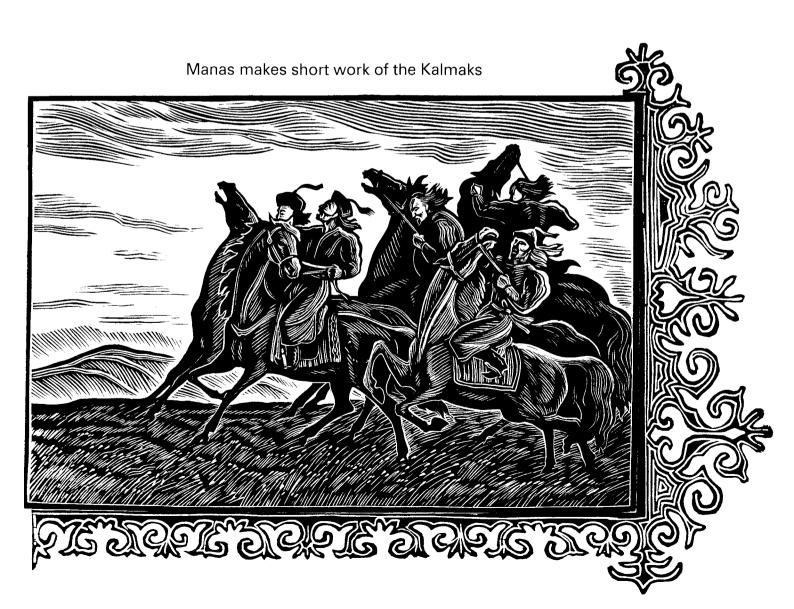
(Wise old Bakai, son of Bai, becomes Manas's lifelong friend and counselor.)



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"This Burut — what kind of boy is he? How could we stand up to him?"...The Kalmaks turned and left, grumbling as they went.







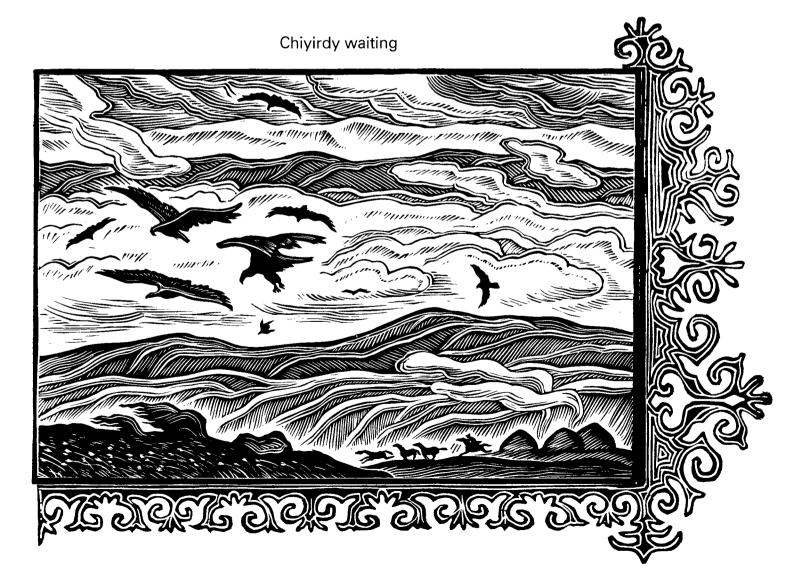


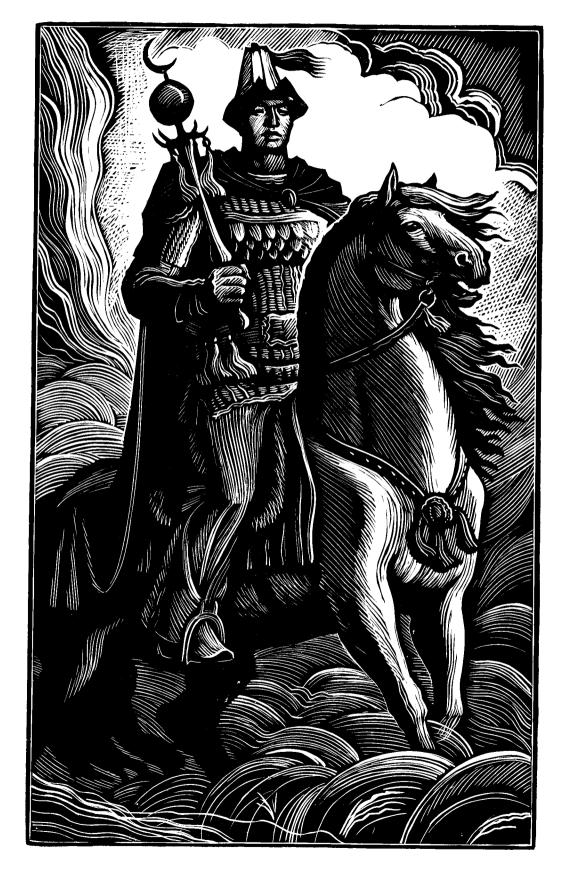
``W hat has become of my only son? Where has my little hope gone?"

(Manas's mother yearns for the boy who has become a man.)









Manas the young khan

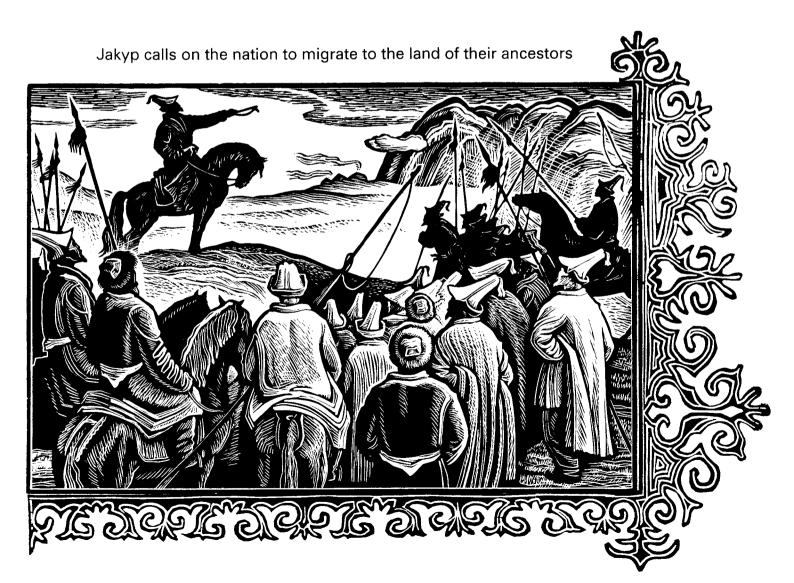
At the age of twelve he shot from a bow, and when he had reached thirteen he spoiled khans' courts and laid waste to yurts! Yes, this young Manas, Jakyp's son, who not long ago was suckling — he laid waste to yurts in the land of caves and captured horses from the land of ravines! His eyelids high, his face tan — Er Manas, whose frame is stooped under all his weight — his blood black, his lice blue; his belly dappled, his back blue — he's a golden-meadowed mountain-top, that one! This hero Manas, you ask? He's a gray-maned he-wolf!



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(The rulers assemble and agree to move from the Altai to the Ala Too. First that distant land must be cleared of the unfriendly hordes who occupy it.)







Appealing to heaven





Mounted warriors

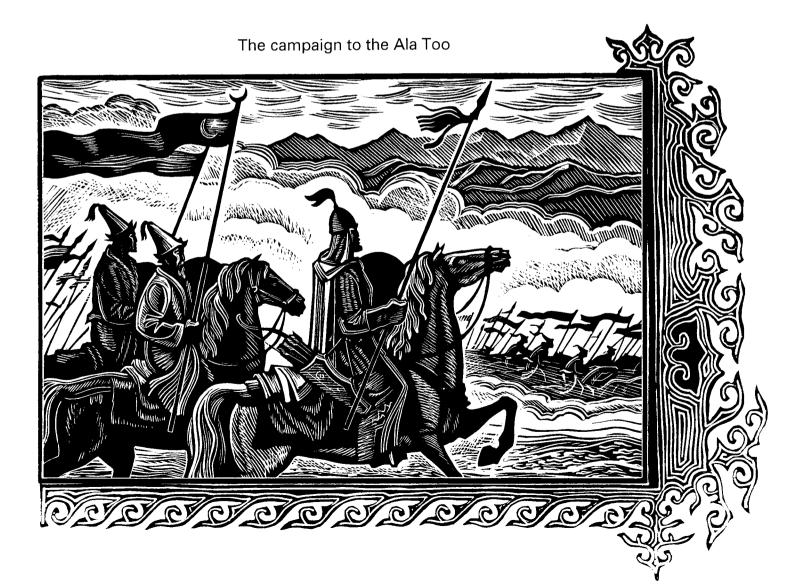




The army marching with a terrible noise was greater than the eyes could take in — eyes were bowed with all the looking! Black plains, gray hills, the face of the earth was beaten down! Coats of mail all a-glitter, racers and chargers bursting forth neighing...The enormous warrior host set a-moving with a crack!









Battle scene



Khans faced khans as the opposing masses fell together.

(The first enemy vanquished on the campaign is the Kalmak khan Tekes.)



Wrestlers

Tethering forty thousand mares, [Teyish] had lakes of kumiss churned. The horses were racing; the people were in place what was there left to think of? — He had cattle arrayed in nines and a camel tied at the head of the herd, and said, "If there be strong-men let them come up now! Let them throw down their foes with strength and prowess! Clear the wrestling-ring in the midst!" Teyish Khan thought of everything.

(Tekes's successor Teyish throws a feast with games for infidels and Muslims alike.)



Kyz Saikal



She was seventeen, with her hair in braids upon her head and a light-roan horse. Brave Saikal went up and said, "If I make off killing my opponent, a pity that will be!" And look — she's put on all the arms and armor for facing a foe: gauntlets, a mail-shirt — say! Girl though she is, she's got the look of a hero!

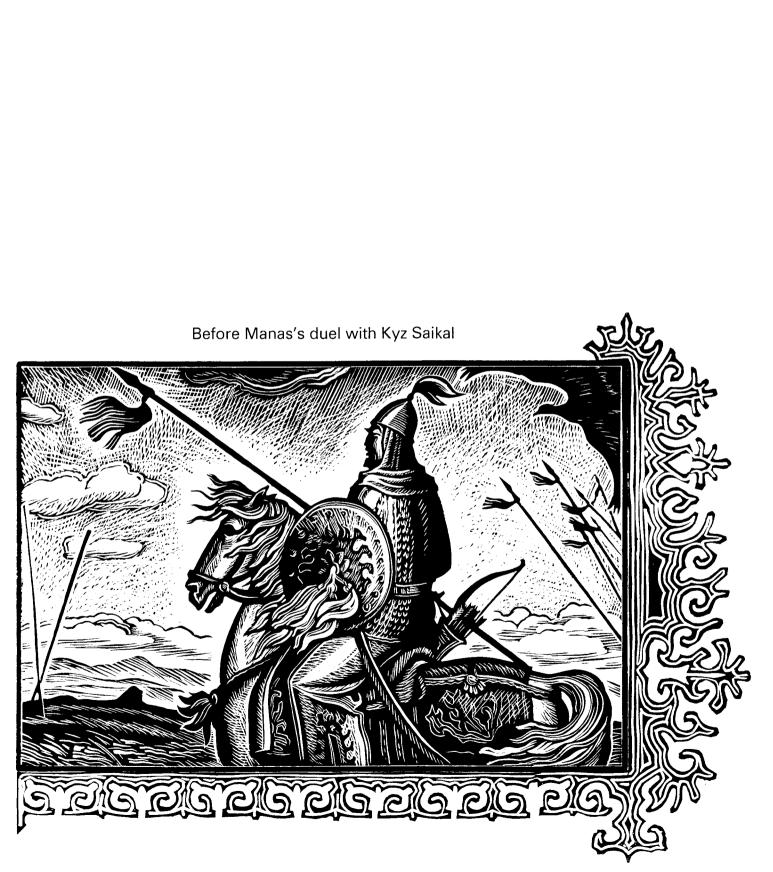
(The Kalmak girl Kyz Saikal challenges to joust any hero from among the Muslims; all refuse but Manas.)





(The two fighters face off. After a long and ferocious fight, Kyz Saikal surrenders.)



