

***Early Scholarship on Oral Traditions:
Radloff, Jousse, and Murko***

Like all breakthroughs in research and scholarship, Milman Parry's hypothesis of an oral tradition behind the Homeric epics and his subsequent fieldwork in Yugoslavia were brilliant extensions and syntheses of the contributions made by others. In this issue we celebrate both the sixtieth anniversary of Parry's "Studies I" article in *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* and essential contributions by three of the scholars who made his pioneering writings possible. For if the 1930 essay marked the path from a traditional to an oral Homer, it was to a significant degree the prior work done by Wilhelm Radloff, Marcel Jousse, and Matija Murko that set Parry on that path. With the help of Dubrun Böttcher Sherman, Adam Brooke Davis, and Edgard Sienaert, we present two translations and an overview designed to collectively illustrate how creatively earlier scholars had documented and analyzed Parry's eventual subject, and in the process how well and thoroughly he had digested their ideas and observations. We hope this section on *Early Scholarship on Oral Traditions* honors both Parry and his forebearers.

Samples of Folk Literature from the North Turkic Tribes

**Collected and translated by
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Preface to Volume V: *The Dialect of the Kara-Kirgiz*

Born to a Berlin police-commissar and reserve officer and educated during the germination of Indo-European studies, Friedrich Wilhelm Radloff (known to Russian scholars as Vasilii Vasilevitch Radlov) turned from his early interest in religious studies to philosophy and philology. Under the influence of the comparative grammarian Franz Bopp and the folk-psychologist Hermann Steinthal, he matriculated in 1854, and turned at once to the neglected field of near-Eastern languages, specializing in Turkish. Centers for Russian studies founded around that time in Berlin and St. Petersburg afforded him the opportunity to work with other Turcologists and students of Eastern Europe and the Near East. A teaching-post in Bernaul gave him the security to make summer research-excursions into Turkic-speaking regions. Various honors followed, as well as duties in the Russian administration of minority schools. He was named to the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences (1884), to the Directorship of the Anthropological and Ethnographic Museum of the Imperial Academy of Sciences (1894), and was instrumental in the founding of the International Association for the Exploration of Central Asia and the Far East (1899). This "St. Petersburg" period was the most productive time of an extraordinarily prolific career (Ahmet Temir's bibliography contains one hundred thirty-seven items), including the fifth volume of the enormous *Proben der Volksliteratur der türkischen Stämme*, the preface to which appears in English here for the first time. This preface, with its suggestions of the principle of multiformity and composition by theme exerted a powerful (and acknowledged) influence on the early thought of Milman Parry.¹ Radloff died in Russia in 1918; very little is known of his private life. His reputation, and those of the "Radloff Circle," suffered from 1937, when he was declared by the Soviet government to have been a German spy; it was for a time forbidden to cite his works in the USSR. His own attitudes towards the peoples he studied and their cultures were complex and changeable, a mixture of profound respect for their integrity and concern for the material privation which might be the price of preserving that purity.

¹ Parry quotes Radloff a number of times in *The Making of Homeric Verse* (ed. by Adam Parry [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971]), praising him for a methodicality and thoroughness uncharacteristic of his time (440).

In the years 1862 and 1869, I collected the texts that I have published here while I was staying with the Kara-Kirgiz (the black Kirgiz). This Turkic people, the only one which still calls itself “Kyrgys,” inhabits the northern foothills of the Thian-schan on the river Tekes, south of the Issik-koel in the valley of thchu, and they live in the mountains stretching south to Kaschkar and west to Kokand and the river Talas. They are divided into two groups: a) the Ong, the right ones, and b) the Sol, the left ones. The Ong consist of six tribes: 1) the tribe Bugu (stag); they live nomadically along the river Tekes and east of the Issik-koel; 2) the tribe Sary Bagysch (yellow elk); they migrate through the south and west of the Issik-koel; 3) the tribe Soltu or Solto wanders south of the river Schu; 4) the tribe Edigaenae migrates along the river Andidschan; 5) the tribe Tschong Bagysch (big elk) are nomads west of the Kaschgar; 6) the tribe Tscherik (the army) around Kokand. The number of the Sol is much smaller than that of the Ong, and they are nomads along the river Talas for the most part. General Makschejeff estimates that the total number of Kirgiz who are subjected by Russia amounts to 27,825 “Kibitken,” that is, approximately 150,000 individuals if one counts five people per family. However, the number is certainly far more than twice as large because none of the nomadic Kirgiz from the former Chanate Kokand are included in this number. I have recently published more detailed information about the history and the geographical distribution of this people;² therefore, I consider it superfluous to repeat anything that refers to this publication.

The Kara-Kirgiz speak, as far as I got to know them, a dialect of their own, a dialect which I also call the Kara-Kirgiz. It is very similar to the Kasak-Kirgiz dialect, yet it sharply distinguishes itself from the latter by certain phonetic qualities. I did not have the opportunity to observe any relevant dialect variations within the Kara-Kirgiz dialect. Therefore, I did not have to record speech everywhere in order to pinpoint local dialect features, but could stay at a few places for some longer time to write down longer texts. I did this at the following places: 1) on the Tekes while I was with the tribe Bugu in 1862; 2) west of the Issik-koel while I was with the Sary Bagysch; and 3) south and east of the city Tokmak during my stay with the Soltu in 1869.

As far as the phonetic characteristics of the Kara-Kirgiz dialect are concerned, I have treated those thoroughly in my book *Phonetik der nördlichen Türk-sprachen* (Leipzig, 1881), which is why I simply refer the reader to this work and to the introduction to the first part of my work *Proben der Volkslitteratur*.

