

**THE MARRIAGE OF KHAN MANAS ACCORDING TO THE
MUSLIM CUSTOM BY MATCHMAKING AS THE REALIZATION OF
AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN THE SYSTEM OF TRADITIONAL
EDUCATION OF THE KYRGYZ**

(Based on the Kyrgyz folk epic “Manas”)

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Abstract

*This research paper describes the event of Manas-batyr's [explanation: **batyr** - (epical) warrior, hero] marriage to the daughter of Khan Atemir named Kanykei. By that time, Manas already had two wives: Karabork and Akylai, who were the daughters of the khans who waged wars of conquest against Khan Manas. Living together with these wives in the status of a family showed that in understanding of habits and relationships, in following folk customs and traditions, some inconsistencies became more and more clearly apparent.*

Almambet-batyr – a friend and companion-in-arms of Manas, once jokingly hinted that Manas could be classified as a bachelor, since he had not yet legally married according to folk custom. Manas shared these rumours and conversations

with his father, Zhakyp-bai, and told him: "... according to the centuries-old custom of our ancestors, you should marry me, but you still haven't thought about it and haven't done it."

All the twists and turns of life related to the events and processes of the son's marriage by his father Zhakyp are described in detail in this article.

Keywords: *beloved wife, custom of the ancestors, matchmaking, traditional education, Muslim wedding.*

Introduction

The epic «Manas», as the greatest creation of the art of words, created by the genius of the people, having traveled a long historical path, without losing its pristine spring freshness and charm, reaches our days and hearts.

As one of the most ancient Kyrgyz epics, «Manas» represents the most complete and artistic depiction of the centuries-long struggle of the Kyrgyz people for their independence, justice, and a happy life.

In this article, **we examine the marriage** of Manas to Kanykei from the perspective of adherence to the principle of folk-oriented upbringing.

Literary review of the marriage of Manas

This plot is considered by researchers from various perspectives.

According to V. M. Zhirmunsky, the marriage of Manas to Kanykey represents the creation of an ideal union of a hero and a wise heroine, necessary for the well-being of the people and the continuation of the heroic family. The researcher notes that beauty, charm, wisdom, loyalty and the ability to give valuable advice to a hero harmoniously combine in the image of Kanykey (Zhirmunsky, 1974).

The famous researcher of the epic "Manas" and writer M. O. Auezov considered Kanykey not only as the faithful spouse of the main character, but also as one of the most active characters in the epic, exerting a significant influence on the development of events (Auezov, 1961).

Z. Bektenov and K. Nanaev have prepared a prose version of the epic "Manas", in which the chapter "The marriage of Manas to Kanykey" is described in detail. An analysis of the content of this chapter allows us to identify several key ideas:

- the need for Manas to have a spouse worthy of him by birth, intelligence, and personal qualities;
- understanding the marriage of Manas and Kanykey as a union of two noble families and an important social event;
- portrayal of Kanykey as the wise and far-sighted wife of the future leader of the Kyrgyz people (Bektenov & Nanaev, 1999).

In recent ethno-pedagogic studies, this episode is considered as a significant educational example for the younger generation. Special attention is paid to the following educational values:

- respect and reverence for parents;
- conscious choice of a life partner;
- responsibility for the creation and preservation of a family;
- preservation of traditional values;
- morality and justice (Muratov, 2011).

Methodology: Introduction to Kyrgyz Philosophy, ethnology, ethnography, pedagogy, patterns and principles of ethnopedagogy.

Research methods: method of analysis of theoretical material and research sources, content and structural analysis of text; conceptual analysis.