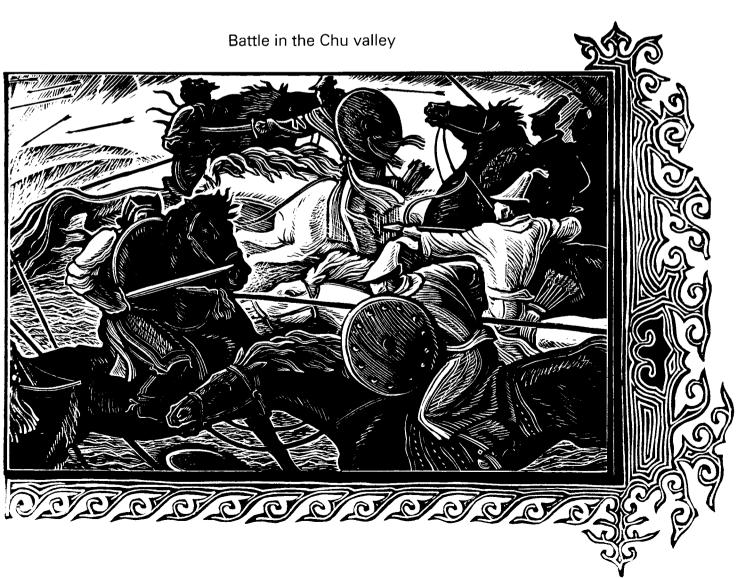


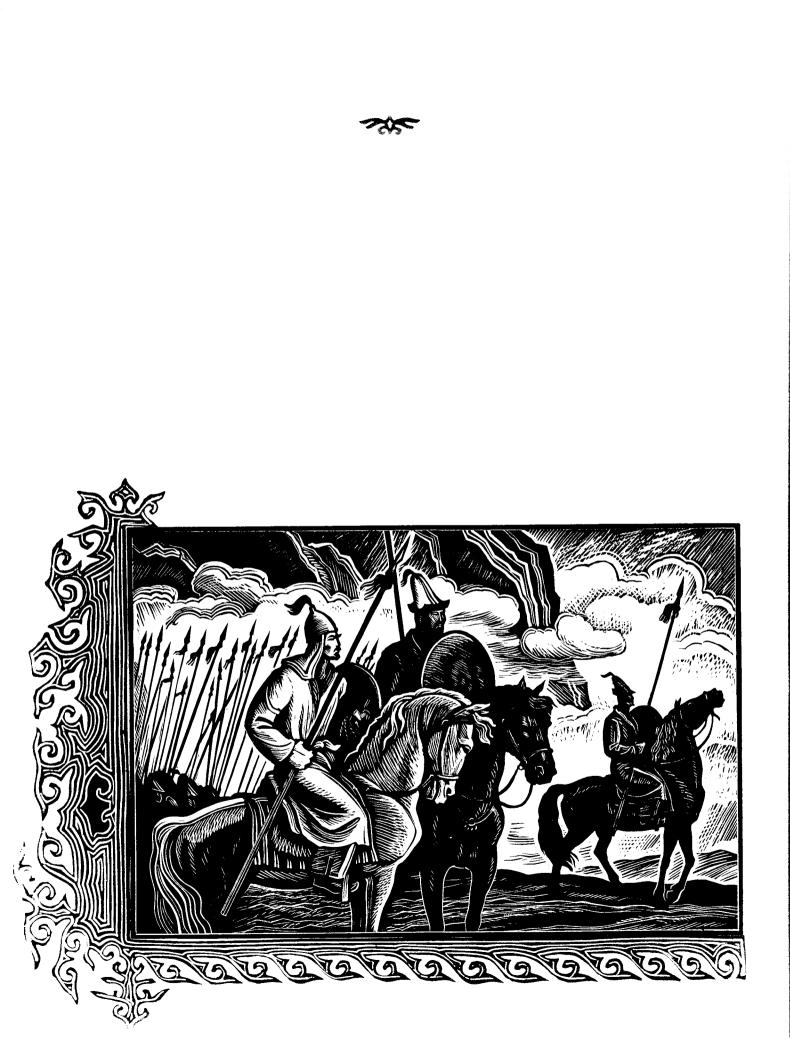
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Horses bared their teeth and fell sprawling; men pricked up their moustaches and fell with a crash as the stuffing flew from their ripped coats of padded armor. The Kytai were all shouting "Taa! Taa!"; the Kalmaks were all crying "Jaa! Jaa!"...They said, "There have never been so many Buruts! They have sprung up out of the earth and the water!"

(The clearing of ancestral lands resumes after Teyish Khan's feast.)







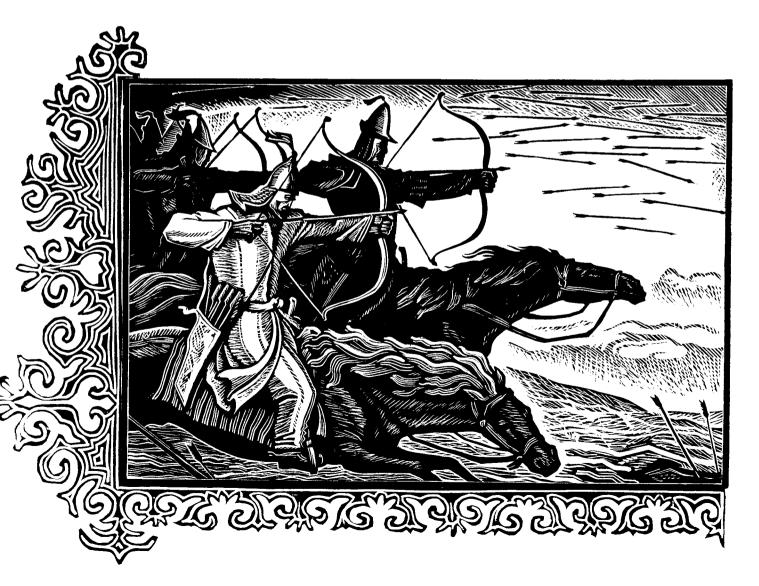
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Arrows were spent in their hundreds, and the rocks on the ground underfoot were crushed to clay.

(Manas's army drives the horde of Akunbeshim Khan out of the Chu valley.)









**Riders with lances** 



They took up their steel [lances] of bluest blue and struck fear into the enemy with their looks.



Loading the camels



(Back in the Altai, the nation prepares for the long march to the Ala Too.)



Manas



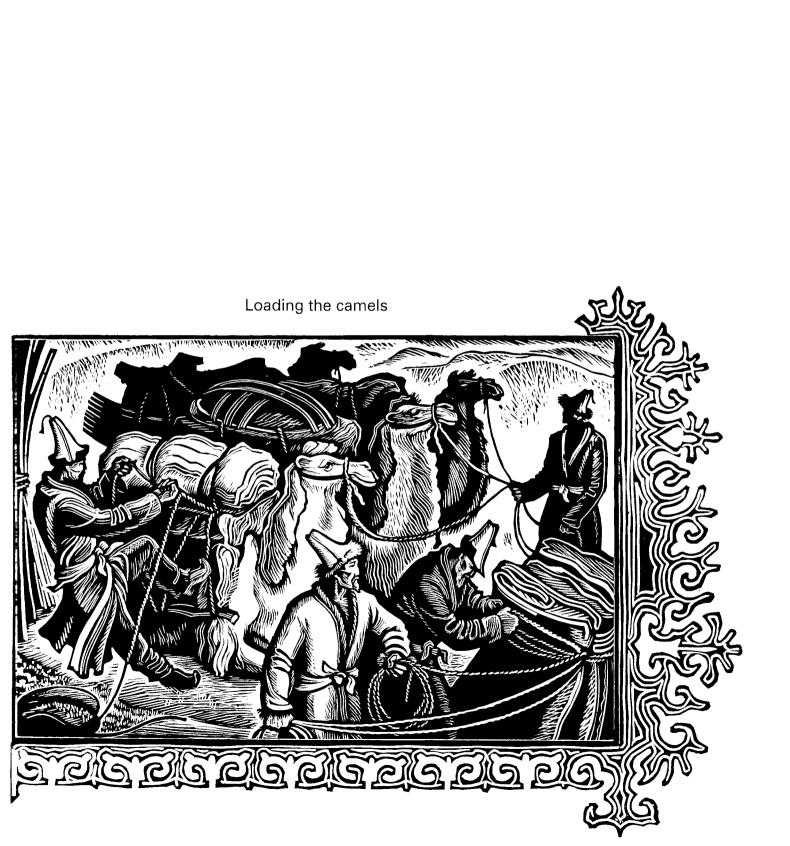
Eyelashes of fire, and eyes of burning coals; among men there is no such marvel! The words he speaks are arrows shot forth; among men there is no such handsomeness. When he casts a severe look his form is as the angel of death; his gaze through narrowed eyes is as a blade of finest steel. In his single person he has the power of a thousand champions! Forehead of a tiger, and a heart of stone; a massive spine, and forearms of an elephant; nose like a mountain ridge, and eyes of red; arching brows, and a dreadful voice; stern-bearded, with jutting moustaches — there is not a single nation that can stand up to him when he is stirred to wrath!





**H**e [Manas] had them blow the golden-belled trumpet and beat the golden drum, and he had a thoroughbred draped with sixlayered cloth of gold. Then the camel geldings, bucket-throated bellowing black camels — fully six hundred in number — were loaded up with the white yurts.



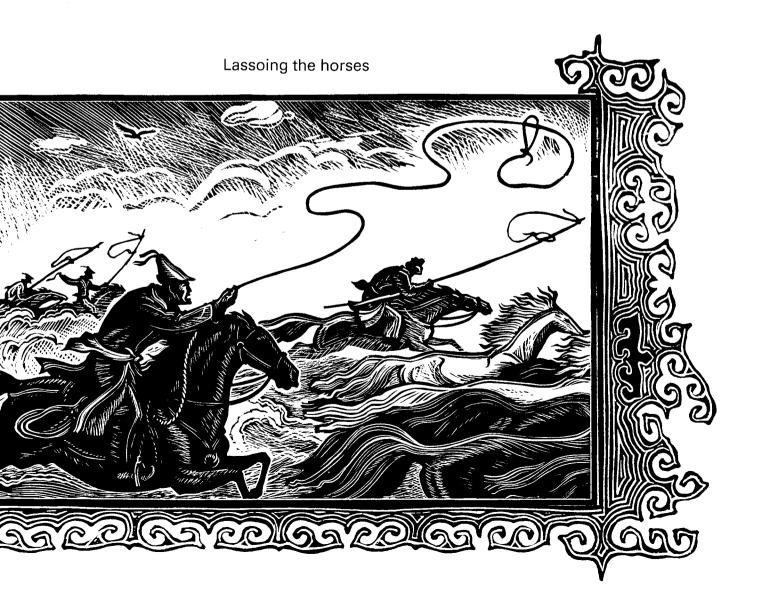


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He had all the herds of horses gathered together, so that in their full expanse they filled the Jyranty and Angyrtty valleys to overflowing. Then he had them set on the move and driven; to keep the herdsmen's mouths from parching he had them chew rib-fat.





They bowed their heads to the hero and made signs of awe...

(The man-eating beasts of Alooke Khan, ruler of the lands between Anjiyan and Kashgar, are dispatched; Alooke then accepts subjugation to Manas.)



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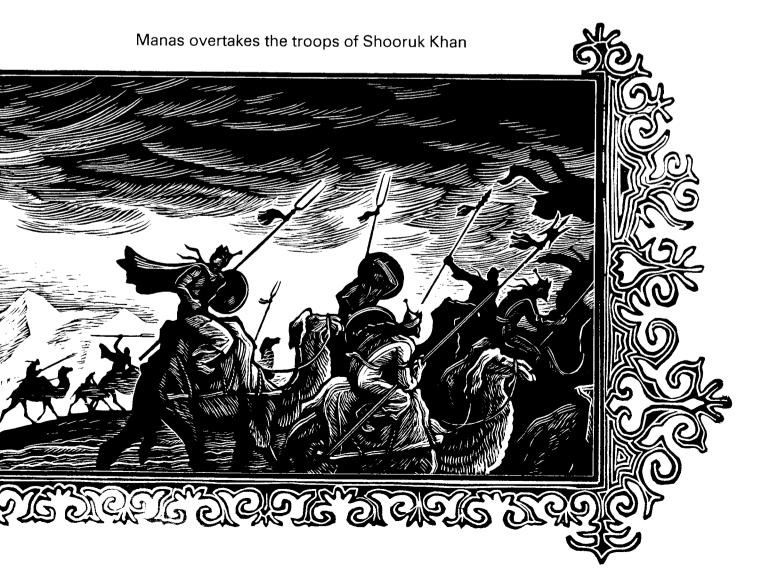


**U**nable to withstand the fury of the excellent lord [Manas], Shooruk Khan raised the banner with tears streaming from his eyes and dashed off at the head of the retreat. They rushed through whatever passes they came to; leaving their dead, they split up into two or three groups and made off in a rush.

(Yet another foe is banished from the Ala Too.)









Single combat





**Fleeing Kalmaks** 

"The enemy [Manas] will not leave off his fighting," [Alooke said], "He will not leave the mountain passes uncrossed! Do not grow up to be a warrior in vain, my son — this one will not leave Bejin unchastised! The enemy...will not leave off his attacks — he will not leave the mountain passes uncrossed! Do not grow up to be a warrior for nothing, my son — this one will not leave Kakan unchastised!"

(Alooke addresses his son Kongurbai, Manas's future archenemy.)



Almambet

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(The early life story of the Kytai prince Almambet, destined to be Manas's closest friend and ally, has significant parallels with Manas's own beginnings. In particular, he is the only begotten son of an elderly father who is a leader of his people. When the infidel babe Almambet refuses the milk of his own mother, he is fed by a Muslim wet-nurse. Later he is schooled by a dragon, who teaches the boy magic arts such as controlling the elements. Grown to manhood and possessed of heroic powers, Almambet is made a ruler of the people and commander of the Kytai armies. But one day, while out hunting, he meets the Kazakh khan Kökchö, who expounds to the young heathen the virtues of the Muslim faith. Deciding at once to convert to Islam, Almambet returns home and tries to convert his elders, including his father, to faith in the One God. When they refuse, Almambet breaks from his people and sets out in great peril to join Kökchö. The noble Kazakh adopts Almambet as a son, and Almambet's deeds enrich and gratify Kökchö and his people.)