The texts that I wrote down while I was staying with the Kara-Kirgiz are almost exclusively epic songs, whose content induced me to translate

² *Aus Sibirien* (Leipzig, 1884), Part I, pp. 136-42 and 200-35.

them in *gebundener Rede*.³ This circumstance delayed the publication of this volume because the texts themselves were ready to be printed as early as 1876. Despite the fact that the translation is given in *gebundener Rede*, it is as accurate as possible and matches the original texts, verse by verse, with only a few exceptions.

These epic songs prove to us that the folk poetry of the Kara-Kirgiz is in a particular phase, which I would like to call the epic period. It is approximately the same phase which the Greeks experienced when the epic poetry of the Trojan cycle of legends was still alive in the people's mouths as unrecorded, genuine folk poetry. Therefore, I want to describe briefly this epic period, which, as far as I know, has nowhere been observed to such an extent. The purpose of this endeavor is to facilitate the study of texts which, in my opinion, will considerably contribute to the resolution of the still unsolved "epic question."

I have already pointed out elsewhere that all Kirgiz, the Kasak-Kirgiz as well as the Kara-Kirgiz, excel in eloquence and surpass all of their Turkic fellowmen in this respect. The Kirgiz has an astonishing command of his language; he always speaks fluently without stopping or getting stuck, and he knows how to combine a certain elegance with the precision and clarity of his expressions in his speech. Even the common speech shows a distinct rhythm in syntactic and periodic constructions so that the single sentences follow each other like verses and stanzas, and give the impression of *gebundene Rede*. One can tell that the Kirgiz storyteller loves to talk, and that he wishes to make an impression on his audience by means of a delicately shaped, well-contemplated speech; likewise, one can observe everywhere that the audience takes delight in a well-formed speech, and that they know how to determine whether a speech is perfected in form. Deep silence surrounds the orator/performer if he knows how to mesmerize his listeners; they sit, bent forward with their eyes glowing, and listen to the speaker's words. Each eloquent word and each sprightly pun evokes animated applause. The Kirgiz eloquence surprises nobody because the individual Kirgiz has considerable practice in talking; he chats day and night because the only activities that keep him from conversation are eating and sleeping.

It is not surprising that people who take so much pleasure in beautiful words consider the *gebundene Rede* the supreme art. That is why a quite significant kind of folk poetry developed in all of their groups. Proverbs and old adages in the most wonderfully bound verses, love songs,

³ It is not altogether clear what Radloff meant by this recurrent phrase (literally, "bound discourse," "flowing speech"). He characterizes it as the language of poetic performance, which the poet uses "without stopping or getting stuck." The *gebundene Rede* of the natural performance would seem to be in contrast to the halting and interrupted discourse necessitated by diction and transcription (Ed.).

historical songs, contest songs, wedding songs and lamentations at funerals, even farces and so forth are recited in all circles and received with pleasure. At the same time, the art of improvising has spread everywhere, and every person in any way experienced with songs is able to honor the present guests by using *gebundene Rede* in improvised praise songs.

If a larger circle of listeners is gathered, not every Kirgiz dares to perform as a singer, of course, but only a few preferred ones who have a special talent for rhythmic recitations and who developed this talent through frequent practice. These people are called by the honorable name *akyn*, and they are frequently widely known. Since the Kirgiz often have larger assemblies and festive dinners (for the event of the funeral dinner [*asch*] is held to be a matter of honor to the family of the deceased), there are frequent opportunities for the singers to display their art. This circumstance has caused a whole caste of singers to develop. These singers, one might say, make singing their occupation; they travel from feast to feast and make a living on their songs. The formation of this caste is especially encouraged by wealthy people and sultans, who like the idea of singers living in their vicinity because the singers cheer them up in times of boredom or grief and praise them in public everywhere. They provide these singers with a living and generous gifts, accept them as their followers, and attend assemblies with them, where they feel honored by the applause their singers receive. This is how it is with all Kirgiz.

Differences in talent, interests, and history between the Kara-Kirgiz and the Kasak-Kirgiz have caused different developments in the folk poetry of the two peoples. The texts that I recorded in the third volume of *Proben der Volkslitteratur* prove that the Kasak-Kirgiz developed a rich lyrical poetry. With the Kara-Kirgiz, however, epic poetry overpowered and suppressed all other folk-poetic creations so that not only lyrical poetry vanished into the background, but also the legend, the fairy tale, and the prose tale were completely absorbed by the epic songs.

Of all the Turkish tribes which I have observed, I have found such a dominance of the epic only in two tribes now living completely separate from each other, namely the Minussinskiz or Abakan Tatars and the Kara-Kirgiz. For the most part, the former group consists of Kirgiz who remained on the Jenissei in the seventeenth century. They are descendants of the ancient Hakas, who destroyed the great empire of the Uigurs in the ninth century.⁴ As the Kara-Kirgiz of the Thianschan are descendants of that group of the Hakas who left the region of the Jenissei springs as early as the tenth century and moved to the southwest, we are justified in assuming that the interest in epic poetry is an intellectual pursuit already

⁴ The word *Hakas* is an incorrect interpretation of the Chinese symbols *K'ic-gia-sze* (T'ang-schu Cap. 259b). It evidently represents the name "Kyrgys," which is common as early as the time of the T'ang dynasty.

characteristic of the ancient Hakas. Until now it has been preserved equally in both descendants of this people (the Minussinskiz Tatars and the Kara-Kirgiz), although both peoples have lived completely separate from each other for nine centuries.