Main content. In those ancient times, the main goal of Khan Manas was to liberate the ancestral lands of his ancestors from foreign invaders and treacherous enemies. A distinctive feature of this era was that there were many wars, clashes, and skirmishes between warring nations, mostly motivated by the appropriation of as much land as possible. Khan Manas, before marrying according to the Muslim marriage custom, married the daughter of the kalmak khan Kaiyp-dang [explanation: **dang** – the title of the ruler of kalmaks] named Karabork, as well as the daughter of Khan Shooruk – Akylai. But these young women were presented as a tribute to Khan Manas. They were beautiful, charming, pleasant and attractive. Living together with them showed that, by nature, habit, and mutual understanding, they turned out to be unworthy as a wife for Manas. Watching them, Bakai and Almambet, Manas's closest associates, casually noticed and told Manas that his wives were unworthy of him. Another good reason that motivated Manas to marry legally is explained in the book "The Legend of Manas" as follows:

But the two of them couldn't

Give Manas a son ("**Manas**. Kyrgyz heroic epic. Book 2." 1988, p.136).

Seeing how longing a friend was,

Almambet told Manas:

Although you have two wives,

But at thirty, you're a bachelor.

You didn't woo them in any way.

And you did not go to them as a bridegroom.

You didn't pay marriage remuneration for them,

To make peace with you,

They gave them to you as collateral.

Or maybe our supreme God,

He doesn't give you any offspring,

For what you are, waging a war,

Didn't take a legitimate wife? –

Almambet asked jokingly.

Manas-batyr [explanation: **batyr** – warrior, hero] pondered: (“*Manas. Kyrgyz heroic epic. Book 2.*” 1988, p.136-137).

Manas decided to marry according to the custom of his ancestors. He told his father, Dzhakyp-bai [explanation: **bai** – (archaism) - (from Turkish *bey* - (tribal) chief, leader) - a big landowner, a wealthy cattle owner] about this intention:

You didn’t choose a [bride], you didn’t bow down,
Did not perform the matchmaking ceremony,
Failed in your duty [to his father] (“*Manas. Kyrgyz heroic epic. Book 2.*” 1988, p.569).

During matchmaking, according to the Kyrgyz custom, the groom’s father comes with a bow to the bride’s parents with a request to consent to the marriage. Upon reaching such an agreement, matchmaking is performed.

He reassured his father, telling him: “If my soul does not perish, God’s promise, I will take care of all the expenses.”

Then, in a calm spirit, he told his father about his desire and requirement for a future wife: “you have a lot of life experience, you know all the subtleties of female nature well, but nevertheless, so she, that is, the future wife, should lead a healthy lifestyle; she should be modest and would think deeply about every thought, would walk smoothly, anticipate, what each case will lead to”, as well as:

In whom the shutter speed is visible,
Who won’t hurt anyone,
Who speaks their words calmly,
Who directs their whole mind,

To win over the people (“*Manas. Kyrgyz heroic epic. Book 2.*” 1988, p.571).

He went on telling about his desires: she should be resourceful, rich in intelligence, bringing good to everyone; she should be polite and generous in spirit, perfect in everything; pleasant and sweet-spoken; she should be fair-faced, with languid eyes; she should be with a long neck and an elegant head; she should be with a deep mind and a firm will (“*Manas. Kyrgyz heroic epic. Book 2.*” 1988, p.571).

He told his father to take his time and watch:
With beautiful bangs, with a long braid –
The kind of girl to look out for,

Father, do not spare yourself, take a good look (“*Manas. Kyrgyz heroic epic. Book 2.*” 1988, p.571).

The future wife would take care of her husband wisely, take care of the people with wit; she would know the value of cattle, skilfully nurse them; so that she lived, praising Allah; let her be a skilled artist, who is not among the people; let her be a smart girl!

She also should have the qualities:
So that the servant of God who took a fancy to,
He would have liked her!
So that at the sight of her hospitality

Even the angry people

Have had enough without food and drink! (“*Manas. Kyrgyz heroic epic. Book 2.*” 1988, p.571-572).

And also, she has to be prudent and calculating, whether she was walking or standing, so that she would take care of everything!

