

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE

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HEAVENLY BANNER / KOK ASABA (1989)

Tugolbay Sydykbekov (1912–1997)

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OVERVIEW

Author

Tugolbay Sydykbekov (1912–1997) was a Kyrgyz writer born in Keng-Suu, in present-day Issyk-Kul Region. Because his official birth date was unknown, he later chose May 14 as his birthday through a family tradition involving his daughter selecting a date at random.

He studied at the Agricultural Technical School in Frunze (1928–1931) and later at the Central Asian Veterinary Institute in Ashgabat, the capital of Turkmenistan. He worked at the newspaper *Leninchil Jash* (1931–1936), served as a consultant for the Union of Writers of Kyrgyzstan (1937–1947), and worked as an editor at *Kyrgyz mambas* publishing house (1949–1951).

In the Soviet period, he was labeled a “nationalist writer,” but his earlier Stalin Prize recognition limited political repression against him. He supported objective study of Kyrgyz history, promoted the development of the Kyrgyz language, and openly criticized official shortcomings, leading some scholars to describe him as a Soviet-era Kyrgyz dissident.

Sydykbekov remained a major figure in Kyrgyz literature for nearly seventy years and died in Bishkek on July 19, 1997.

Literary career

He began his literary career as a poet. His first poem, *Who Are These People? (Bular Kimder?)*, was published in the newspaper *Leninchil Jash* on May 1, 1930. Soon afterward, he wrote *The Old Komuz Player (Chal Komuzchu)*, which appeared in the magazine *Chabuul*. His first poetry collection, *Struggle (Kurosh)*, was published in 1933, followed by *Heroes (Baatylar)*, 1936) and *Poet-Nightingale (Akyn-Bulbul)*, 1938). During this period, he also began working actively in prose.

Like many writers of his generation, Sydykbekov's early works reflected social changes in Kyrgyz society, including the new socialist system, labor, and changing social relations.

In 1937–1938, his novel *Keng-Suu (Keng-Suu)* was published in two volumes, becoming one of the first novels in Kyrgyz literature. In the 1950s, he revised it and republished it as *Among the Mountains (Too Arasynda)*, with volumes appearing in 1955 and 1958. During this period, he also wrote *Poet-Nightingale (Akyn-Bulbul)*, 1938), the essay *Ala-Toodon Jetoo* (1939), the poem *News from the Night Watchman (Tun Jarchysynan Kabar)*, 1939), and the verse tale *The Greedy Father (Ach Koz Ata)*, 1940).

His collection of stories *During the War Days (Sogush Kundorundo)*, 1943) reflects wartime unity and patriotism during World War II.

Between 1938 and 1940, he wrote the novel *Temir (Temir)*, published in 1946, depicting the establishment of Soviet power in southern Kyrgyzstan.

His novel *People of Our Time (Bizdin Zamandyn Kishileri)*, 1948) marked a major stage in his career. It was first published in *Sovettik Kyrgyzstan (Ala-Too)* and later in Moscow in Russian. In 1949, it received the Stalin Prize, making him one of the leading Kyrgyz writers.

After the war, he contributed to children's literature with *Mountain Children* (*Too Baldary*, 1953). Later, after *Among the Mountains*, he wrote the major novel *Women* (*Zayıptar*). Its first part, *Batiyna*, was published in 1962, and the complete version, including *Mountain Pass* (*Ashuu*), appeared in 1966.

His later works include *Friends* (*Kurbular*) and *Confession* (*Syr Achuu*, 1977), focusing on youth, and *Yimanbay's Character* (*Yimanbay Peyili*, 1980), which continues a character from *Among the Mountains* (*Too Arasynda*).

In his autobiographical works *The Road* (*Jol*, 1982) and *Over the Mountain Passes* (*Bel-Beleste*, 1996), he reflects on his life and experiences.

Novel

The novel was published as a book only once. After the wave of openness in literature, the novel was printed only once in 1989 by the “*Adabiyat*” publishing house with a circulation of 35,000 copies and quickly spread widely among the people.

Background

The novel is based on historical sources. It is especially valued in Turkic literature for its vivid depiction of the life of the Yenisei Kyrgyz during the 6th–8th century Göktürk period. The story draws on a range of materials, including the Orkhon-Yenisei inscriptions, oral genealogies, legends, and elements from the epic *Manas*.

The author presents an old *sanjyra* (folk genealogical tradition):

It begins with Yafas, followed by Turk, the ancestral ruler. The line continued through Tutuk, then Elchi Khan. Later came Alancha Khan, whose twin sons Tatar and Magul divided the lineage into two branches.

In the Tatar line, seven rulers succeeded each other. In the Magul line, Karakan ruled until his death, after which his son Uuzkan (Oghuz Khan) succeeded him.

Uuzkan (Oghuz Khan) restored unity and moral order and had twenty-four grandsons. The youngest became the ancestor of the Kyrgyz, said to have existed before Alexander the Great.