The plot



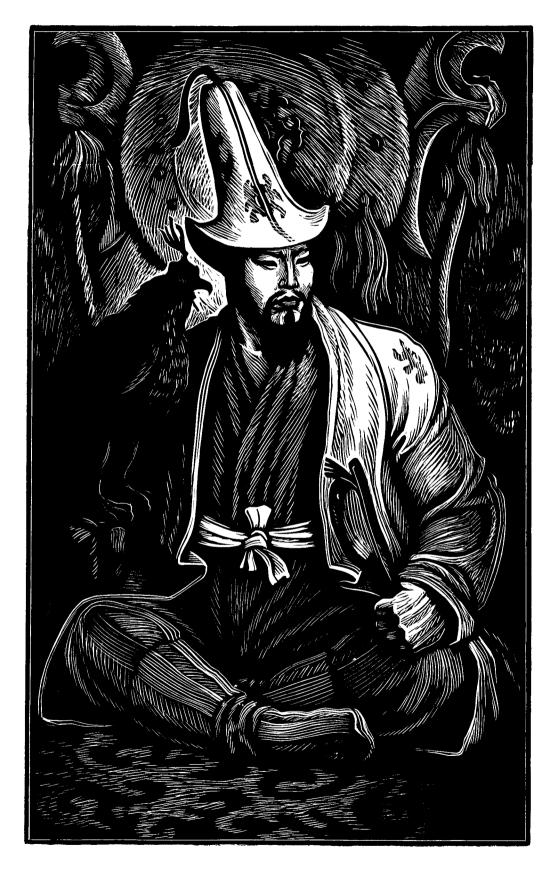
"This Kytai makes mischief — our prestige has dropped!...He is divesting more and more of Kökchö's powers — just where does he come from, this scandalous Kytai who brings trouble and meddles with Kökchö?"

(Jealous chiefs in Kökchö's circle eventually conspire to bring Almambet down.)



Almambet





Kökchö Khan

205

"A dog's snout points to where the pear-trees grow...a dog wishes for the food he is not eating!...Will a bear look for prey where the lion walks? This Kalmak who asks for my horse — ach! Will God punish him?"

(Kökchö, drunk, believes the base lies whispered to him by Almambet's rivals that the foreign prince has seduced one of his wives. Enraged, Kökchö summons Almambet. Without openly accusing him, he humiliates Almambet by inviting him to request heroic gifts of a horse and arms and then refusing to give them to him. Almambet is once again an outcast.)

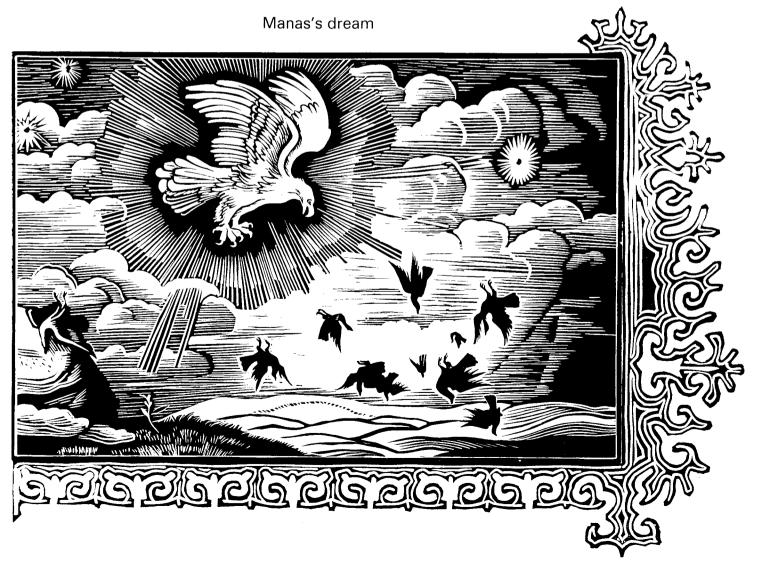


"Almambet will come to your side! He will be our support! The bird of prey you saw, the hawk, is your fist for attacking your enemies. The birds fell and landed by you — so to your steadfast person will all respectful braves bow in deference. All that is hidden has been entrusted to you, and you have seen it with your own eyes! Your companion in this world, your helper in the other world — Lion-Tiger Almambet of your dream — is coming!"

(One of Manas's loyal band of Forty Companions, smoothtongued Ajybai, interprets his vision.)









Hunting scene

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Then Manas spoke:..."My surpassing worthies! Saddle up, and let's have a good abundant hunt! Let it be a wonder to see tracking hoofed beasts, hunting game, great mountains where man does not tread, hiking the mountain slopes — let's shoot mountain rams off the steep slopes and make our place in tales [to come]! Let's eat the meat of mountain rams and sleep wherever we please! There are full-grown mountain rams on the ledges — if God so grants, we will have our trophies! Let's shoot rams off the ledges, and so doing be immersed in joy!"



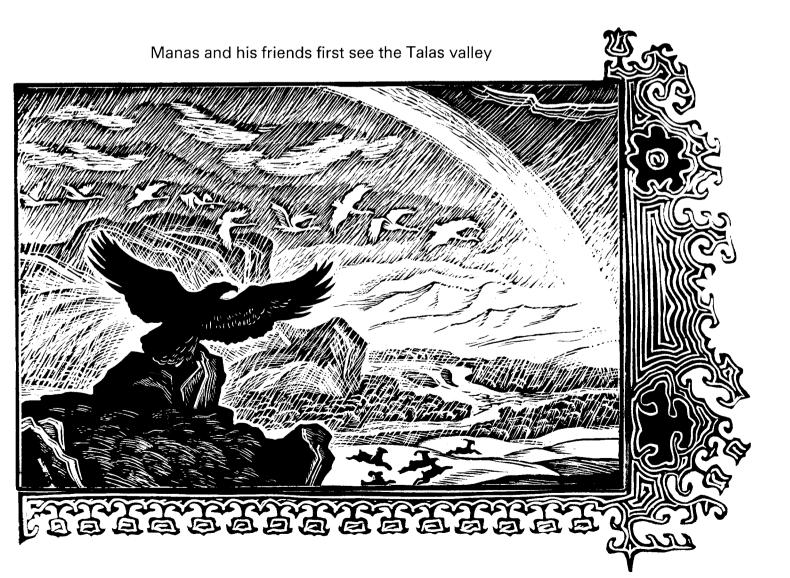
Saddled horses



Thus immersed in laughter, on the fifteenth day exactly they crossed over Chanach pass and gazed in the direction that the sun was heading: "See the foothills, the wetlands, the solitary flying geese! See the hollows, the wetlands, geese honking as they fly! See the country, the wetlands, the ducks and geese! The stallions such as would not maraud among herds of horses!" And from every direction springs welled up and flowed hither and thither.







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Almambet's grief

**R**ubbing the wound he set the injured wing in place; the Red Wolf hero delicately bandaged the wing. He swabbed the wing with medicine; he bound it in a coil of twigs. So that it would fly again, Almambet kept the lapwing as he moved on...When he came to a place of dry steppes...he said, "Find your home, dear creature — you've got children in your nest, too! It's time to make you get up and fly." The lapwing flew up skyward; Almambet raised his eyes to heaven and looked after the lapwing as it flew into the blue. And from the place where he stood on Boto-moinok pass, looking handsome astride Ak-kula, cutting a magnificent figure as he loomed on the ridge, Manas had just begun to watch [Almambet]; hero had just fixed eyes on hero.

(Almambet wanders alone in the wilderness. Regretting having shot a solitary bird, a lapwing, he heals it. At that moment he is spied from afar by Manas.)





"Make ready to take a thoroughbred; lay in coats of gold cloth [as a gift]! Tie up a first-rate tulpar; pacify your hero's heart!"...They readied a horse — it was Ak-kula they groomed and fitted out and led by the reins before him!

(The two meet and become friends, and Manas heaps rich and noble gifts on Almambet.)



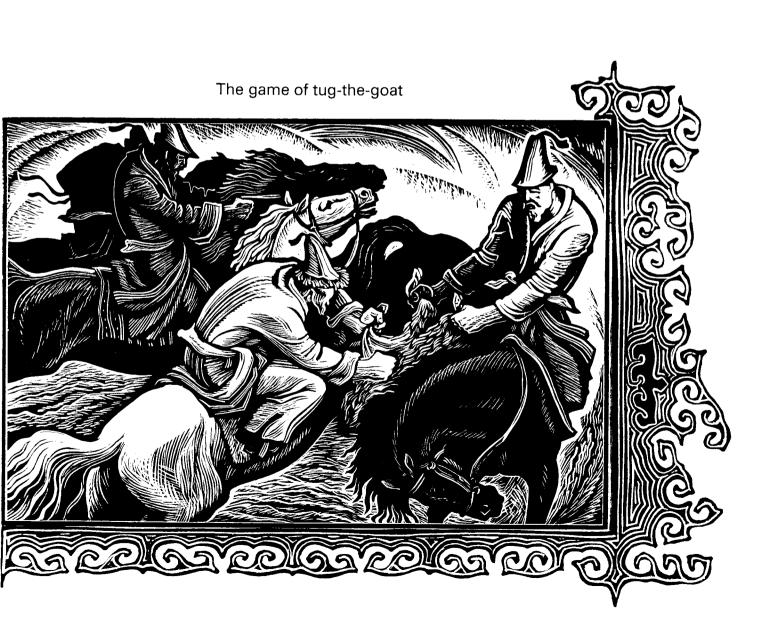


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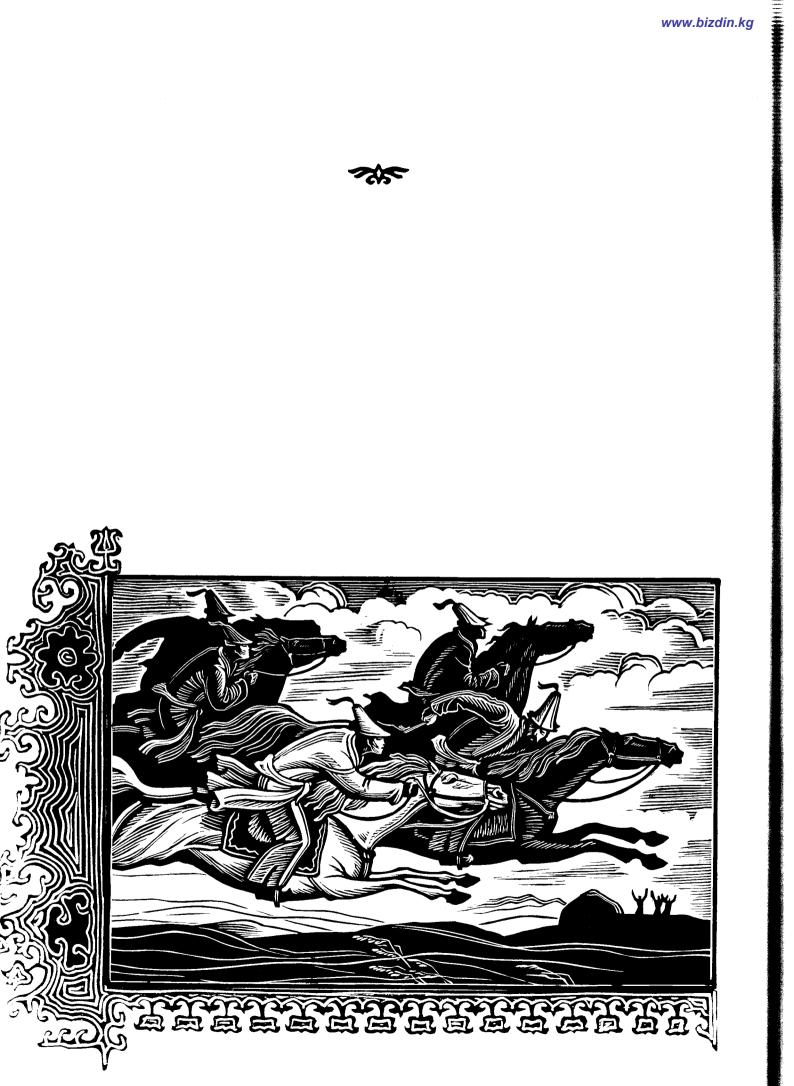


## (Almambet's arrival is celebrated with a feast and games.)

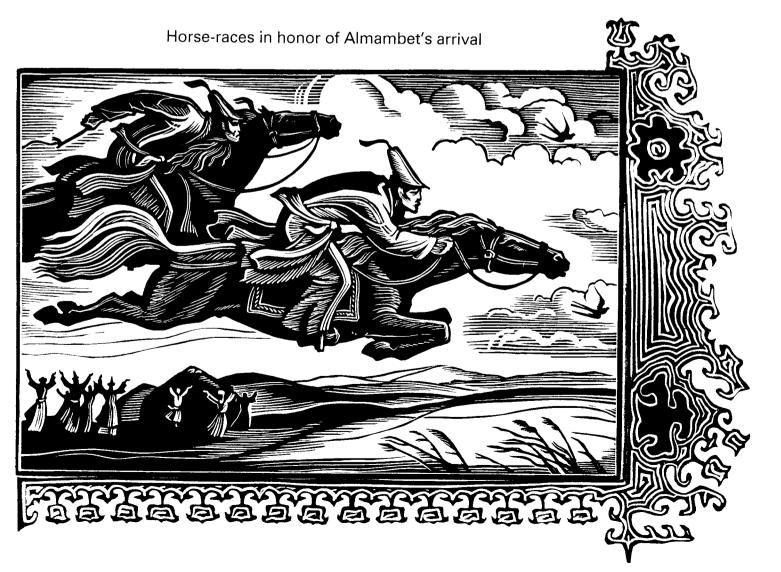




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Mother's blessing



The old lady's breasts became like those of a young wife newly delivered of a child...Manas took the right breast and placed it to his mouth; Almambet took the left breast and began to suck..."Through my mother I have become [one of] two!" were the words Er Manas spoke.

