



## SUMMARY

"Ay-Khuuchin" is one of the most beloved works of the heroic epos of the Khakass people living on the banks of large Siberian rivers the Yenisei and the Abakan.

The Khakass are one of the Turkic peoples. Especially interesting in their rich folklore is their heroic epos alyptykh nymakh, brought to us from the depths of antiquity by the improvising singers who were numerous in the past but are very few at present.

The ballad "Ay-Khuuchin" was widely spread in the aals (settlements) of the rivers the Black and the White Iyus. The pearl of the Khakass epos, "Ay-Khuuchin" was first recorded in September 1964 as recounted by P.V. Kurbizhekov, an outstanding Khakass narrator. It was recorded by V.Y. Mainogasheva, a folklorist, then a post-graduate. She was also the first to translate the epos into Russian.

"Ay-Khuuchin" has incorporated many Khakass epic motifs. Some of the oldest are devoted to Khan-Mirgen, a polygamist, and Ayp-Khys-Khan, the fighter-maiden who waged predatory wars and later became the wife of Khan-Mirgen. According to the common Turkic tradition the wise ancestors are depicted as long-livers. Such is also the elder sister of Khan-Mirgen. The fighter-maiden usually wears an awful mask to hide her charming beauty.

The pivot of "Ay-Khuuchin" is the Turkic myth of skewbald horses. Besides that there are myths of the fight of a frog with a lizard, mourning songs and other genres of the Khakass epos. This is explained by the Khakass epos being centuries old and by the influence of various Khakass folklore traditions.

Ay-Khuuchin is the main personage of the ballad, a "bodaty" maiden-fighter. Being the chief warrior of the ruler Khan-Mirgen, she selflessly defends her people from the foreign enemies and struggles for social justice in the whole of the sunny world.

Ay-Khuuchin is also a kind of a counsellor of Khan-Mirgen both in military and private affairs. Nevertheless, their relations are those of friends and relatives. She tenderly addresses him "my elder brother" while he calls her "my beloved younger sister". One of the most important spiritual commandments of the ancestors is the cult of patriarchal kinship, concern and respect for one's

relatives. These are revealed in all the ballads. With her personal behaviour Ay-Khuuchin carries out the behests of her parents, the horses, who before their death ordered her to obey the elder relatives always — the elder sworn sister Khys-Khan and the elder sworn brother Khan-Mirgen. Mutual respect is the main precondition of friendship among relatives. No self-willed actions of Ay-Khuuchin belittle the kindness of Khys-Khan who always forgives the younger sister. Ay-Khuuchin, in her turn, loves the sworn sister with all her devotion and tenderness. When the elder sister suddenly dies revealing all her beauty hitherto hidden under the fearful mask, Ay-Khuuchin is mourning deeply for a long time and then buries her sworn sister with honours in the family vault of the White Rock. In her mourning monologue she expresses her lasting grief over the loss. Ay-Khuuchin enumerates the virtues of her sworn sister who took her to the Khan's palace and thus introduced her into the people's world.

The ancient myth of a sister and a brother of whom the former is a woman and the latter — a horse, and the myth of a bogatyr-maiden miraculously originating from the sacred skewbald horses merge into a majestic epic treatise of the unity of man and nature. According to the ancient philosophic concepts, man should do good and remember that he is inseparable from nature.

Ay-Khuuchin is on friendly terms with all the other representatives of the Khan's family, his sons and daughters.

Ay-Khuuchin is especially loving and careful to her lame slave.

Khan-Mirgen, though he is the elder and the ruler of his territories, recognizes the superiority of Ay-Khuuchin because she is wise and shrewd and possesses greater martial strength and better skills. She is always sure of herself and knows no fear. As she is of an animal origin she is sometimes unrestrained. Once while she is crying she hears the laughter of her sister-in-law. Ay-Khuuchin grows furious and with a whip made of the skins of nine oxen she beats her sister-in-law till she bleeds.

Ay-Khuuchin seems to come from another world. Her first appearance in the palace of Khan-Mirgen is surprising and mysterious.