The present social conditions greatly differ in these two Turkic tribes. The Abakan Tatars have lost every remembrance of the bloody fights in the seventeenth century; they consist of a number of small tribes, all of which entirely lack the notion of national unity. Hard-pressed by the Russian inhabitants from all sides, they have almost given up their former nomadic life; they keep only a few cattle, farm half-heartedly, and make their living mostly on what they take in their hunting expeditions in the vast forests and mountains surrounding the Abakan and Jenissei prairies during the fall and winter months. The Kara-Kirgiz, on the other hand, are genuine nomads, who were able to survive the horrible fights with the Kalmucks, the Chinese, and the Kasak-Kirgiz because of the mountainous character of their residences. The characteristics of the land account for the fact that the Kirgiz have maintained their warrior-like attitudes. Until recently, they have lived independently among the Chinese, the Russians, and the Kokands, and have had to defend themselves in all directions. They migrate in dynasties, not in *auls* like the Kasak-Kirgiz. All the inhabitants of a large area along the river change their residence together at the same time because they are exposed to attacks from strangers while moving, and need to have large support teams ready. Despite their warrior-like lifestyle, the Kara-Kirgiz distinguish themselves from their neighbors by their large number of cattle. The consciousness of tribal unity has developed much more strongly in them than in the other North Turkic tribes. The battles of the previous century united them, if not politically (because this is not possible with a nomadic people) then at least in their goals and their ideals, which they consider the traits that distinguish them from their neighbors.

Naturally, the epic poetry of such different peoples had to develop differently as well. With the Minussinskiz Tatars, who were not unified and who were discontent with their poverty, only single heroic tales could develop; these are not related at all to each other. These tales describe the wonderful fates of giant heroes. The hero is born into misery and sorrow, and only escapes death because of his bodily strength and the invincible resistance of his heroic nature. Barely grown-up, he starts to take his vengeance upon his father's destroyers. His heroic expedition leads him through the vast strata of the earth; he crosses streams and oceans with the help of his loyal companion, his heroic horse. With the horse he climbs the sky-high mountain ridge, and at last even ascends to the seat of the gods; he descends into the deep subterranean strata and fights there with horrible giants and swan-women. If he is defeated by the power of the

circumstances through his shortcomings, then it is his horse who saves him, his horse who, even if he dies prematurely, revives him. After having taken home the ultimate prize for his battles, the woman chosen for him by the gods, he re-establishes his jurte [a sort of igloo or teepee made of skins or felt] in his father's lands, on the sea shore, and occupies himself with the leadership of his people and hunting until, mostly because of his own lack of caution and against the will of his loyal wife, he plunges into new battles, in which he perishes.

It is a certain, dream-like, blurred fairy-tale world that these heroic tales describe, distant from the poor earthly existence; it is a world of the imagination, in which the otherwise impoverished spirit of the people takes delight. It is especially the improbable, the supernatural, and the unnaturally gigantic that seize the audience in these stories, and that fill them with horror. One can understand this kind of poetry fully only if one tries to picture the circumstances under which it is recited, and under which it exerts its full influence on the audience. This occurs chiefly on fall and winter evenings when the hunting groups which roam about in the wood-covered mountains for weeks prepare for the nights in cabins made of branches. The hunters, tired from their exertions, then sit around the fire wrapped in their furs; they have just refreshed themselves with a meal, and they take delight in the warmth of the fire; then the singer takes his instrument in his hands and begins to sing the monotone melody of a heroic song with a dark, throaty voice. The dark night surrounding the whole scene, the magic light of the fire, and the roaring of the storm that howls around the cabin and accompanies the singer's throaty sounds, form the necessary background for the brightly illuminated misty scenes of the songs.

The epic songs of the Kirgiz give us a completely different picture. The feeling of "national" unity among the Kirgiz brought all the epic folk songs together into a whole. Like new crystals that develop in a saturated sodium solution during evaporation and group together around a large crystal center in the fluid, or like fine iron filings that cluster around the magnetic pole, all single legends and tales, all historical memories, stories, and songs are strongly attracted to the epic centers and become, by being broken into pieces, parts of a comprehensive picture reflecting a culture's thoughts and aspirations—its collective spirit. It is not the miraculous nor the horrible of the fairy-tale world that the Kirgiz esteems and seeks in his songs, but he sings about his own life, his own feelings and efforts, the ideals which are shared by all individuals as members of the entire community. He does not seek the gigantic or the unnatural, but the natural and the real. Despite their miraculous, frequently supernatural fates, the heroes in these songs are human beings who have good qualities as well as weaknesses and defects, exactly like real people. The exaggerated and the

unnatural only serve as ornamentation for the descriptions of life; they are supposed to brighten up the bleak reality, and they are supposed to make the poetic description fit for the audience.

The true center of this people's collective literature is the highly regarded heroic image of the ideal prince of the Muslims, or Er Manas, son of Jakyp Kan, from the tribe of the Sary Nogai. He is the greatest of all warriors, traveling with his forty companions (Tschoro) around the world and defeating all enemies. All nations have felt the strength of his arm; he smashed the Chinese people, chased the Svart away, scattered the people of the Kalschar, and tortured the Persians. His horse is a white dun, unequalled by any other horse; white armor is his garment, which no arrow is able to penetrate. Not only the enemies fear the mighty one; even his own father is afraid because [Er Manas] does not spare his aging father, nor his mother who loves him above everything, when he is enraged. Just as no one equals the Greek hero Achilles in strength, so no Muslim is able to measure up to Manas. The only worthy adversary who opposes him is the pagan prince Joloi, the great eater, who, because of his gigantic body and his superhuman strength, can only be defeated if he goes to sleep (a death-like sleep characteristic only of him) after monstrous consumption of food and drink. His horse is the mighty Atsch Budan, the only one to equal Manas' white dun in size.