(Manas and Almambet become ritual brothers.)



Maidens





Kanykei

"Temir Khan's daughter Kanykei is a girl who is just the match for Manas! Rousing like a falcon in the cattails, light as a copper bride's headdress — she will rattle her golden earrings, she will please her father-in-law Jakyp Khan! She will be a fine bride. Her mother-in-law, the lady...when she rattles her silver earrings, the lady will be pleased! She will be a fine bride!"

(Manas, whose harem consists only of wives taken in war, resolves to court and marry a proper wife. Jakyp then journeys far and wide in search of a bride for his son.)

This girl [Kanykei] was the very picture of marvelous form... Clothed in her everyday garments, her waist was as curvaceous as a camel-calf's; with drawn-out, reedlike eyebrows; even forehead, and black eyes; polite tongue, and sweet speech; rounded back, and the breast of a mountain ram; capricious as the moon, with eyes like a camel-calf's; her red cheeks shone, and her narrow waist wriggled daintily.

(Jakyp's search leads to the city of Keyip (or Khiva), seat of Atemir Khan. There he conceals himself and spies Manas's future bride at play in her pleasure garden. Difficult negotiations ensue with Atemir Khan, who demands an enormous bride price.)









Herds

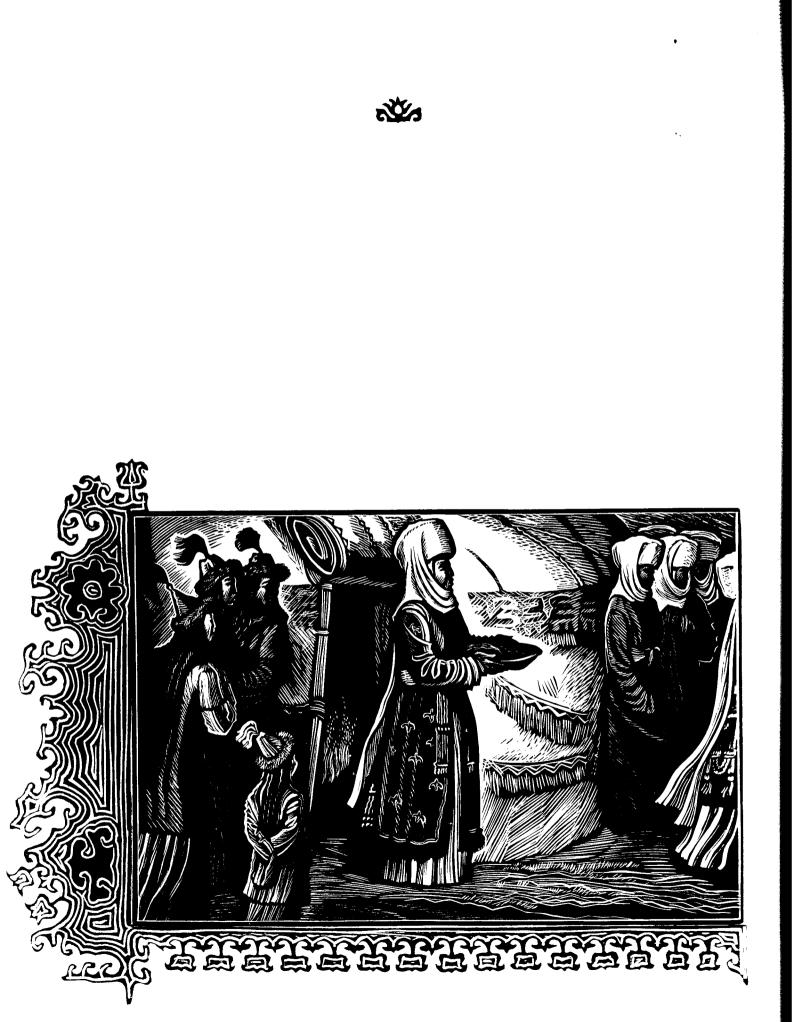
(Manas and Almambet, alerted in dreams that they and the Forty Companions will be given girls to wed, deliver the required herds and gifts to Atemir.)



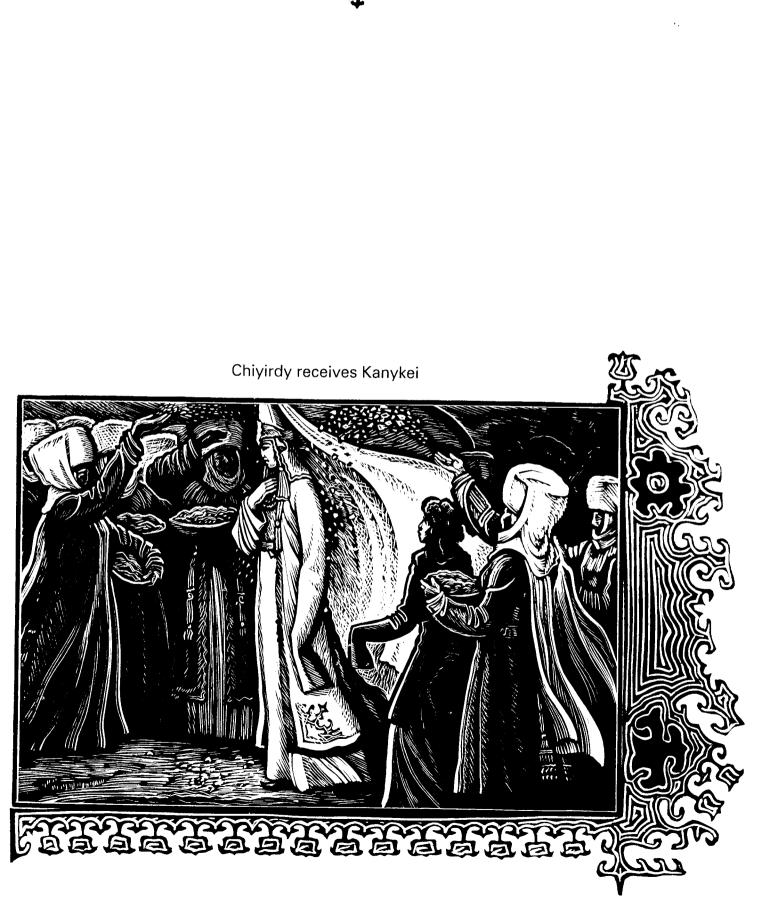
The khan

Kanykei awoke from her slumber, opened her eyes, and sat up. Her sharp dagger with the patterned hilt — this she took up in her hand. "Just who are you to tie your horse on my father's... manger, where no horse should be tied?! Just who are you to hang your riding-crop on the willow where no crop should hang?!"...Kanykei drew her horn-hilted dagger from its sheath; she lashed out and ripped his banded calves and white wrist!

(Manas steals into Kanykei's couch and receives a surprised and violent rebuke from the proud maiden. The enraged Manas and the Forty Companions then prepare to crush Atemir Khan; disaster is averted only when Kanykei, humbling herself, accepts the blame and agrees to wed Manas.)



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"It seems that my end has arrived; my heaven-lent soul is coming loose. I leave behind a young son, unclaimed cattle, a storehouse full of gold, my wife Ayimkül, and the entire Kirghiz people!...My heaven-lent soul is in dire straits. My son with the dripping nose, who never ceases his sniveling, whom the people were always pampering...whose name is 'Snot-Nose' — it is a scandal for his father that a becoming name has not yet been bestowed upon him!"

(With Manas wed to Kanykei, another major branch of the epic unfolds: the Memorial Feast for Kökötöy Khan. In his last testament the dying khan laments that his son Bok-murun is still too young to assume responsibility for his wealth. Instructions for a massive memorial feast are also given.)







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Bok-murun



"This great tulpar Maaniker — ride him and learn his qualities! Of mixed blood, yet a thoroughbred; tireless lungs, wings of brass; ears like cut reeds, pasterns of brass; if you give him his head he will not stumble; if he were to run for forty days through brain-boiling fire and mortal exertion, he would not thirst!"

(Bok-murun inherits his father's magic steed Maaniker and accedes to the throne.)



He [Bok-murun] had a bay stallion mounted whose neck was thick as a maul — no common beast but a huge racer — had the rider dressed in a golden coat, and sent him on the road on a six-month circuit to carry the tidings.

(News of Kökötöy's death is spread abroad.)

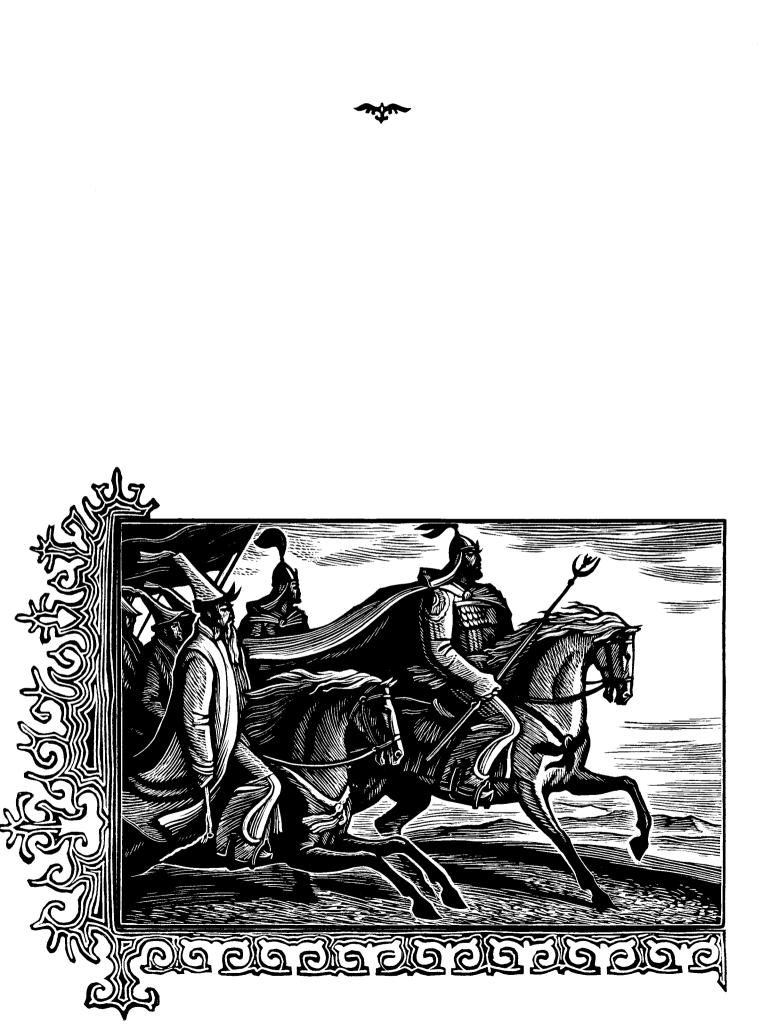


Bok-murun

 ${}^{\prime\prime}\!H$ ow shall I give this memorial feast? How shall I set the horses racing? How shall I win a place in the next world? These heathens and Muslims — how shall I feast them? I will move on from here and alight at Sairam! I will move on from there and alight at Chibikent! I will pass Sary-bulak, cross over the Kara-buura river and go down to the wide Talas! Then I will move on from there, go up the Kara-kol, and cross over the three Korumdu passes; I will descend to Suusamyr, castrate all the lambs and rams, and make it so that the cattle do not breed! I will stay there for a month, fattening my cattle, hanging yurt frames, and repairing the yurts! Then I will set out again: I will cross Kara-balta pass and follow the Kayingdy river! Then moving on from there, when I reach Ak-ermen, I will untie the camels' saddles. Traveling along the Korogotu, I will cross at It-kechüü; making my way along the valley of white cliffs, I will alight at Ak-bulung! There I will shear the sheep and put the covers on the yurts! Then I will move on from there. Crossing Yrgaity pass, I will make straight for the Kopa valley! Then I will be on my way again, stop along the Karkara river, make friends with the Kaldai, and boil my salt!...When seven months have fully passed I shall have dug my fire-pits; when a full ten months have passed I shall have procured my firewood! I shall win a place in the next world: the infidels and the Muslims, one and all, I will feast them! From my place of honor call them hither! Invite them all, leaving out no one!"