A little girl, she defeats the enemies of Khan-Mirgen and is quietly having her dinner in the Khan's palace. On coming home Khan-Mirgen and his bride see an unknown child. Khan-Mirgen suspects his elder sister of libertinism, he thinks the little girl is his sister's daughter. The elder sister, however, is full of surprise too. Then they find out that the little girl is a child of a scwebald colt and a mare, the parents of the wonderful race horses. The little girl has a twin-brother — a three-eared scwebald colt whom she usually rides.

Because of her special origin people in the Khan's palace treat her as a wonder and show indulgence to her whims. Soon Ay-Khuuchin is ordained into bogatyrs, she puts on the warrior's armour and announces that she cannot live in one palace with another bogatyr — Khan-Mirgen. She asks Khan-Mirgen to let his elder sister go with her and on being refused she takes with her a lame slave-girl whom she calls her elder sister.

Ay-Khuuchin does not always act in a straight way to achieve her aim, she sometimes resorts to roundabout methods. Thus seeing Khan-Mirgen's weakness for the fair sex she does not blame or try to restrict him. On the contrary, she even seems to indulge him. She provides him with new women, one of whom is a monster-woman with thin twig-like legs. Khan-Mirgen in gripped by fear and he implores Ay-Khuuchin not to bring new women to him. He swears he has had enough of them. Thus, acting as a diplomat Ay-Khuuchin manages to achieve the desirable result.

Ay-Khuuchin's struggle with enemies is the brightest page in her warrior's biography. As all the outstanding Khakass bogatyrs she performs her first heroic deed when she is a little girl. After that she is initiated into the rank of bogatyrs. As a warrior she is fearless and indomitable. She repays the enemies' cruelty with her own fierceness. The enemies are constantly tormenting her home-land and the whole sunny world with their unexpected plots, intrigues and bloody wars. Ay-Khuuchin foresees their criminal intentions. She decides to fight her main enemy Chalat-Khan on his territory. She challenges her adversary to begin the war which after forty long years she finally wins. In her struggle she is supported by Khan-Mirgen and his sons.

Ay-Khuuchin spares the guiltless and does not subject them to tortures. Thus she destroys her enemy Chalat-Khan, but she is merciful to his wife and offers her to help marry their daughter to one of Khan-Mirgen's sons.

The middle age motive of theomachy (God-fighting) has also found its reflection in the Khakass epos. Conscious of her mighty strength Ay-Khuuchin, in a state of intoxication, challenges the heavenly and underground gods, she declares herself to be thrice as mighty as the gods of heaven and seven times as mighty as the gods of the underground, the enemies of the people. For such unheard of imperfinence Ay-Khuuchin is punished severely: the gods of heaven deprive her of one half of her bogatyr's strength and a half of her wit, but they give her freedom.

Later one of the daughters of Khan-Mirgen, the sinless maiden Ay-Charykh using her magic returns to Ay-Khuuchin her former strength and wisdom and thus helps her to defeat Chalat-Khan.

There act three generations of bogatyrs in "Ay-Khuuchin" The first is represented by the ugly Khus-Khan, the elder sister of Khan-Mirgen, the second are Ay-Khuuchin and Khan-Mirgen, and the third are his children. They all come to power inheriting it from their fathers. The succession and continuity of generations symbolize the eternity of life.

The feats of the third generation are depicted in less details than those of the second one. The pivot of the legend are the life and exploits of Ay-Khuuchin and Khan-Mirgen. All their actions and victories, however, are supported by the deeds of the third generation.

The heroic epos "Ay-Khuuchin" depicts poetically the faith to one's land and the good deeds of one's ancestors. At the same time it condemns self-assurance, ambition and lust for power. It does not forgive these predilections even to Ay-Khuuchin herself.

It is not the ideal features that exalt the heroine, but her exploits for establishing justice in the sunny world.

The first academic publication of the epos "Ay-Khuuchin" introduces the wonderful Khakass epos into the world culture.

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