Besides these two heroes, the Kirgiz epic knows a whole series of independent Muslim princes: Jamgyrtschi of the Kara Nogai, the mighty wrestler; the old Er Koschai, who opened the door to Paradise; Er Koektschoe, son of Aidar Kan and descendant of Kambar Kan; Er-Toeschueck; Juegoerue, who traffics with the dead; and many others. The main figures among the pagans who enter the action are Kara Kan, Urum Kan, and Kongyr Bai, the Chinese.

The Kirgiz epic is like the Greek epic. Despite all of its poetic ornamentation, the Greek epic describes the political life of the entire Greek culture, representing Greece as a more or less close federation of single Greek states. Although these states are often hostile to each other, they present a united front to their enemies. The Kirgiz epic also describes the social conditions of the Kirgiz, a genuinely nomadic people, without any tight bonds among its members; a people who in the flow of its social life resembles a turbulent ocean whose waves are driven back and forth so that no solid, tangible components can ever detach themselves to form a stable state. The rushing water covers vast stretches of land and devastates, but it returns to its original bed after having expanded as far as possible. We see battle after battle, but no result from the enormous expense of energy; we see the heroes fade away and find in their children a new generation, who accomplish in the same kind of battles only what their parents achieved. This generation wastes its energy as well. The nomad

never provides for the future; he lives in the present, takes delight in the quiet as long as an excess of strength does not impel him to action, or as long as no invading enemy forces him to leave his peace and quiet behind to protect its foundations. When we see the scenes⁵ of the epic pass before us without having a clear idea of what motivates the change of appearances, we should never forget that we are dealing with a nomadic people, who have ideals different from those of a settled people living on farming and constantly working on the expansion of its social life. The descriptions in the Kirgiz epic are similar to the scenes of the Greek epic world, which portray the beautiful sky of the south and the sunny regions of Asia Minor and Greece, and describe the colorful activities of the culturally ambitious Greeks. As in the Greek epic, we also find in the Kirgiz epic huge, ragged ridges and awe-inspiring, romantic gorges, but between those are vast, bleak prairies, lush but monotonous green areas which form the paradise of the cattle-raising nomads. Human life is as monotonous here as is nature. The social orders are separated according to the strength and cattle people possess. Despite that, various passions surge in their hearts. Hatred and love, pain and joy, greed, revenge, and dedication are the emotions of the prairie nomad and the stimuli for his actions. The Kirgiz epic describes these emotions just as does the Greek epic. However, one should not expect too much from this poetry and should not dwell on it too long while reading it, because otherwise the sameness of the images becomes tiring for the reader. The reader who follows this advice will also find pleasure here.

Frequently, the conflict between the Islamic religion and heathenism appears as the cause of fierce battles. The ethical motif of protecting one's religious faith is not an original, organic part of the stories, however; it was added [to them] from the outside after the fights in the last century had actually taken place. Even though these battles had not really been religious, the Kirgiz began to build up religious hatred towards their non-believing lords after the Muslims had been harassed by the Kalmuck princes and the Chinese. Such hatred has continued to live on in this culture, even though the Kirgiz do not understand much of the Islamic religion themselves, and despite the fact that they are generally called non-believers by neighboring Muslim city-dwellers.

In the battles described, one often finds echoes of the horrible fate in war which, as mentioned before, befell the Kirgiz people during the previous century. Nevertheless, the main heroes who must survive these fights, Manas and Joloi, are by no means historical personalities; they are

⁵ The German word *Bilder*, here translated as "scenes" or "images," has for Radloff some overlap with *Vortragsteil* (lit., "part or piece of a performance or song") and *Bildteil(chen)*, *Teilbild* ("part or piece of a picture"). All these terms correspond roughly to what Parry and Lord will later call "themes" and "type-scenes" (Ed.).

mythical figures much older than the historical memories of the Kirgiz. The historical memories merged with the ancient tales and stories to form completely new creations of the imagination. In these new creations, the commemoration of actual events only serves as ornamentation and as a way of completing the older legends.

I divided the recorded epic songs into three groups and listed them under the titles *Manas*, *Joloi*, and *Er Toeschmueck*. However, the reader should not conclude that I recorded three finished epics. *Er Toeschmueck* is a fairy-tale also known among other Turkic tribes; here it appears in the form of an epic song, and I will refer to it again later. *Manas* and *Joloi*, on the other hand, consist of a series of episodes, which cannot even remotely represent the whole Kirgiz epic. The epic genre, as it lives among the people, cannot be represented at all. It is the poetic mirror of the people's entire life and striving. Of course, the reflection only captures single characteristics (not the whole picture). As a people's life manifests itself in individuals, so does the collective epic, the poetic mirror of this people's life, manifest itself only in single episodes recounted by various individuals. Therefore, these episodes can only be considered individual representations of a part from the whole.⁶ It would be a futile endeavor to attempt to assemble the whole picture from the single parts, for the epic is not something finished; it is a culture's collective consciousness, which lives in the people and changes with it. If we could really succeed in recording all episodes that now live among the people, we would have to begin to record again after having completed the collection. In the meantime, the various singers' personal conceptions would have changed and created new episodes. However, the more complete the collection became the more difficult it would be to establish the whole picture, because the number of variants, repetitions, and contradictions increases with the number of episodes. To bring all of these into balance would be absolutely impossible for someone not belonging to the culture.