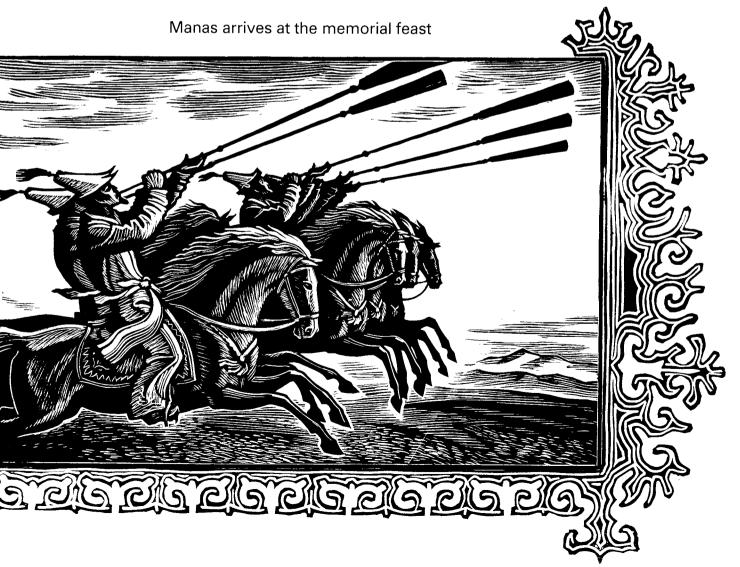
(The young heir fixes the route to the distant feasting grounds, revealing his masterful understanding of the countryside and of his people's nomadic economy. Such a leader shows the makings of a khan.)





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Welcoming the guests



Kongurbai demands Maaniker from Bok-murun

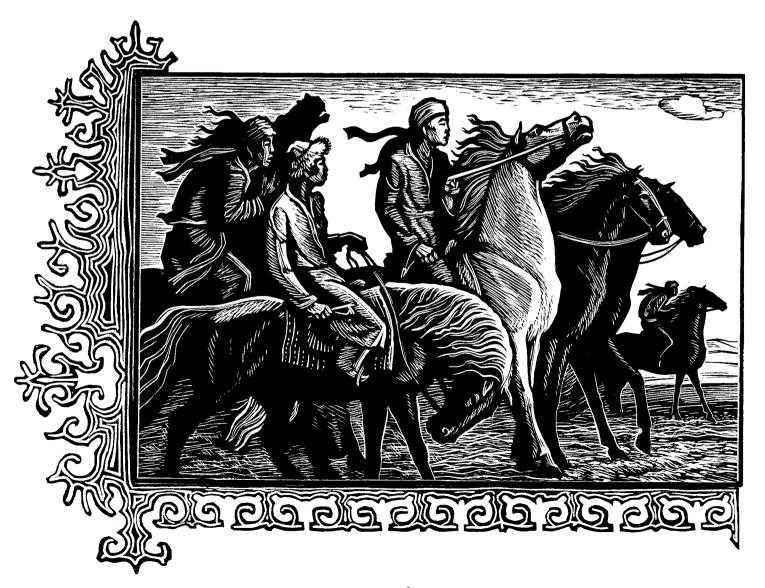
"This so-called memorial feast for Kökötöy Khan! You stinking yogurt, green curds, cowering scoundrel! You said there would be cattle beyond counting for the first prize, and you went rather further than saying you would welcome all guests that came — you said you would annihilate me if I didn't come! The fun is over, Bok-murun, I'm vexed enough by your innumerable words...your offending father has died, now if you are really giving his memorial feast then give me Maaniker. If you do not give me Maaniker, you will know misfortune!"

(The Kalmak khan Kongurbai begins the inevitable disturbances between Muslims and infidels at the feast.)

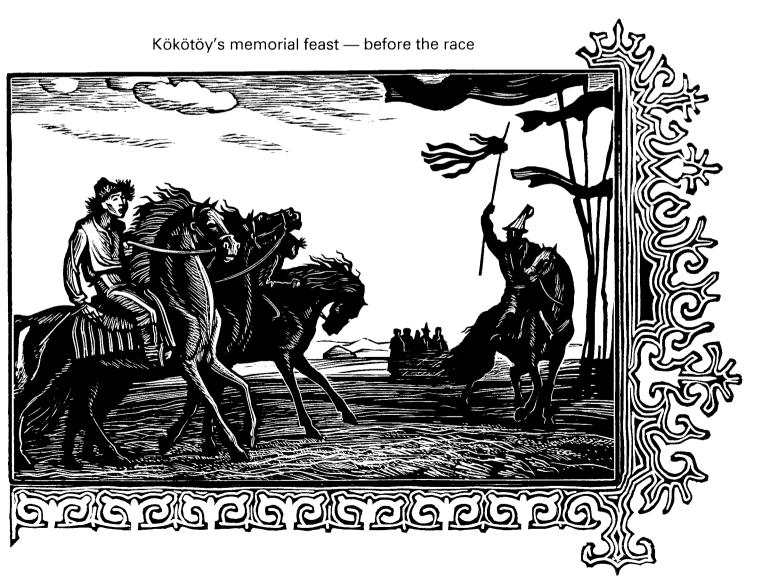


At dawn, as Kökötöy's standard fluttered in the sun's first rays, Aidar cried out with a loud shout, "If you've got a horse, parade him!" and planted the blue banner. Then, swaying heavily atop Kuuchabdar, he ambled in amongst the host and called the entire people [to the race].

(The long-distance horse-race, the main event of the feast games, begins. Riders number six thousand at the start.)







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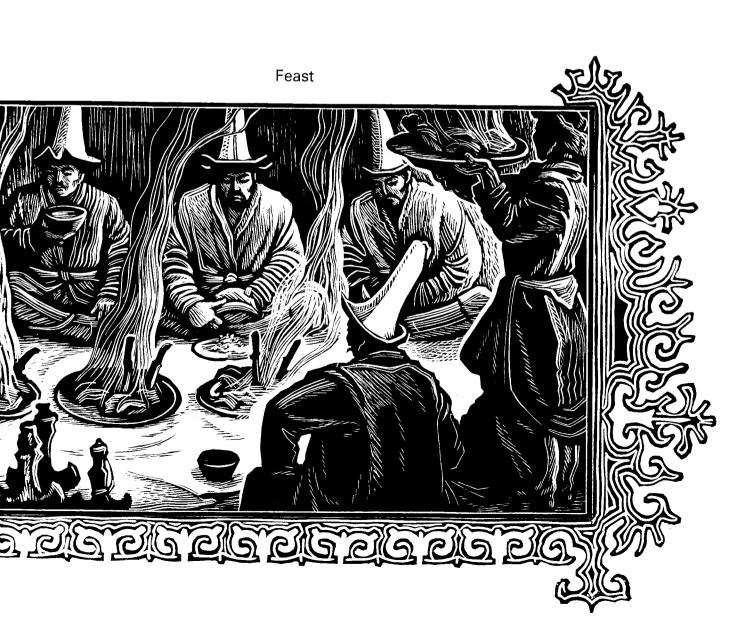
With the racing horses started, all the people got down to feasting.







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Riders with spears



In the morning when the day dawned, as the first rays of light peeped out, they raised Kökötöy's blue standard and set the blue banner a-rippling. With a roaring noise the people all mounted on horses — eyes could not see from end to end of the throng, nor words tell its size!

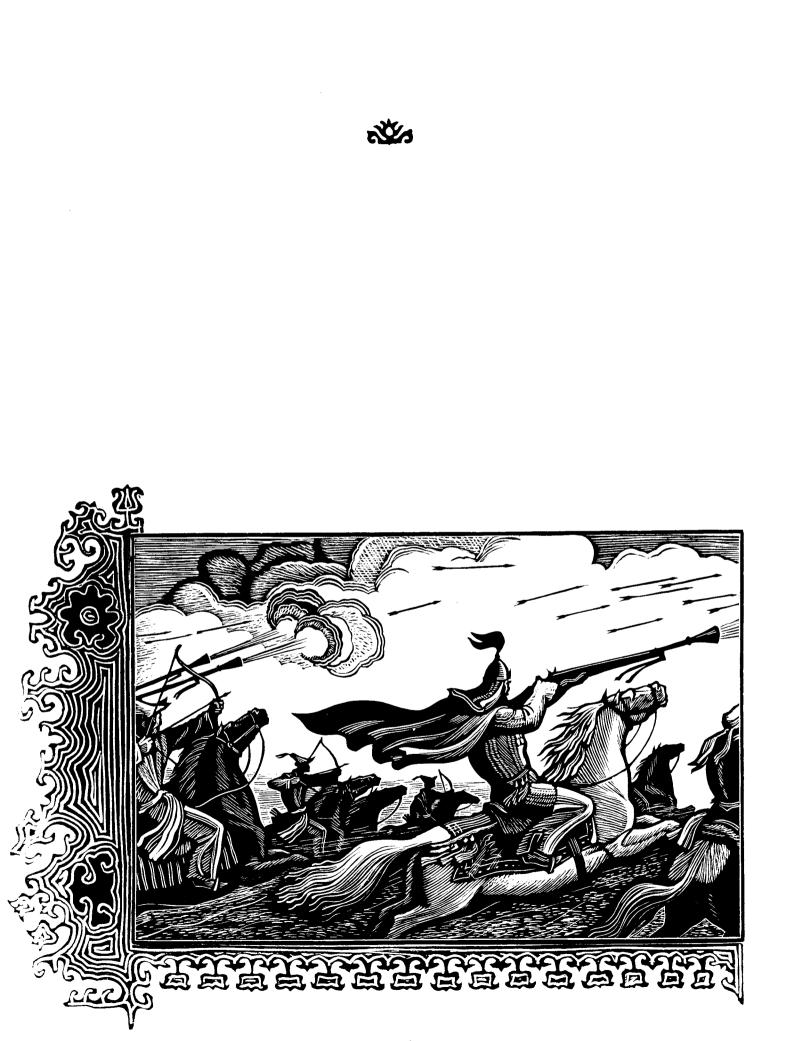
(The feast games begin.)



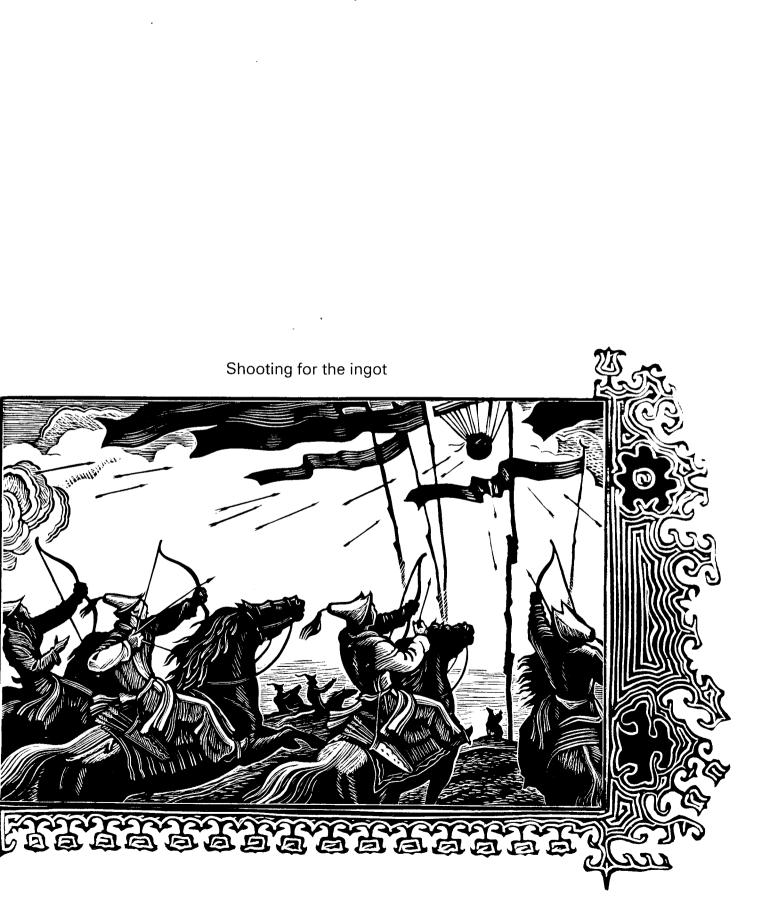
Warriors

**T**here were sure-shot huntsmen, coursers distinguished with firearms, coursers adroit with bow and arrows...

(The heroes are called to compete in shooting down a hanging ingot of gold.)



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Joloi



Any opponent he got his hands on would be ground into pieces like oat flour! If one looks at this man's form, the distance between his two shoulders is half a fathom — a full fathom!...If one looks at his two shoulders, there is space there for two men to perch; if one looks at his two cheeks, there is enough meat there for two grown he-dogs to feast on! If one looks at his eye-sockets, they are like excavated granary-pits;...His calves are large as a bull's girth; the breath from his mouth is like the blast at the top of a mountain pass! If one looks toward his hands, they are as broad as a forty-year-old poplar tree; if one looks at his eyelids, they are those of a black-faced falcon which seizes [its prey] with no hope of escape! If one looks at the breadth of his chest, it is like a foothill hard by the mountains; if one takes in his general disposition, it is like that of a hungry, gray-maned he-wolf!