Father should marry his son –

It turns out that the ancestral custom is as follows (“*Manas. Kyrgyz heroic epic. Book 2.*” 1988, p.572).

After these words of his son, deep in thought, Dzhakyp-bai decided to go look for a bride for his son and took as a companion the son of Atai named Booke, the son of Akymbek – Mendibai, the son of Alybek – Dzhooke.

He made plans:

“If you find a girl all of a sudden,” he said, -

I cannot get too close,

I didn’t even give any red copper coins!

How am I going to perform the matchmaking ceremony?”

With money – with sixty jambys [**jamby** – an ingot of silver of a certain shape and weight, which served as a monetary unit; sometimes also an ingot of gold (*Manas. Kyrgyz heroic epic. Book 2.*1988, p. 672)],

With servants and slaves,

He set off on his way, calling out to Allah,

He rode out, mounting his horse (“*Manas. Kyrgyz heroic epic. Book 2.*” 1988, p.572).

He travelled around many lands and regions, leaving behind the difficult days of searching, having experienced a lot of torment; it was not so easy to find a suitable girl, and at one of the stops, Dzhakyp-bai set himself up to go to Bukhara, preferring that there were learned ulama, knowledgeable rulers, therefore, the people should be good.

Dzhakyp came to this place, when meeting the local people, one man named Aym, having learned of his intention, shared his advice that there is a daughter of Khan Atemir; she attends the theological seminary; Aym praised her, said that he should like her; in the big break, female students often appear in the orchard near the lake and, one can keep an eye on them, having reached and settled down in a convenient place close to the garden; thus, he had given him a landmark. Dzhakyp did just that; hiding behind a thick reed so that the girls would not notice him while walking around the orchard and having fun. Indeed, they appeared in the garden near the lake; Dzhakyp began to watch them slowly; in their conversations and jokes among themselves, it gradually became clear that the girl named Sanirabiyga was the daughter of Atemir. Sanirabiyga (she is also known as Kanykei in the epic), along with a girl named Aruuke, began to stand out among the girls:

Her father’s name is Atemir,

[He is] khan over thirty cities,

The girl’s name is Sanirabiyga,

Many souls are within her power (“*Manas. Kyrgyz heroic epic. Book 2.*” 1988, p.574).

Sanirabiyga, according to Dzhakyp, is characterized as:
It turns out that the girl is Sanirabiyga –
A true beauty herself.
She speaks loudly,
At that time, she had matured her mind.
She is sixteen and a half years old,
has thick long black braids (“*Manas. Kyrgyz heroic epic. Book 2.*” 1988, p.576).

In the garden:
Knocking down one cocok [**kokok** (folk), **kokokko** – (in the epic) the name of the fruit] fruit,
Picking it up, the girls divided it.
When they were walking back and forth,
Dzhakyp got a good look at them: (“*Manas. Kyrgyz heroic epic. Book 2.*” 1988, p.576).

Of the forty-one girls, he was particularly attracted by the charm and prettiness of Sanirabiyga. He liked her well-groomed appearance, cleanliness, and careful attention to her clothes. He was a little upset that her situation was worse concerning the birth of children.

Characterized the sincerity of her:
There are no limits to her kindness,
She will soften a person’s soul. –
And the heart at the same time,
Will connect the torn ends (“*Manas. Kyrgyz heroic epic. Book 2.*” 1988, p.577).

Her best human qualities, such as generosity and depth of thought, are revealed in the following lines:

To the speaker: “I don’t have enough”
Can cut off her sleeve and give it to –
It turns out that she is generous,
He thinks out his thought to the end –
It turns out that there is a depth in her (“*Manas. Kyrgyz heroic epic. Book 2.*” 1988, p.577).

It turns out, Manas’s father notes, that when necessary, she shows firmness of character, is eloquent, knows how to approach everyone, finds what is missing, and is frugal.