Since the actual purpose of my recordings was only to collect the necessary language material to be able to examine the Kara-Kirgiz dialect, I simply recorded the native's dictations of a significant number of texts, exactly the way they recited them. I did not care whether repetitions and contradictions existed; I did not shorten the texts to avoid the repetition of things already told. But I also believed that I could represent the nature of the real epic only in that way.

Then I presented the single episodes in the order of *Manas*' life. The first episode, "*Manas*' Birth," which I recorded while I was staying with the Sary Bagysch south of Tokmak, was of meager content and seems to be

⁶ *Individuelle Darstellung* may perhaps be better rendered as "unique presentations;" in this passage we have a precursor of the later notion of the multiformity of the oral performance (Ed.).

a song triggered by my question about the birth of Manas. My question alone sufficed to urge the singer to a new song. The second episode describes the conversion of the Kalmuck Alman Bet to the Islamic religion, and it is in some ways very similar to the tale of Oghus Kan. Alman Bet then goes to Koektschoe as a companion, but he leaves him again soon and goes to Manas, with whom he remains as his most loyal companion for the rest of his life. The third episode tries to give the complete picture of Manas' life. It begins with the praising of Manas' deeds, then goes on to an entirely unmotivated fight between Manas and Koektschoe (which is obviously caused by Alman Bet's going over to Manas). The description of the fight is very detailed. After that, Manas' wedding procession and the marriage ceremony with Kanykaei is described. Subsequently, Manas dies without his motives becoming clear to us. Then the relatives' fates follow, and the hero's revival.

In discussing this episode, I would note that the singer presents Manas as a friend of the White Tsar (the Russian Emperor) and of the Russian people throughout his performance. As the story develops, the tsar is present as an active participant. The tsar was only included because of my presence [as recorder]. The singer thought that the Russian civil servant might dislike the fact that Manas also defeated the Russians. Therefore, he made sure that there was a variation that would please me. This incident shows us clearly that while performing, the singer takes his audience into consideration.

The fourth episode contains the festive dinner of Bok Murun, a wealthy man. This episode describes the events at a funeral. All heroes of the Muslims and pagans gather there, the ones about whose deeds the Kara-Kirgiz sing. The fifth episode introduces us to the cause of Manas' death in the third episode. Despite Kanikaei's warning, Manas receives as brothers his father's relatives, who come from the Kalmucks, and is killed by them. The sixth and seventh episodes describe Manas' death and the fates of his son Semaetaei and his grandson Seitak. In the second group, *Joloi*, this powerful hero's life is described. Here we find no echoes of the song of Manas, but this lack of echoes is the result of the singer's personal interpretation. Several times I have heard songs which relate Joloi's fate to that of Manas exactly as the two are related at the feast of Bok Murun.

The song of *Er Toeschtueck* is the fairy tale about Jaer Tueschtueck (the earth-sinker), who received his name from his raids underneath the earth. The fairy tale appears in volume IV in a detailed form. Here, the Kirgiz falsely calls the earth-sinker "Er Toeschtueck" ("the hero Toeschtueck"). The singer presents the beginning in detail and describes the fairy tale in typically epic breadth. Unfortunately, he is partially unfamiliar with its subject, for the journey under the earth differs from the fairy tale and is tedious. We can tell from various statements in "Bok

Murun” that this particular singer simply lacks the knowledge. Besides, he had exhausted himself while singing the long song of Joloi, and then he recited the *Er Toeschtrueck* for me in an inaccurate and hurried manner. Many passages, like the motives for the courting of nine sisters, seem to have been left out. The courting expedition is mixed with the older brothers’ journeys to get their brides. The youngest brother’s remaining behind is omitted, and many other things are imprecise and incoherent.

The recording of the songs that were being dictated was difficult in many ways. The singer is not used to dictating so slowly that one can follow with a pen; therefore, he often loses the thread of the story and maneuvers himself into contradictions by omitting things. These contradictions are not easily resolved by asking questions, which confuse the singer even more. Under these circumstances, the only thing left for me to do was to have a singer recite one episode to me first while I was taking notes about the development of the episode, and then I could proceed to the recording when I was familiar with the content of the episode. If then the singer became guilty of leaving out things while slowly dictating to me, I could easily alert him to those. However, the reader will notice that many deletions occurred despite this procedure.

The singer recites his songs in the meter of the *Dshyr* (see the introduction to Volume III), and he uses different rhyme schemes according to his poetic skills. Generally, the rhyme is an end rhyme (certainly caused by the influence of the Kasak-Kirgiz folk poetry). Even if the originally Ural-Altai acrostic rhymes still appear quite frequently, they have long since been superseded by the end rhyme. During his performance, the singer always uses two melodies: the first, in a fast pace, is used for the telling of facts; the second is slower-paced and used for solemn recitation during conversations. I had the opportunity to observe the change in melodies in all singers with some experience. Otherwise, the melodies of the various singers are almost completely the same. As far as the clarity of their pronunciation goes, the Kara-Kirgiz singers surpass the singers of all the other tribes, even the Kasak-Kirgiz. The rhythmic recitation interferes with the understanding of the words so little that it is easy even for non-Kirgiz to follow the song. This fact made the process of my recordings much easier.

