

UDC 82-1

https://doi.org/10.33619/2414-2948/92/66

HOMER OF THE 20TH CENTURY SAYAKBAY KARALAEV

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ГОМЕР 20 ВЕКА САЯКБАЙ КАРАЛАЕВ

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Abstract. This article analyzes the life and creativity of the well-known manastchi (bard) of the Kyrgyz people Sayakbai Karalaev. Sayakbai Karalaev was a bearer of a unique skill which is a great phenomenon for the scholars of all times, being a person who contained hundreds of thousands of lines from the boundless ocean like the Epic of Manas.

Аннотация. Рассматривается жизнь и творчество известного манасчи кыргызского народа Саякбая Каралаева. Саякбай Каралаев, будучи носителем уникального вида искусства, которое является феноменом для исследователей всех времен, уникальная личность которая содержала в себе несколько тысяч строк бесконечного океаноподобного эпоса «Манас».

Keywords: manastchi, creativity, poem lines, Epic of Manas, phenomena.

Ключевые слова: манасчи, творчество, стихотворные строки, Манас, явление.

A person who knew by heart thousands of lines of epic Manas, Homer of the Kyrgyz people Sayakbai Karalaev, fascinated people with his rare unique talent of performing Manas at the highest artistic level, like he was striving and rising up to the sky. Sayakbai Karalaev can be truly called phenomena of the 20th century. His story enchants his listeners: they seem to be under influence of the power, the power of the performance, where the performer is wholly dedicating himself to the story. He is so devoted to the story that it seems that this story is passing before his eyes. There is no doubt, that the talent of this great manastchi and his masterpiece epic “Manas” will be subject of much research.

Bearer of the unique skill of Manas retelling, the skill, which is related only to the Kyrgyz people, Sayakbai performed with incredible artistry, colorful expression of the story and lives of the characters. The skill that was certainly given by God for fanning the deed of the head of the Kyrgyz people and his vigorous life. The value of the story that it tells the life of the people and the characters, whose lives are truly educational. Their lives still teach us high moral values, patriotism, the image of the ideal woman, friendship, and devotion to Motherland.

Sayakbai Karalaev performed 500 553 lines (epic Manas – 84 513 lines, “Semetey” – 316 157 lines, “Seytek” – 84 697 lines, “Kenen”, “Alymsaryk, Kulansaryk” -15 186 lines of poem), in other words, 6 parts of the epic “Manas”, about 5 generations of Manas.

Initially, the activity of recording the version of the manastchi started in 1932. The full recording of his version lasted till 1968. K. Jumbaev, Y. Abdyrahamov, J. Yrysov, K. Kydyrbaeva, S. Musaev, S. Begaliev, T. Uraliev, B. Alagushev. In 1963 parts of “Manas” and “Semetey” in S. Karalaev version have been recorded to 45 000 meters of audio film and added the radio’s “Altyn kazyna” – a fund of rare materials. In 1965 the famous film director B. Shamsiev made a-two-part

documentary film “Manastchi”. In 1968 on the initiative of the film director M. Ubukeev the Kyrgyz film studio made an experimental film with the screening all the main events of the parts of the epic: “Manas”, “Semetey”, and Seytek”. In 1968 S. Karalaev performance was recorded to audio film by the specialists of the Kyrgyz National Academy of Sciences S. Begaliev and S. Musaev [1].

The talent of the great manastchi impressed millions of people. One of the great people who was impressed by the talent of the manastchi was world-famous Chingiz Aitmatov. The writer C. Aitmatov once said about the prominent manaschi S. Karalaev, “If I were asked to list great people from my nation, I would first and foremost say Sayakbai Karalaev. Karalaev has mastered and learned by heart a-thousand-year historical heritage from the beginning to end. He is a sparkling harbinger of eternal literary work, a listening bard, and like a tireless stallion. Not losing anything, not forgetting any word and not fading any color, Karalaev has kept our national treasure which is rarely felt by a human being; he has contributed to that treasury, by putting his spirit like a true artist and enriched it. Sayakbai Karalaev and Manas in the 20th century are inseparable. When he was performing Manas fervently, we can imagine brave Manas appear before our eyes. The famous writer of the kindred Kazakh people, Muhtar Auezov highly valued Karalaev and called him “Homer of modernity, rapsody of the 20th century”.

The talent of the manastchi really fascinated the spectators. According to Ch. Aitmatov once the Algerian minister of culture, Murat Burbu, who had a chance to attend one of Karalaev’s performances, was so fascinated by the talent of combining a song, a theater, a cry and storytelling in one single moment. After the performance he gave a hug to a singer and said: “That old man is a treasure of Kyrgyz nomadic culture!” (<https://goo.su/d1cDg>).

The deputy of the Jogorku Kenesh (the Kyrgyz Parliament) K. Imanaliev recalled Sayakbay: “Sake (a patronymic name) is an absolutely unique person... Karalaev for three days and three nights, thus 72 hours has performed Manas, for 72 hours his arms, body, and head have been moving and he was performing energetically. Where does he get so much strength and energy? It is a talent blessed by God; a unique gift given by God. Sayakbai in his interview said: “I have only once had pleasure. I had been in Sary-Solto performing the whole Manas”. In the mornings buttering his throat with sary mai (melted butter), taking rest when tired he performed Manas for 23 days. 500553 lines is not perfectly right. The amount of lines reached 1.5 million in his longest performance. It is not a religion, it is not a disease, and not a science, it is an incredible world. You can feel it by head and heart” [2].