Kyrgyz rulers then followed in succession: Safarsha → Alkhan → Analhan → Arslan biy → Tymushi biy → Atan biy → Shukur biy → Murat biy → Telkozu → Kalpak biy, and others.

Centuries later, during the time of Aigankan (Genghis Khan), Dolon biy, son of Dombol biy, lived. The Kyrgyz were defeated in war, scattered, and Dolon died wandering; his burial place became Dolon Pass.

MAIN CHARACTERS

Er-Kishi — A brave warrior and wise mentor to Jash-Tegin.

Jash-Tegin / Bash-Tegin — The main hero who grows from a sad boy into a strong leader.

Adyltay Ajo — A wise ruler who wants to keep the Kyrgyz tribes united.

Saykal Ana — A strong woman leader who helps prepare the people for war.

Talmyz — A brave female warrior who rescues captured Kyrgyz men.

Elteres — a Turkic ruler, known in history as Ilterish Qaghan, whose real name was Qutlugh (Kutluk).

Doo-Ake — A very strong warrior known for his power in battle.

Sher — A legendary hero and symbol of courage and tradition.

Aruuke — Sher's noble daughter who represents family and cultural unity.

Er Kulchur — Jash-Tegin's heroic father who dies defending his people.

Bars, Jolbors, Aguul, Bozuul — Young warriors trained by Er-Kishi.
Umai Ene — A wise elder woman who gives blessings and spiritual guidance

SYNOPSIS

This novel follows the journey of the Kyrgyz people through generations of warriors, leaders, and trials. It begins with young Jash-Tegin, son of the fallen hero Er-Kulchur, who tastes sacred soil from his father's grave and is raised by the wise elder Er-Kishi to follow his father's path of courage and duty. Guided by tradition, he learns horsemanship, blacksmithing, and warrior discipline.

Under the leadership of Adyltay Ajo, the forty Kyrgyz tribes struggle to maintain unity. When commanders Erdene and Urdana break tribal law by attacking their own kin, they are punished to restore order. Er-Kishi travels across the steppe teaching young warriors wisdom, peace, and the strength of words over swords, often reconciling enemies through honor and ritual.

Heroic women like Saykal, Talmyz, and Aruuke emerge as fierce defenders, rescuing captives and leading resistance. Battles unfold against the Tabgach (Chinese) and Elteres of the Eastern Turkic Khanate, blending strategy, deception, and sacrifice. Legendary figures like Oghuz Khagan inspire the warriors.

Through endless wars, rituals to Tengri, and the wisdom of elders, the Kyrgyz preserve their unity and identity. Ultimately, Er-Kishi reflects on war's cruelty, finding that true strength lies in compassion, wisdom, and remembrance.

SCENES

The 1st Chapter

Er-Kishi and Jash-Tegin after Er-Kulchur's Death

A Child's Oath at His Father's Grave At his father's grave, a young boy stood silently as the elder Er-Kishi scooped a handful of sacred earth and gently placed it into the child's mouth. He told him that this soil came from the resting place of his heroic father, who had died defending his people. Though saddened, the boy did not cry. He swallowed the soil as a symbol of courage, duty, and connection to his father's spirit. Er-Kishi then placed a small pouch containing the remaining earth around the boy's neck and blessed him. Lifting him onto a horse, he encouraged the child to be brave and follow in his father's footsteps. As they rode away, the boy appeared stronger and more confident, carrying the memory and legacy of his father with him.

Er-Kishi's Hope Er-Kishi looked at the young boy and remembered the warriors who had fought to protect their people. The boy's father had been a brave warrior who led others at a young age and devoted his life to defending his homeland. Er-Kishi hoped that the child would one day grow into a courageous and honorable man like his father. As they rode across the steppe, he encouraged the boy to be fearless and strong. Sitting proudly on his horse, the child gradually gained confidence. Er-Kishi believed that the sacred land and the spirits of the ancestors were watching over them. In his view, every boy should be raised with courage, endurance, loyalty, and a deep sense of responsibility toward his people.

Er-Kishi and the Young Heir Er-Kishi, the son of a blacksmith, had admired strength and bravery since childhood. He believed that a warrior's horse was like a pair of wings and that courage was the greatest virtue. As he rode behind young Jash-Tegin, he watched the boy with pride. After tasting soil from his father's grave, Jash-Tegin felt stronger and more confident, believing he had received his father's spirit and strength. Riding through the villages, he was greeted with respect by the people, who recognized him as the son of a fallen hero. They hoped he would grow into a brave leader and protector of his people.

The Journey of Jash-Tegin through the Village Jash-Tegin rode forward on his horse without looking back. People called out to him and Er-Kishi, praising their courage and wishing them well. Jash-Tegin moved on as if guided by fate. Behind him, Er-Kishi called for blessings from sky and earth. Villagers came out to watch. They said they were busy with cattle in the hills, farming in the fields, and working with iron, while warriors were away at war. Some added they tended crops, herds, and metalwork, yet still

paused to look. Even the barking dogs fell silent. Jash-Tegin continued toward the horizon, fearless, while Er-Kishi followed closely behind.