Every singer with some talent improvises his songs on the spur of the moment so that he is not even capable of reciting a song twice in completely the same manner. One should not believe, however, that such improvisations are new creations each time. The improvising singer is in the same situation as the improvising piano player. The latter creates a mood by putting together various courses, transitions, and motifs with which he is familiar, and he thus creates the new from the old he knows. The singer of epic songs proceeds in the same way. Through extensive

practice in reciting, he has a series of themes [*Vortragsteile*] available, if I may so put it, which he assembles in a manner suitable to the development. These themes are the descriptions of certain incidents and situations, such as a hero's birth, the growing up of a hero, the praising of weapons, the preparation for a battle, the clangor of a fight, the heroes' verbal exchange before a fight, the description of persons and horses, the characteristics of famous heroes, the praising of the bride's beauty, the description of the residence, of the *Jurte*, of a dinner for guests, an invitation to the dinner, the death of a hero, the lamentation, the description of scenery, of nightfall, dawn, and many other things. The singer's art is to order all these ready-made themes [*Bildteilchen*] and to link them by means of newly composed verses. Now the singer can sing in different ways about all the aforementioned themes. He knows how to sketch one and the same scene [*Bild*] in a few brief strokes; he can describe it more thoroughly; or he can go into a very detailed description of epic breadth. The more different themes [*Bildteilchen*] the singer has at his disposal, the more varied his song will be, and the longer he will be able to sing without tiring his audience with the monotony of his images [*Bilder*]. The measure of the singer's ability is the number of themes he knows and the skill with which he puts them together. A talented singer can sing about any possible subject and recite any desired story *extempore* as long as he is clear as to the course of events. When I asked one of the most successful singers with whom I became acquainted whether he could sing this or that song, he replied to me: "I can sing any song there is because God has planted this gift for singing in my heart. He supplies my tongue with the word without my having to search for it. I have not learned to sing any of my songs; everything gushes out of my insides, out of myself." And the man was completely right. The improvising singer sings without thinking about it; he sings only about the things he has always known⁷ when someone encourages him to sing; he sings like a speaker whose words come out of his mouth continuously, without intentionally and consciously articulating this or that word, as soon as his train of thought requires words. The experienced singer is able to sing for a day, a week, a month, just as he is able to speak and talk all this time. But just as the garrulous talker comes to an end and becomes boring because he finally begins to repeat himself, the singer runs the same danger. If one lets him sing too long, his supply of scenes [*Bilder*] will be depleted, and he will repeat himself and become tiresome. The song of Toeschueck, for example, proves this. It was recited to me by the same singer who had dictated the song of Joloi. The singer even wanted to recite the song of Juegoerue, but I had to interrupt it in the middle, and I did not include this fragment in my literature samples

⁷ *Aus innerer Disposition*, by which Radloff seems to mean the psychic condition created by his cumulative knowledge and experience (Ed.).

because it was simply a boring reiteration of previous descriptions which lacked any interest.

The singer's competence [*innere Disposition*] depends on the number of themes [*Bildteile*] he knows, but this alone is insufficient for singing, as I said before; encouragement from the outside is also necessary. Such encouragement comes naturally from the crowd of listeners surrounding the singer. Since the singer wishes to earn the crowd's applause, and since he is not concerned only about fame but also about material benefits, he always attempts to adjust his song to the audience around him. If he is not directly called upon to sing a specific episode, he begins his song with a prelude which is supposed to introduce the audience to the ideas of his song. By linking the verses in a most artful way, and by making allusions to the most prestigious persons present, he knows how to entertain his audience before he goes on to the actual song. When he can tell from the audience's vocal approbation that he has gained their full attention, he either goes on to the plot directly or gives a brief sketch of specific events that preceded the episode he is about to sing, and then he begins with the plot. The song does not proceed at an even pace. The excited applause of the audience continually spurs the singer on to new efforts, and he knows how to adjust his song to audience circumstances. If wealthy and noble Kirgiz are present, he knows how to skillfully weave in praises of their dynasties, and he sings about those episodes which he expects will stir the nobility's applause in particular. If only poor people are in his audience, he includes some bitter remarks about the arrogance of the noble and wealthy. The more applause he gleans, the more often and assiduously he cultivates it. Take, for example, the third episode of *Manas*, which should suit my taste completely. But the singer understands well when he has to come to an end. When signs of fatigue appear, he seeks to raise the audience's attention once more by stirring their highest emotions. He tries to evoke thundering applause, and then suddenly arrests his song. It is admirable how well the singer knows his audience. I myself have witnessed how one of the sultans suddenly jumped up during the song, ripped his silk garment from his shoulders and, cheering, tossed it to the singer as a present. It is very interesting to observe what exactly evokes the greatest applause from the Kirgiz audience; frequently, it is passages which do not impress me in the least because they appear to me to be verbiage and artificial rhyme-patterns. So, for instance, the singer's most difficult task, and the most highly regarded part of the song of *Manas*, is to perform the address of the forty companions in a dignified manner. The reader will find a variety of such addresses in all of the *Manas* episodes.

Unfortunately, I must concede that despite all my efforts I did not succeed in completely reproducing the singers' songs. The repeated singing of the same song, the slow dictations, and my frequent

interruptions slackened the singer's excitement, which is often necessary for good singing. He could only dictate in a fatigued and lax manner what he had recited to me with fervor a short time before. Although I was generous with applause and gifts to encourage the singer, these could not make up for natural motivation. Therefore, the recorded verses have lost much of their freshness. But I hope what I have accomplished was indeed as much as was possible. Furthermore, the translation is only a weak recasting of the original, because some expressions, which were put in only for the sake of rhyme and rhythm, were left out of the translation because they appear to be superfluous and illogical.