After that, Dzhakyp-bai went to meet Atemir. At first, the guards, the people guarding Atemir, looked down on him, suspiciously, disrespectfully, as if he were some kind of outsider. And when they were interested in Dzhakyp’s ancestors, they understood from his story that he was the heir to the tree of khans, came from a distant Kyrgyz land with the sole purpose of looking for a suitable bride for his son, Manas, found a girl in the person of Sanirabiyga to woo Atemir himself and asked them to let him to see the khan. Akylbaiys immediately went to Atemir to report on Dzhakyp-bai and his intention. According to Akylbaiys, the girl’s father caught some nuances, subtleties, that is, “she was running away from Manas, he

recalled” (“*Manas. Kyrgyz heroic epic. Book 2.*” 1988, p.582). Atemir criticized his guards for their inappropriate treatment of the old man – Dzhakyp-bai, sent them back to clarify: - who takes as a wife? Is it the same old man, or his brother? Or a son? And when Atemir’s guards came back and asked a question to Dzhakyp, at first, he expressed a certain chagrin that they did not know the rules of dealing with people, with a guest, swearing. It turned out that they had previously heard about the glory of the brave Manas.

After explanation of Manas’s father:

Saying “All four of you stay here.”,

Off bai Dzhakyp,

Abdykalyk retreated hastily,

He went in to Atemir,

He spoke hurriedly: (“*Manas. Kyrgyz heroic epic. Book 2.*” 1988, p.585).

Deep in thought, he uttered the word Atemir:

In the world, a person cannot overcome [this] –

We are in such a predicament,

One cannot survive in the world –

We have experienced such torment (“*Manas. Kyrgyz heroic epic. Book 2.*” 1988, p.586).

Then Khan Atemir ordered his beks [explanation: **bek** – (Turkic) - (for Turks — *bey*, for Kyrgyz — *biy* or *bai*), a title given to: 1) people of “noble” origin — as opposed to both the lower classes and members of the royal house] to invite Dzhakyp-bai into the living room as a highly respected guest. On the threshold of the living room, Dzhakyp noticed the very Sanirabiya; he and bek, who was walking next to him, started a chat on this girl; the bek described her as smart and skilled.

Dzhakyp asked the beks to tell Atemir about his request and said: “please give me an answer or tell me: go your own way!”:

If you give [her], say: “We give”,

In our area [it is] called kulduk –

You will receive payment for collusion.

Bai Dzhakyp said this,

Five of the beks

Went to Atemir (“*Manas. Kyrgyz heroic epic. Book 2.*” 1988, p.589).

Atemir decided to get together wise elders, beks, famous people to arrange a council. During the discussion, most of the participants thought it would be the right decision if we offered a relatively large amount of kalym [explanation: **kalym** – a traditional form of marriage remuneration, a payment that the groom (or his family) transfers to the bride's parents as compensation for her leaving the parental family.], thereby complicating their tasks, which they would not be able to collect, and it would be a tactful move on our part to be respectfully rejected from us. This proposal came from the mouth of Abdykalyk. His proposal was supported by Akylbaiys, Tuloobek, Abdylkasym, Atemir himself, and then all the others.

After that, the story is told about the meeting of Atemir and Dzhakyp-bai. Dzhakyp told him that he was very glad to meet him, and politely explained his intention as follows:

“I came down all this way,
I’m looking for a bride for my son,
I’ve seen a lot of lands, but I didn’t like the girls,
I didn’t find a girl that I would like.
I like your daughter,
If it is ordained by the Almighty God,
If you say you agree, our Khan,
She suits my son. –

We will take your daughter” (“*Manas. Kyrgyz heroic epic. Book 2.*” 1988, p.597).

And when Atemir offered his terms, Dzhakyp did not start an argument, but gave a sign of agreement through a warm handshake.