This person was really blessed by God and gifted as he was meant to take a great mission to convey the deed of the Kyrgyz national hero, the head of the Kyrgyz people Manas. He told about the Hero Manas’ deed in uniting the Kyrgyz nation, his continuous efforts in defending his land from the enemies, keeping his Motherland as the “cherish of his eye”, and his endless devotion to the Motherland and his nation.

The famous Kyrgyz sculptor Turgunbai Sadykov recalled the artistry of the great manastchi. He tells about time how a small man turned into a giant Karalaev. To portray manastchi, sculptor having persuaded him with enormous efforts, started to paint getting him to sit in front of him: “It was 1962. In front of me I saw only an image of a small man. After much thinking I asked him to perform Manas ... We had been working every day. Sometimes he was silent, I had been drawing all the time. I recorded him performing Manas. One day, suddenly, he started to tell Manas energetically and continuously. He had been performing for long. He hardly stopped. The tape of the recorder ran out. It seemed a giant appeared in front of me. He stopped performing and went out to the workshop yard. After some while when he went in, the man who I saw was not a giant

manastchi, who had been continuously staring at me; now he again turned into modest old man. Having realized that it was a great spirit, I was so fascinated”, said T. Sadykov [2].

The pride of the Kyrgyz people, great manastchi Sayakbay Karalaev was born in Issykkol region in Ak-Olong in 1894. As a child he grew up listening to folklore from his mother Dakish. Moreover, his grandmother told her grandson the lines that she heard from the great manastchi like Suranchy, as well as the plot of the work in prose.

When he was twelve, he worked in Jeti-Oguz region; he looked after the sheep of the rich man whose name was Tolbay. In his teenage years, when he was coming back from Semiz-Bel, a place where he was born, to Orto-Tokoy he falls asleep by a black stone and had a dream. In his dream a black stone turned into boz ui (a living place of the Kyrgyz people), when he came into the boz ui, Mother Kanykei served him some food with her hands, and wise Bakai gave characteristics to Manas, Almambet, Chubak, Syrgak one by one, and acquainted Sayakbai with them. After that event Sayakbai started to tell small passages from “Manas”; he met great manastchies of the time Choyuke and Akylbek. After taking lessons from them, he started to perform in front of the people [4].

Besides Manas, S. Karalaev also wrote a range of works. The legend “Toshtuk” (1969,1981) in S. Karalaev’s version was found to be the best version in volume and aesthetics among the Turkic speaking people and was published in Paris. A number of folklore patterns were recorded in the Karalaev’s performance and published in a book, among of those works are “Falcons” (Бүркүттөр) (1952), “Memorable” (Эстен кетпейт), (1957), “The hero Deldesh” (Делдеш баатыр) (1957), “The birds” (Канаттуу куштар) (1955), “The Hercules Bakytay” (Бакытай балбан) (1961), “Karamoldo” (1962) and others [4].

Moreover, Sayakbay Karalaev was into falconry. He has kept a number of eagles. He gave them names: Kuldubadam, Koyron kara, Boz jigit. “By starring in in the film with his golden eagle Karacholok Sayakbai made him memorable”, said literary critique Baktybek Maksutov [3].

People had not known that Sayakbai Karalaev was mastering a golden eagle. Since it was not possible to keep the eagle in the town, he used to go to the village in his free time. One day he was going towards the mountains with golden eagle on his hand and with his dog. Suddenly a man ran to him, a collective farm shepherd of the thoroughbred horses. He was very anxious and said: “Sake, Sake please help, there has been a wolf in this place. It killed a horse”. Sayakbai: “Ok, where do you think that wolf might be?” The shepherd pointed to the mountain side. Then they walked for a while climbing from one hill to another and finally reached a mountain where they saw a big wolf lying by the big stone. Sayakbai Karalaev saw him and said: “If we unleash the eagle to clutch the wolf, it is young and not so strong; it might hit the stone while approaching to it... Let’s unleash the dog to the wolf.” They unleashed the dog. The dog ran to the wolf, and they fought. The wolf was so strong that the dog had to escape. That time Sayakbai let the eagle free. The eagle flew up, approached to the wolf and clutched it. At that time the dog ran to the wolf, and they clutched the wolf together.

After that event people started to know Sayakbai not only as manastchi, but also as a falconer. To sum up, Sayakbai Karalaev is a great storyteller of the endless ocean Manas, and a true gifted person who contained thousands of lines of the national treasure Manas. His incredible artistry, his majesty and storytelling skill impressed millions of people worldwide. There is a great hope that this skill of telling Manas story will last in next generations.

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*Работа поступила
в редакцию 25.05.2023 г.*

*Принята к публикации
02.06.2023 г.*

Ссылка для цитирования:

Takenova Zh. Homer of the 20th Century Sayakbai Karalaev // *Бюллетень науки и практики*. 2023. Т. 9. №7. С. 464-467. <https://doi.org/10.33619/2414-2948/92/66>

Cite as (APA):

Takenova, Zh. (2023). Homer of the 20th Century Sayakbai Karalaev. *Bulletin of Science and Practice*, 9(7), 464-467. <https://doi.org/10.33619/2414-2948/92/66>