I believe that the controversy about the epic question has led to unresolvable antitheses because all parties did not understand, and could not understand, the true nature of the *αοιδός*. The *aidos* is precisely the singer of the Kirgiz songs, as he is described in the songs of Homer.⁸ The singer belongs to the prince's court. Only he knows the art of the epic song; he is under the control of the Muse who inspires him for the song (exactly as the [Kirgiz singer] said himself, as mentioned before, only in fewer poetic words). With respect to this, I note that Niese interprets Homer's words incorrectly (*Od.* 8. 62-64)—

κῆρυξ δ' ἐγγύθεν ἦλθεν ἄγων ἐρίηρον αοιδόν,
τὸν πέρι Μοῦσ' ἐφίλησε, δίδου δ' ἀγαθὸν τε κακὸν τε·
ὀφθαλμῶν μὲν ἄμερσε, δίδου δ' ἠδεῖαν αοιδήν,

—that is, that the singer learned the art. The singer only learns passively by listening. He does not recite well-known songs because songs do not exist at all during the period of the authentic epic. There are only subject areas that are sung about, as the Muse, that is the singer's inner singing power, inspires him. He never sings other people's poetry; he always composes himself as I described in a detailed manner above. It is correct that art also seeks after sustenance, but I think Niese takes this too literally. Homer's words (1.154) ὅς ῥ' ἤειδε . . . ἀνάγκη simply mean that the singer was driven by the desire for gain or fame, for he did not have such an inspiring audience anywhere else nor could he perform as frequently as he could at the suitors' festive meals.

Aidoi can exist only at a time when their culture's folk poetry itself is the sole intellectual product reflecting the culture's collective spirit. They can only exist as long as there are no other creators of ideas besides them. Only a culture completely unaffected by the idea of individualism can produce *aidoi* and develop a period of authentic epic. With the beginning of individualism and the knowledge of reading and writing, the *aidos* vanishes and is replaced by the rhapsode (like the *akyn* of the Kasak-

⁸ Cf. Niese, *Die Entwicklung der homerischen Poesie* (Berlin, 1882).

Kirgiz), who does not create anymore by singing but who performs songs he has heard from others. By looking at numerous records of folk literature from different tribes, I saw that a folk singer could retain only a very limited number of verses from an acquired song. I also came to the conclusion that oral transmission of very long songs, like, for instance, a song of the length of several books by Homer, is completely impossible. By this, I do not mean to say that the human memory is incapable of retaining and memorizing a very large composition (I myself have known Muslims who knew the entire Koran by heart, word for word, and they recited it without leaving one word out). But this is only possible if the long work exists in writing so that the learning individual can put it into his memory, piece by piece. He can do this either if someone reads it to him or if he reads out loud to himself. A text that is not accurately written down and therefore not fixed is always in a fluid state and becomes something completely new in ten years. According to my experience, then, I hold it impossible that so enormous a work as Homer's poetry could have survived a decade had it not been written down. How then did this poem originate? Is it a work created by one human being, is it one poet's composition, or a combination of individual songs of the *aoidoi*? After all I have read on the epic question, I feel obligated to lean towards the first view. Yet I dare nonetheless to call Homer's poems authentic epics.

We witnessed a similar creation in this century: I am talking about the Finnish epic *Kalevala*, which was collected by Lönnrot. Lönnrot had always loved the epic songs of his fellow citizens, and he enjoyed, from his youth on, having old songs sung to him. Thus he became a singer of epics himself. He was a man of high education and began to get an understanding of the people's entire epic repertoire by acquiring episodes. He decided to collect the epic songs and publish them. Steinthal regrets that Lönnrot did not publish the material of the Finnish epic in its unrefined state.⁹ I believe that this reproach is unfounded. Lönnrot could not do that because the *Kalevala* is the way it is, the creation of a single poet. He could have written down individual songs, but nothing would have been achieved thereby for the epic as a whole [*Gesamtepos*]. The collective image in a chain of events is simply a reflection of the intangible whole as mirrored in Lönnrot's personal vision. He would not have been able to present this collective picture had he not himself written down almost half of the poem. By retaining the songs in his memory, the single parts grouped together inside him and formed the whole poem that was written down later. The contradictions also disappeared, those which interfere with the creation of the larger song when a non-participant attempts to compile the single songs. But even Lönnrot was not able to eliminate all contradictions, because to do so would have divested the folk song of its characteristic,

⁹ "Das Epos," *Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft*, 41.

fluid nature. Even Lönnrot's unified poem is full of contradictions, and in many places we find insertions that may or may not belong in their indicated places.

Steinthal says with respect to the origin of the Finnish *Kalevala*: "Before 1832, nobody knew about a complete Finnish epic, to say nothing of a comprehensive name for the *Kalevala*—no one, not even a Finn, not even Lönnrot, who grew up among these songs and was a singer of runes like any of the Finnish peasants. That is the miracle: nobody knew about the unity, and yet it was there. It was alive in the songs which were sung, and no one was aware of it. Only when Lönnrot, who himself knew many songs, began to collect songs and had others collect them, a mass of material was found which indicated some organization. The unity of these songs was in no one's consciousness, inasmuch as nobody was aware of the unity, and yet the unity did not exist in some mystical transcendence but was inherent in the songs, and therefore in the culture's consciousness."¹⁰ That proves that for the Finns the era of the authentic epic, the way in which it exists with the KaraKirgiz, was already in the past in 1832. In the epic period, each individual is aware of the unity of the songs to the extent to which he can perceive the whole. The collective epic is at this stage so enormous that one cannot speak of a complete representation at all. The individual can describe only one episode, which is, depending on his general knowledge of songs, reflected in only a part of the overall epic.