(The infidel khan Joloi challenges the Muslims to wrestle.)





Aksakals

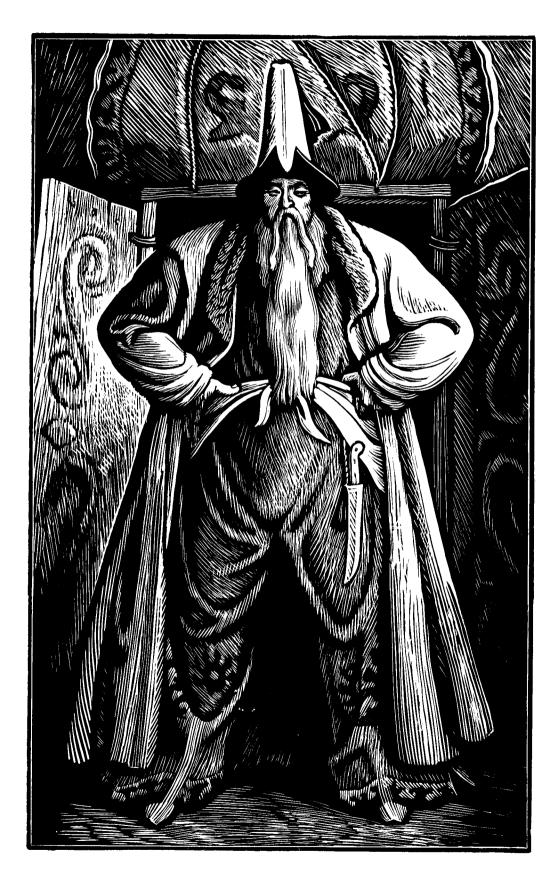
(The search for a Muslim champion willing to face Joloi lasts an embarrassingly long time.)



Breeches for Koshoi

There was a mountain goat on Dangdung-bash that had never seen a hunter, a black-backed goat of the bare cliffs. Sixty huntsmen rode out with Abyke in the lead, and making sure not to mar its hide he had it shot in both eyes. Leaving it unflayed for a hundred days they then had the dried rawhide rolled up and cached away in a fresh chest...Then with great care Kanykei placed it in a copper basin, had apple bark put in, and left it to ferment for six months. Then it was given to the dyer...and the women cut it, the girls skilled with the thimble sewed [the breeches]. It was experts alone who sewed them!

(At last Koshoi Khan agrees to enter the ring. He receives a fabulous pair of wrestling breeches from Manas.)



Old Koshoi



"This is a day for father to lament! If we walked over the earth barefoot and the ground were springy — and we were twentyfive — were we riding keen gray horses and courting the girls at twenty-five — would that I were twenty-five!" he said. "Would that I were thirty-five, to say nothing of forty-five! Now, would that I were only fifty-five, or a mere sixty-five! Or only seventy-five, to say nothing of eighty-five! This is a day for dear father to lament!" And now it was time for ninety-five-year-old Koshoi to undress and enter the match.

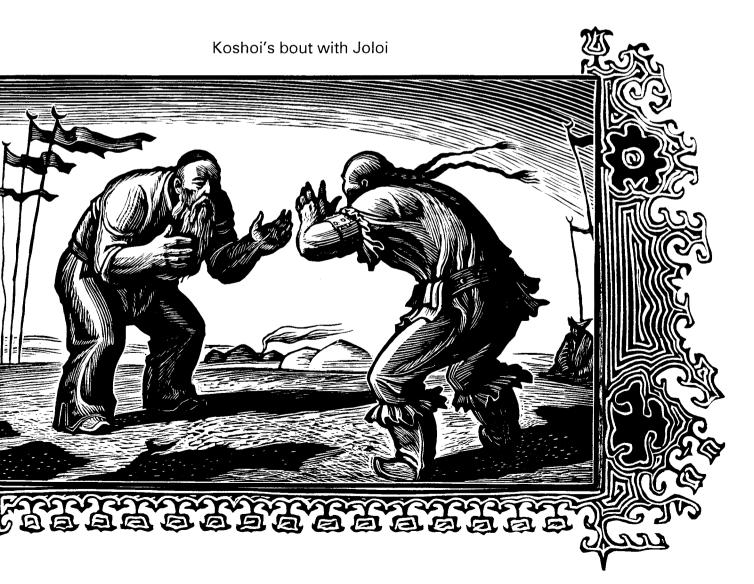


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Champion of the world Koshoi, his grizzled beard fluttering, lumbering like a yearling camel-bullock, readied himself for the tussle and stepped out slowly. The cursed giant Joloi was on his feet and ready to wrestle, fire billowing from his mouth and flames sparkling from his eyes.

(Ancient Koshoi's victory deals a blow to the infidels' pride.)





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Elders' counsel





Meeting with Karagul



"Let the jousting among the heroes begin! May the winner take the prize and the loser go empty-handed!"

(The most dangerous game of the feast is announced.)

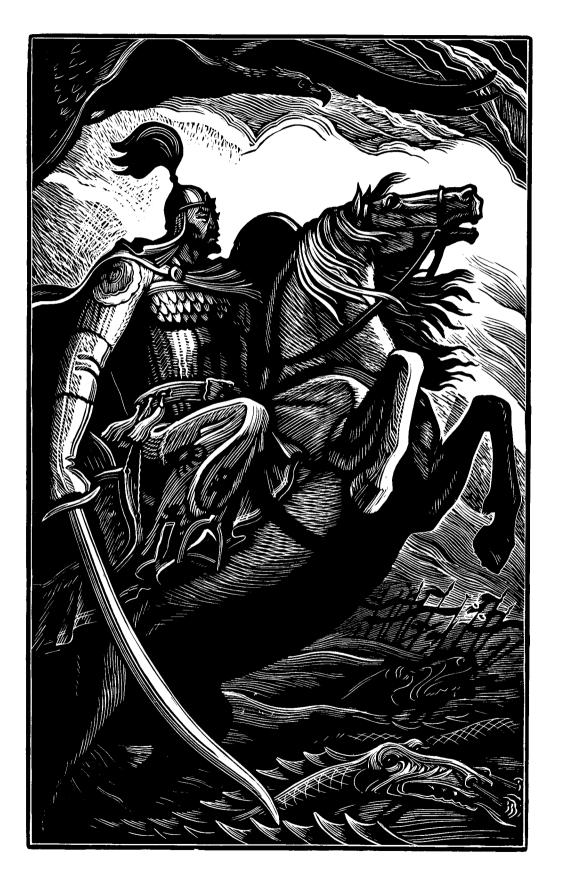


Kongurbai

His eyes were frightful like iron, his nose was like a high, grassy mountain crest; ridge-nosed, red-eyed; deep-chested, broad-trunked; Lord Kong's formidable stature has been proverbial for ages! Saddling and outfitting his big, shapely black horse Kytai-style, he mounted in fury;...vehemently spurring his flamelike [horse] Algara, he slung on his gun and took up his blue [steel] lance.



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Manas before single combat with Kongurbai

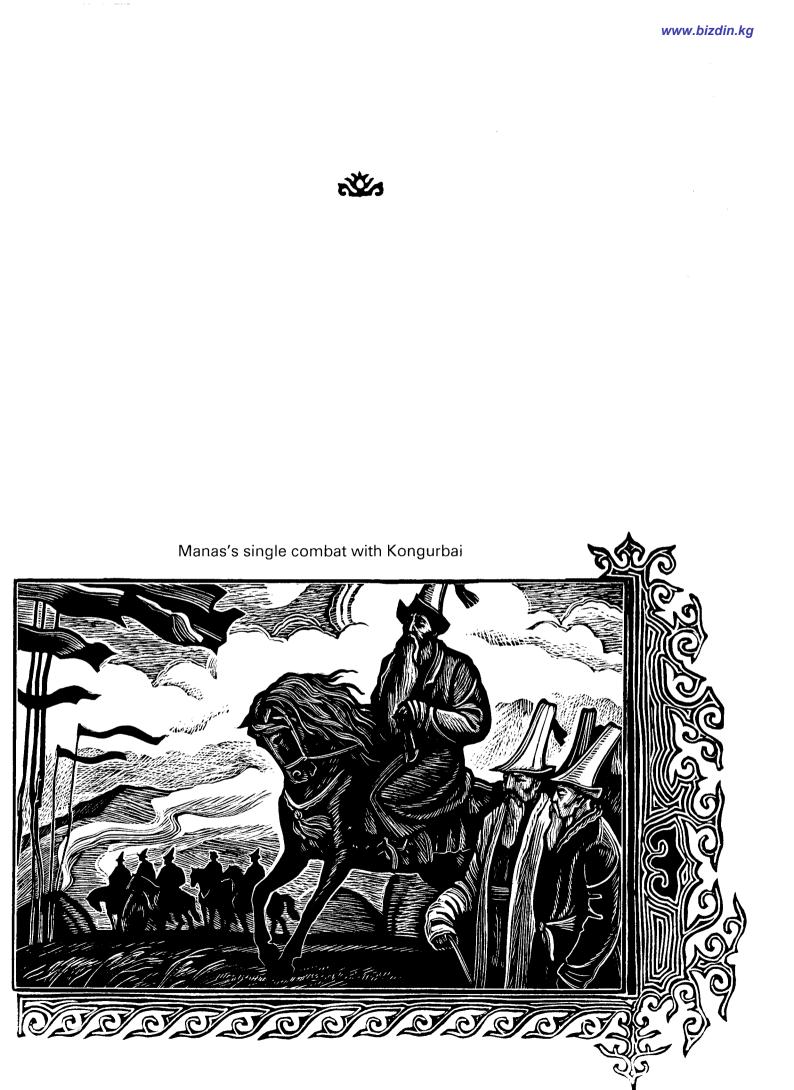


Your valiant Manas was raging like an aroused tiger and raving like a camel-bull in winter rut. He clapped his weaponry onto his belt and said a prayer to Shaimerden; the hero mounted his horse and spurred it to a leap!

They came onto the jousting-field, and when they saw each other they laid their whips into their horses...and the two giants had at each other hotly — flashing their lances they came at each other.

(Manas succeeds in unhorsing Kongurbai.)







Wrestling

The two scuffled on their horses, tearing at each other and breaking off, neither able to get the upper hand. Back and forth sixty times they vied...

(Horseback wrestling completes the gaming diversions before the long-distance racers return.)



The horse-race

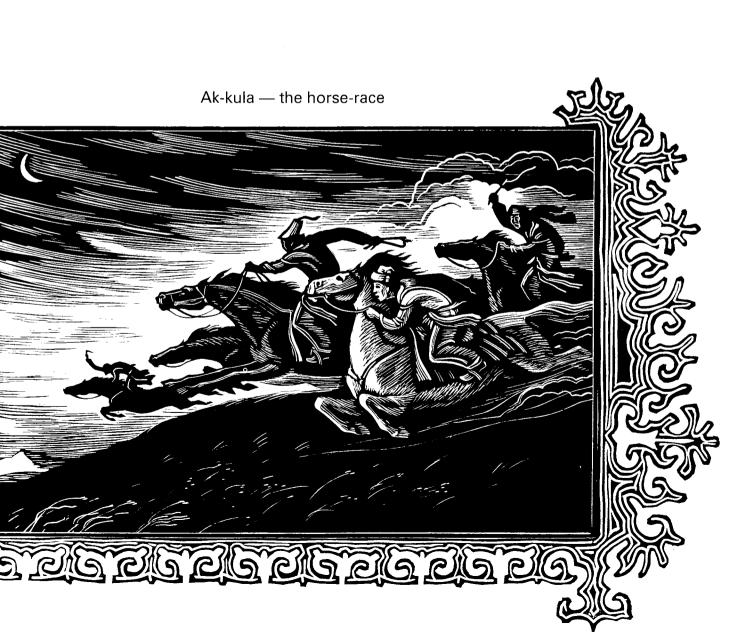
The wonderful tulpars flying like falcons jostled along the course, the jockeys giving them rein and beating them left and right with their crops.

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Kula high in the withers, most tremendous of beasts Kula, straight-backed Kula, larger than any horse of the Oirots — Kula, lean-ribbed Kula, the superior tulpar Ak-kula!

(Manas's own magic steed, ridden by a jockey, comes from behind and wins the grand prize.)