Upon arrival home, Dzhakyp-bai invited notable people, his people, to a gathering, and told them about how Khan Atemir received them warmly, honouring them and showing his customs:

Twelve sarpais [**sarpai** – 1) clothes that are presented to honoured guests at weddings or feasts; 2) (southern) gifts to the groom’s father and the guests coming with him from the bride’s father’s side.] were put on me,

I took them and came here.
Sarpais and robes
To your gray-bearded father
[Presented] Atemir, paying tribute,
Bring it, let the people see,
Let the clan leaders divide the robes.

Dzhakyp said these words,
Akymbek’s [son] Mendibai
He brought twelve sarpais,
And put them in the middle (“*Manas. Kyrgyz heroic epic. Book 2.*” 1988, p.604-605).

Then Manas asked,
“Atake [**atake** (Kyrg.) – dear father, dear dad] [my dear dad], he says,
It turns out that you have delved deeply into their customs.”,
You told me, praised their speeches,
You have told us about the power of that people,
When the girl is given away and the bride is taken,
Do they pay kalym? (“*Manas. Kyrgyz heroic epic. Book 2.*” 1988, p. 605).
With the help of a friendly, solidary and united people:
We have prepared three times as much
More cattle than they asked for (“*Manas. Kyrgyz heroic epic. Book 2.*” 1988, p.608).

Discussion: In Kyrgyz society, great importance was attached to marriage. In this regard, the epic gives us a valuable lesson, an instruction. The wives tried to

raise the dignity of their husbands. At the same time, husbands behaved decently in society. Therefore, according to the tradition of our ancestors, priority was given to marrying a son through matchmaking, a Muslim wedding, in order to build a strong family.

Based on the above, we can make, in our opinion, the following generalizations:

- wives of Khan Manas named Karabork, who was the daughter of kalmak Kaiyp dang, and also Akylai, the daughter of Shooruk Khan, who were presented as gifts to Manas due to their major defeat in the war with the troops of Manas, in order to conclude an amicable agreement and thereby save their people from further destruction;

- these young women possessed beauty, charm, grace, but after a certain time, in the process of living together, undesirable mannerisms began to manifest themselves in their behaviour, character and habits, worldview and tolerance, in acceptance of Kyrgyz traditions, as well as in fulfilment of their specific feminine duties;

- and therefore, on one of the appropriate days, convenient to start a talk, Manas decided to talk to his father about this issue and spoke: “you know that your son walks like a bachelor; from time immemorial, according to our tradition, it was the duty of fathers to marry their children according to Muslim custom by marriage; thus, he inadvertently reproached his father for not thinking about this problem until now;

- at the end of his conversation with his father, Khan Manas described in detail the personal qualities of his future prospective wife, that is, what she should be like;

- Dzhakyp-bai went to look for a bride, visited many places, was confronted with a lot of difficulties and complications on the way; finally, in a distant land called Bukhara, he was able to find the daughter of Khan Atemir named Sanirabiyga (in the epic she is called Kanykei), who was sixteen and a half years old by that time; the process of wooing her was not easy for Dzhakyp-bai; Atemir and his servants tried to complicate Dzhakyp’s tasks by offering him a relatively large amount of kalym, which would make it difficult for him to pay, thereby tactfully pushing him away from wooing; but Dzhakyp-bai did not start an argument, agreed to the condition presented to him, and the subsequent course of events demonstrated that he adequately passed this difficult exam;

- in the search for a future bride for his son, it is necessary to pay tribute to Dzhakyp-bai that his slow observation, vast life experience, as well as foresight favoured him to find a suitable wife for his son;

- the negotiation process showed that Manas’s father tried to respect the customs and traditions of this people, and Khan Atemir also tried to act according to the tradition of the Kyrgyz, and such reciprocity led to their rapprochement, to finding agreement and accepting matchmaking by Atemir;

- as the Eastern wisdom says: “The greatest legacy is upbringing,” we, using the example under consideration, can conclude that how a daughter should be

raised in a family so that in the future she would be a happy, good, worthy wife, mother of her children, respected by her relatives, friends, and people around.

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