Consequently, we can see from the origin of the Finnish epic the origin of the epic *per se*, and that only a man who is an oral poet himself, an epic singer of his time, can compose an epic. If the truly epic period has passed, as in the case of the Finns, a collection of small episode-songs, carefully pursued for many years with the cooperation of many assistants, needs to be recorded before the quantity of the material allows the singer an insight into the whole epic corpus. But if the recorder of an authentic epic is in close contact with oral poetry, that is, if the consciousness of the totality of the epic is still alive in each member of the culture, the recorder must be a famous *aoidos* who, before deciding to write down the epic, has digested the largest possible mass of constituent parts.

Consequently, three conditions must be met for a poet to be able to write down an authentic folk epic. First, his culture must have, from the very beginning, an apparent appreciation for epic songs, which, in the course of time and under the influence of powerful historical events can develop into an epic permeating the entire culture. Second, this culture has to be unaffected by self-consciousness until the authentic epic has fully blossomed. During this time of "unculturedness," such a culture must also have lived through a series of historical events and ethical battles as a unified people. Third, at the peak of epic poetry, a powerful urge for

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 38.

culturedness has to manifest itself suddenly in the people, an urge which spurs a part of this people on to an unimagined high degree of culturedness within a short time.

The first two conditions are indispensable for the formation of the period of authentic epic poetry because an epic talent can only mature if the culture's consciousness can develop substantial epic foci through an eventful past. Around these centers, the epic songs can group themselves. But the epic period is not able to spawn poetic individuality because authentic folk poetry distinguishes itself from art-poetry in that it lets the individual flourish in the universal. However, the creation of a complete epic (if I may so term the great epics, like the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, the *Nibelungenlied*, and the *Song of Roland*, because they try to give a total picture despite their episodic character) requires an individuality which can digest the entire material of the epic period and constitute a whole. Only culturedness can create such individualities. But the cultured man can unite his culture's feeling and thinking into a whole picture only if the entire culture still recognizes this total picture [*Gesamtbild*] in scenes [*Teilbilder*], that is, if that person is still able to contribute to the creation of an episode like a real *aoidos*. He has to proceed just like any *aoidos*; he has to order the various scenes [*Teilbilder*] he has internalized according to an artistically designed plan. Since he did not create the pieces, the complete epic he designs will be a compilation of material created and sung by the culture. These episodes originated and were sung at different times and under different circumstances. In this respect, the complete epic differs from art epics that poets like Goethe composed. The art epics in their entirety and their parts are a product of the poet's mind, whereas in the authentic epic the poet is only the instrument which renders the material sung in the culture.

The investigation of the Greek epics has become significantly more difficult in that we do not have those epics in their first form when they were created by the *aoidos* Homer. Instead, they underwent changes over the course of many centuries; the manifold insertions and deletions that occurred which make it difficult to identify the original epic. But we should not assume that all contradictions stem from later insertions, because these contradictions are characteristic of every true oral poetry. If one wants to locate the most characteristic part of the Greek epics, one must identify especially the scenes [*Teilbilder*] which are repeated in different places in a more or less varied form. They are not the individual's creations, but material developed in the culture, material created from the period of the authentic epic, the building blocks from which the poet created his epic. Then one has to establish the cycles of tales which center on certain personalities and events, and to compare them with each other. Such comparisons could perhaps help us to gain an idea of

how the Greek *aoidoi* recited their episodes, that is, an idea of the episodes of the (so to speak) pre-Homeric oral poetry of the Greek people. For such investigations, the study of the Kara-Kirgiz epic episodes goes back to a period very similar to the one that produced Homer's epics. In these episodes the reader finds, as I already indicated above, truth and poetry mixed, historical facts transferred to heroes of old legends, and the diachronic represented as the synchronic—because the purpose of the epic is not to represent historical facts but to create an ideal world which reflects a culture's consciousness with all its memories and ideals. For this reason, historical research does not give sufficient information about Homer's world. Homer's world, that is, the reflection of the Greek *Zeitgeist*, has to be researched from within itself, because only in the epic does it present itself in its full beauty.

May the reader forgive me if I restrict myself to establishing only general points in this introduction. At this juncture I wanted merely to create an understanding of how my records relate to the people's epic period. I may later have the opportunity to return to this subject and to compare the episodes of the Kara-Kirgiz epic with subjects of tales that we find in Turkic cultures in general. Such a comparison would entail an investigation of how subjects of tales developed into an epic and an examination of the changes they underwent.

Besides the epic songs, which showed neither obsolete words nor unknown expressions, and which are sufficient as a dialect sample, I have included two additional lamentations, one song sung by girls and the song of Kul-Myrsa. These songs were dictated to me by people unfamiliar with epic songs. Nevertheless, even the lamentations and the last-mentioned poem have the character of epic songs; they almost appear like scenes [*Teilbilder*] cut out from the epic songs. One might convince oneself of the truth of this claim by comparing the lamentations with the prelude to the third episode of *Manas*, or the song of Kul-Myrsa with the frequent conversations of Kan Joloi. I had written down even more of these songs, but because all of them are too much like the epic songs, and yet do not provide the same interest, I did not include them in my collection.

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