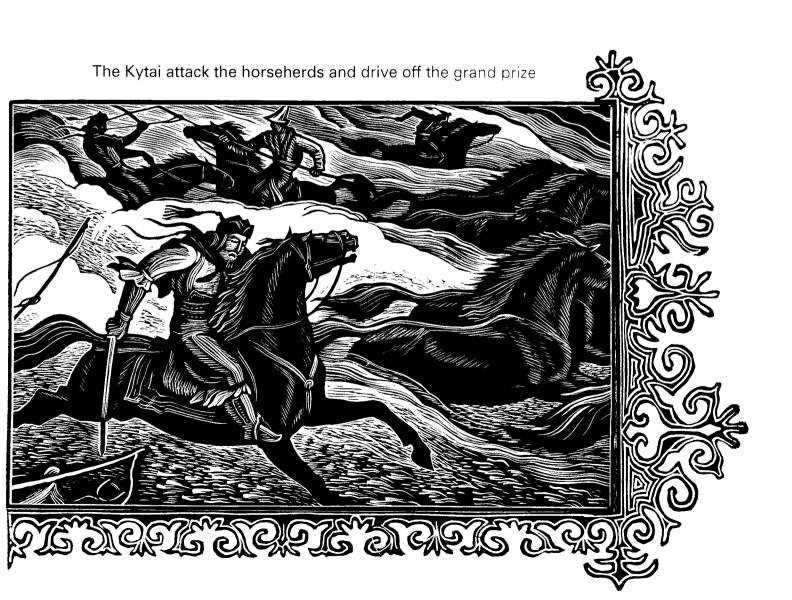




When all eyes were shut in slumber, valiant Manas rode out to the place where they had left the grand prize tied, at Kara-suu above Üch-bulak. Approaching, Manas looked and saw sixteen of his companions remaining: the sixteen, slaughtered, had been relieved of their charge — the prize had been stolen! The Kalmaks had decided to make off with [the herds]!

(The Kalmaks' consummate affront precipitates a bloody battle, with the Muslims under Manas emerging victorious. So ends the memorial feast for Kökötöy Khan.)





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The bais take counsel

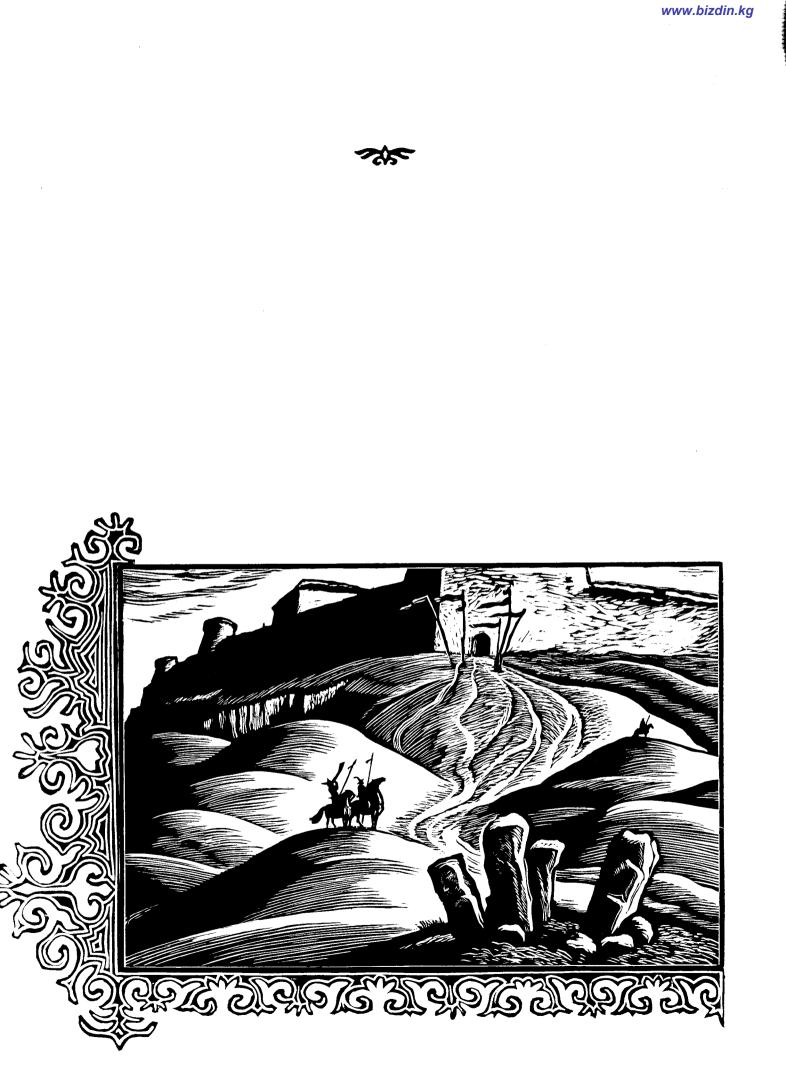
(Manas has grown too powerful for certain of his allies. They plot to act against him in concert.)



Emissaries

"Say this to Manas: 'You have become a lord, Manas, and your riches are vast as a sea. You have become a hero, Manas, and the bird of happiness has alighted on your head. We have mustered an army — come [join us]! Or, if it be that we with our forces come to you, give hospitality to us! You see this heathen nation — now heed, exactly as we say! You are hedged around by the Kytai — now this is what you must do!""

(The plot is set in motion. If the representatives are received, the khans may complain that they were received badly; if Manas comes and joins them, they can then humble him with low treatment.)



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(Manas seizes the initiative and persuades the khans to form a grand alliance and march on Bejin, the capital city of the Kytai nemesis Esen Khan. Thus begins the Great Campaign.)







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"If it is thus, then come, bring your seals and attach them!" He had a scribe draw up the pact, then the khans gathered themselves together and affixed their royal seals, and they laid it away in a big book.







Captured horses

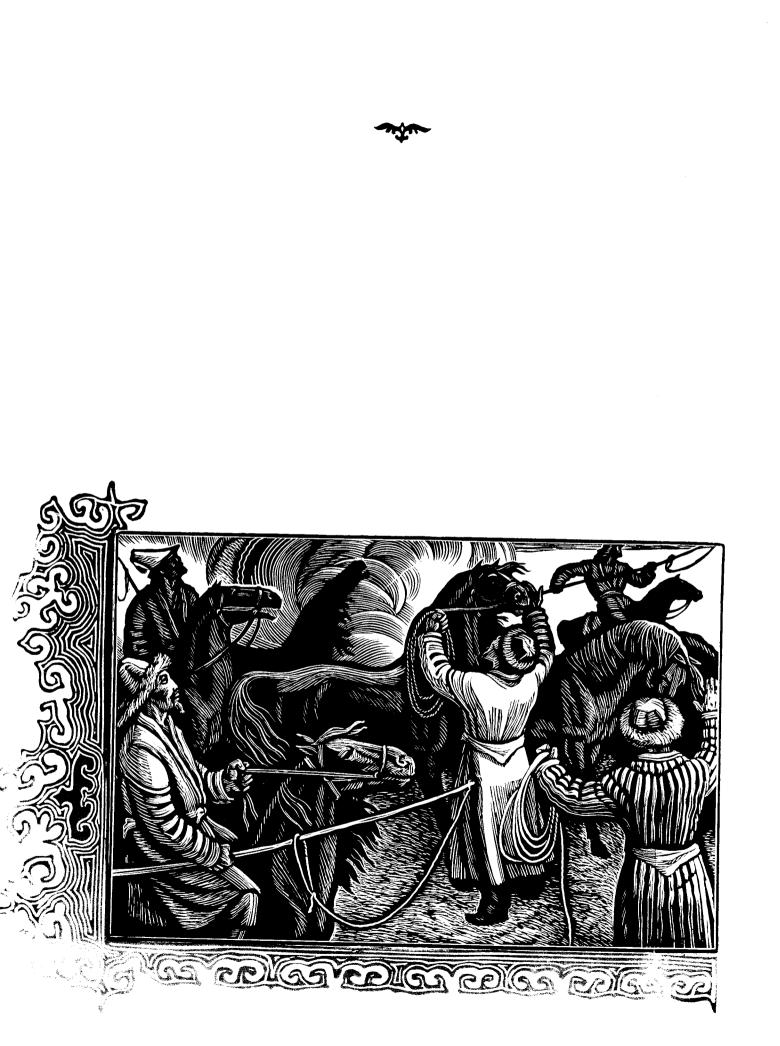




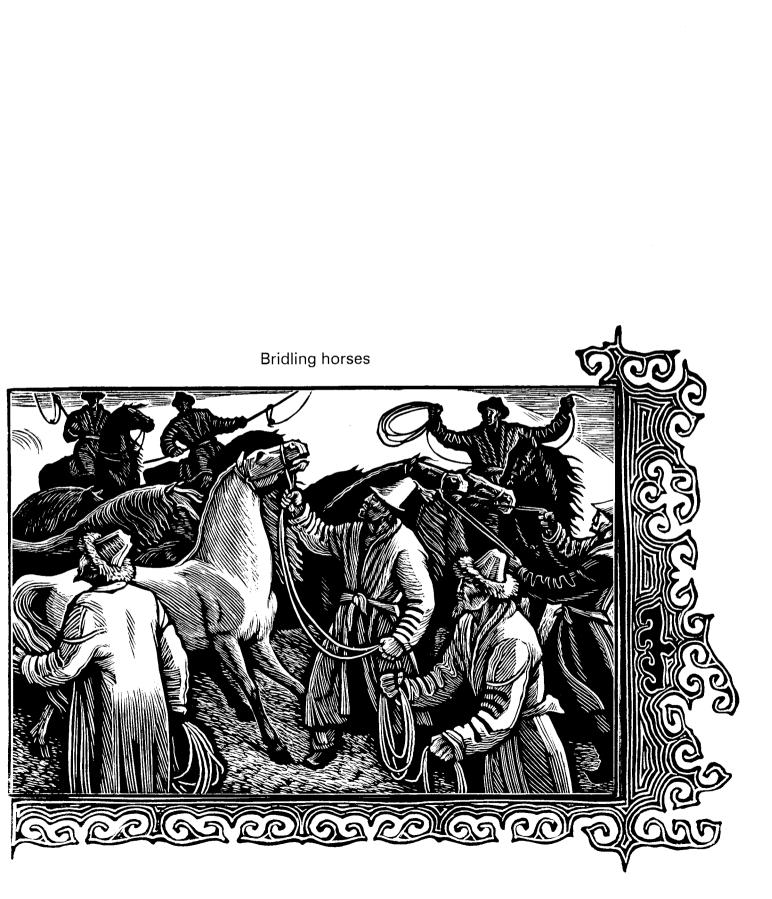
The women meet the warriors



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Kanykei — armor for Manas

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"Your tiger-like troops, all your friends and comrades, are at your side. If you are going on a journey, may you fare well, and may my Lord the Creator protect you! May you do mighty deeds; may you find a straight path to the enemy you seek! May the vanguard on your journey be no fewer than one hundred battle-horses; may your couch be of sable furs! And may your deeds be such as will be told of our people till the end of time!"

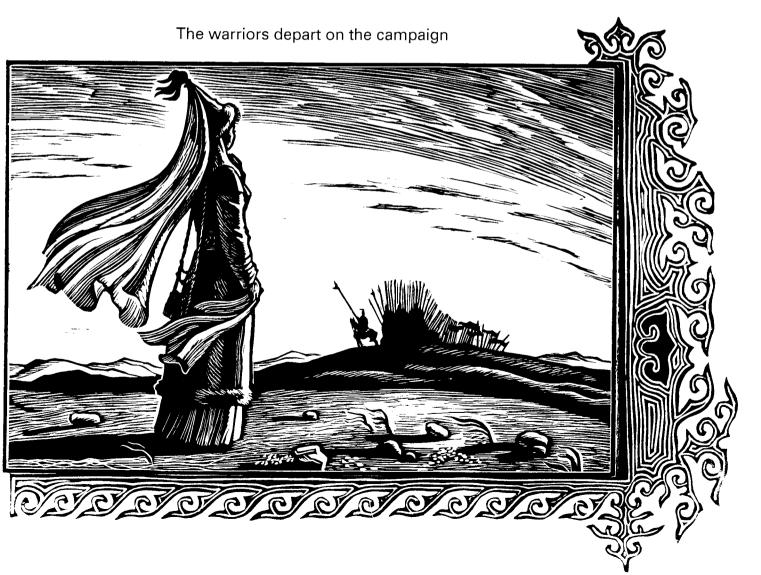






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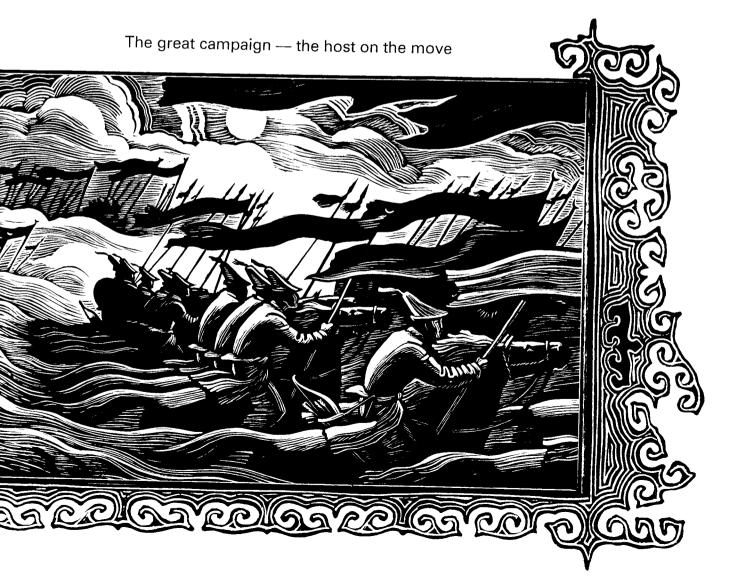


The chiefs had banners as their emblems; there was a din in the front ranks. They allotted war-trumpets to every ten thousand men and carried out a count of the whole teeming army: there were thirty myriads of banners! The earth was filled up! With three hundred war-trumpets wailing and three thousand fifes shrilling, with thirty myriads of standards, who would assume absolute authority?

(Almambet is chosen as supreme field marshal.)







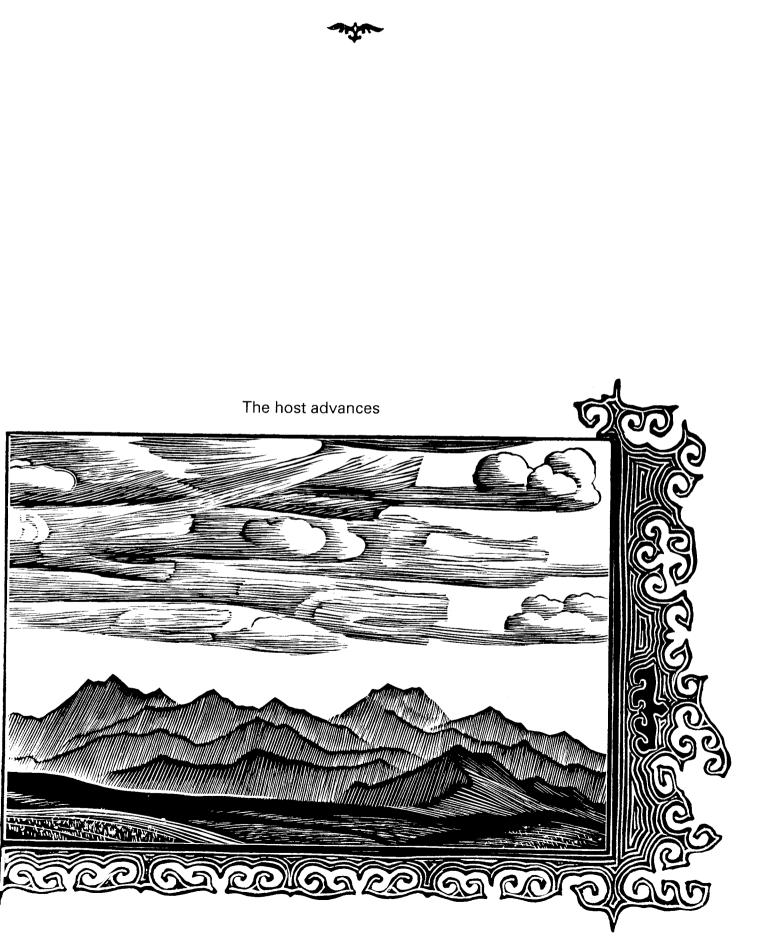
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" $\mathbf{F}$ rom here on you will not be letting your horses nibble as you ride! You will not be eating provisions as you 'migrate'! You will not be having a nap, nor even letting your elbow touch the ground! How does such a trip sound to you? Your horses will be champing for want of grass, or if they have grass at all it will not be much! [You] men will not have a drop to drink; nor days nor nights will you loosen your girdles! And you will go a-faring no small distance — three months, or ninety marches, at the very least!"

(Almambet begins the campaign with a forced march.)



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Driving out the herd





Among cliffs





Bakai



On the road to Bejin



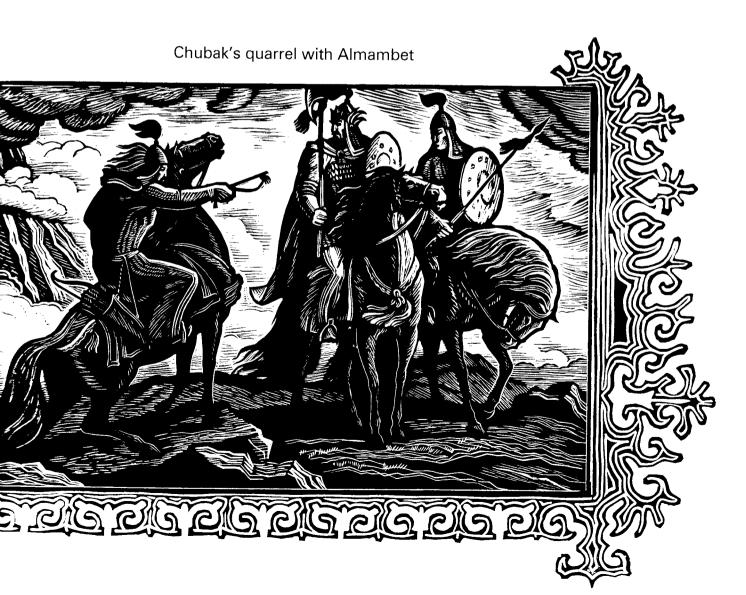
(The sage Bakai is made khan over the whole union of forces; Almambet takes Syrgak, one of Manas's Forty Companions, on a reconnaissance deep within enemy territory.)



(Chubak, another Companion, sets off after Almambet and Syrgak in anger that he has not been chosen for the mission. Manas catches up and mediates a resolution. The four then proceed ahead of the vanguard.)



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 $H\!e$  came on in a rage, muddled as a rutting elephant...

(The Kytai, alerted by scouts of the army's arrival in their territory, send out a one-eyed giant to deal with the intruders. Almambet and Syrgak give battle and defeat the monster.)







Almambet and Syrgak



(The two heroes continue and reach Bejin in disguise.)



Almambet weeps

There Almambet recalled his bygone days, and a tear welled up in his eye. As he looked carefully all around and his past came back to him, he could not bear the sight; Lord Almambet's heart came undone.

(Almambet encounters the ancestral home he abandoned.)

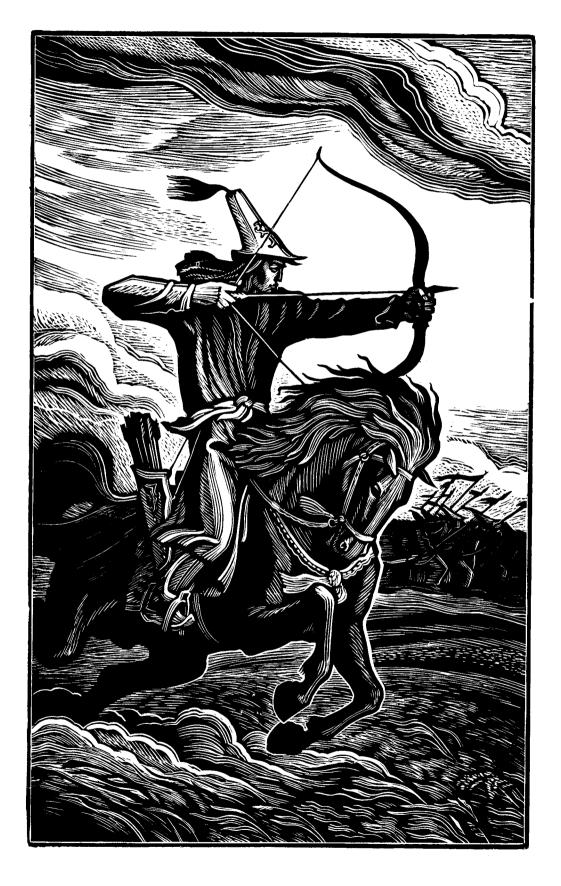
Almambet attacked from the side and drove in his lance where the gilded girdle ended, square between the shoulder blades, crying, "Cursed Karagul, now you die!"

(The war begins with a raid on the Kytai horses by Almambet and Chubak. Karagul, the overseer of the herds, is felled.)









Syrgak

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On reconnaissance



Lord Kongurbai set his lance, saying, "I'll kill the hero Noble Manas in the stream! Now just how shall I drown him?" But bold [Manas], who knows not death, said, "What does this heathen think he's doing?" and cast him a level gaze. Aiming in between his two eyes, Er Kongurbai leaned forward in the saddle and thrust his lance, but the stone-hearted hero did not blink! Manas grabbed the point of the lance just as it went for his eye! Not letting the lance reach his face, your valiant Manas caught it — he had it by the tassel! And once [Manas's] hand was on the lance, [Kongurbai] was left without a shadow of a hope.

(Manas, awaiting Almambet and Syrgak at an advance position, is caught in an ambush.)

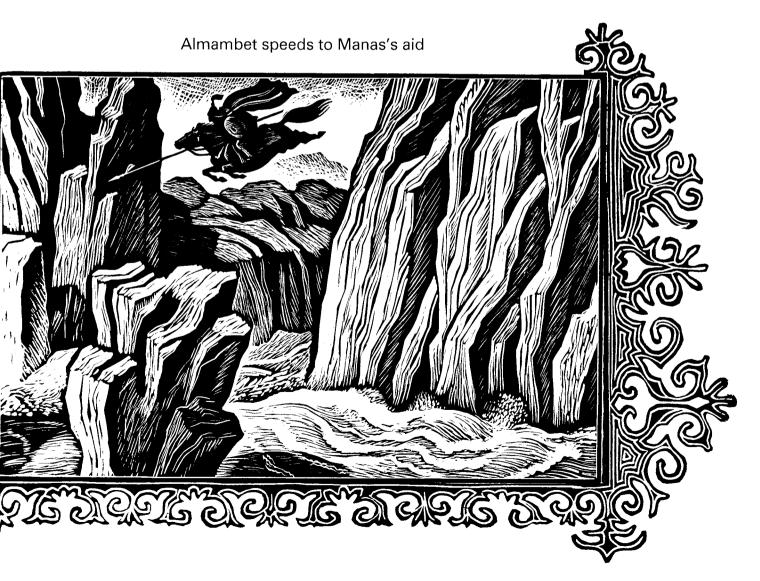


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Attacking cavalry

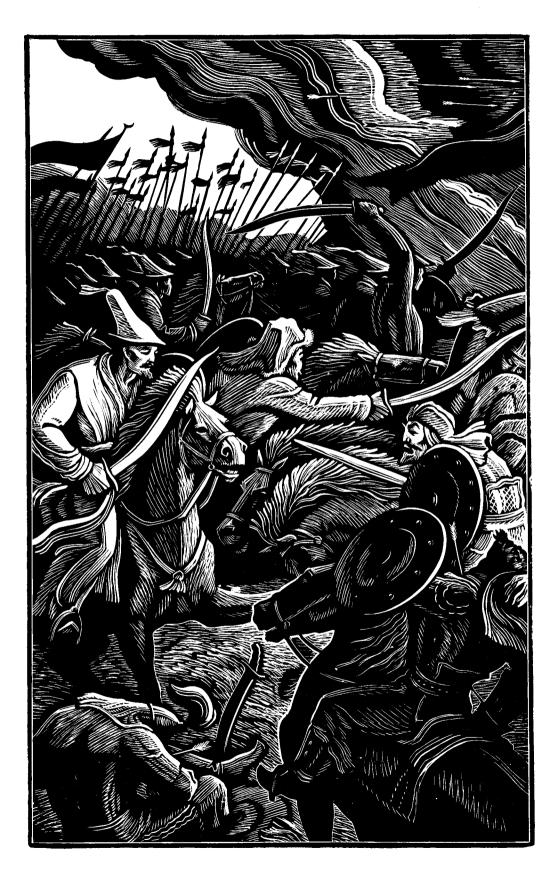


(Reinforcements arrive and a terrible battle ensues.)

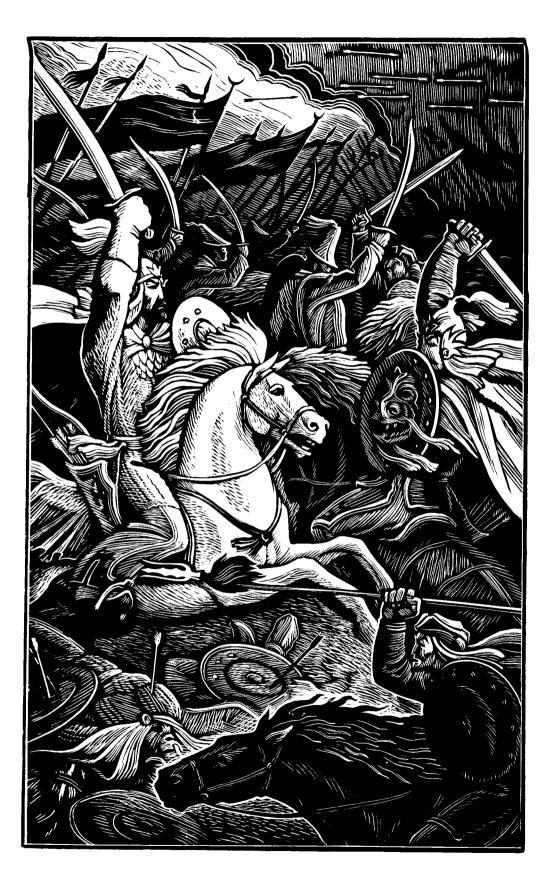
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Battle



The great battle





After the battle

(Manas wounds Kongurbai and the Kytai army is driven back. After besieging Bejin, the Kirghiz wring surrender from Esen Khan and return home victorious.)

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Bringing kumiss



## (Peace is restored; Manas rules on.)

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