The Call of the Tribes On both sides of the river, people gathered with excitement. Elders stood at the front, holding spears and waving tribal flags of different colors—blue, white, green, and red. The flags symbolized unity, honor, and victory. The tribe leader raised his spear and shouted, calling his people to mount and prepare for battle. Men, women, and children responded with strong voices, saying they were ready for war. Beyond the wide river lay a large village with neatly arranged white houses. Everything looked calm, but the people were ready for conflict. From every direction, voices rose as the tribes united, preparing to defend their land and seek victory under the open sky.

Er Kulchur's Final Will and Legacy Er Kulchur defended his people against the Chinese army (Tâbgaçs) in battle. After a great clash that lasted five days and five nights, the enemy was forced to retreat, but Er Kulchur was severely wounded. His injury did not heal, and his strength gradually faded. When the new year began, he called his relatives and people to his side. Although weak, his eyes remained determined. He spoke of how he had strengthened his people in his youth and wished to unite many tribes. He asked that a balbal gravestone be placed on his grave so that his words would not be forgotten. "Do not forget to be full in times of hunger, and do not forget hunger in times of fullness; remain united," he said. After completing his will, he closed his eyes. After his death, the people did not forget him. His son Jash-Tegin grew up taking his father's courage, justice, and leadership as his example and continued his path.

The Falcon of Destiny In Er-Kulchur's white yurt, elders gathered in silence as the people waited for a sacred sign. His grandson Jash-Tegin rode closer on horseback while Adyltay Ajo prayed to Kok Tengri for blessing. He hoped a falcon would confirm the boy's destiny as a future leader. When the bird was released, it circled above the yurt and suddenly landed on Jash-Tegin's hand. The crowd rejoiced, believing this was a divine sign of greatness.

But the falcon soon struggled and fell, causing fear and confusion among the people. For a moment, everything turned silent as fate seemed uncertain. Then hope returned as voices confirmed the sign was true. At that instant, Er-Kulchur stepped forward and lifted the boy into his arms, marking him as the future bearer of courage, unity, and leadership for his people.

The Blessing of Jash-Tegin In Er-Kulchur's yurt, elders and women gathered to bless young Jash-Tegin. His mother Saykal and Umai Ene prayed for his strength, courage, and protection from enemies. They poured sacred water around him and wished him a strong horse, a brave spirit, and a bright future. They believed the Sky God (Tengri) and Earth would guide him. Er-Kishi placed a falcon on the boy, symbolizing leadership and destiny. Adyltay Ajo also blessed him, asking for unity and peace for the people. The elders prayed together, wishing the boy good fortune. Four warriors rode out to spread the joyful news across the land.

The Young Horseman's Past Jash-Tegin is raised in the traditions of his ancestors, where strength, courage, and horse-riding are central to life. From early childhood, he is trained to become a true horseman. Elders tell him that a real warrior must endure hardship, sleep on the saddle, and never fear danger. At first, he struggles and often falls while learning to ride. People around him sometimes doubt him, but he continues training with determination. Stories of heroic ancestors inspire him to grow stronger. He learns to control wild horses and face fear without hesitation. Over time, he begins to transform into a brave and skilled young rider, shaped by the demanding past of his people.

The Horseman's Training On a cold night, young Jash-Tegin rode his horse alone during training in the darkness. He was still inexperienced and at first became afraid when strange sounds appeared. He mistook wild boars for danger and ran away, but later learned the truth and felt ashamed. He realized that fear was part of learning.

As time passed, he became stronger and more skilled. The horsemen continued their night games and training exercises, where groups patrolled, guarded the camp, and tested courage. These activities taught discipline, bravery, and teamwork. In this way, Jash-Tegin slowly grew into a confident young warrior.

The Brave Young Rider Once, as autumn approached, the leaves had turned yellow and the grass on the slopes had dried. Before dawn, Jash-Tegin had been riding a newly trained horse, feeling confident and proud. Suddenly, wild animals had appeared from the dark bushes, making loud noises. At first he had been afraid, but he had not shown it. He had continued riding forward. Later he had realized they were wild pigs. During the hunt, he had also faced a wild boar and had struck it with his weapon. The older warriors had watched him and had said he had become strong, brave, and worthy.

The Lesson of Coal and Iron Er-Kishi came to the horsemen dressed in simple clothes. He wore a rough coat, a felt hat, and rode an old horse. He and young Tegin went into the forest and cut wood, making charcoal. Er-Kishi explained that warriors once made their own weapons. He said coal heats iron, iron becomes strong, and weapons are forged by the worker's own hand. Tegin learned that a warrior must be skilled and self-reliant. They worked together, cutting trees and burning coal. Tegin grew tired, but Er-Kishi did not. In the end, Tegin understood that strength comes from hard work and learning.

Er-Kishi's Lesson Er-Kishi comes to the horsemen dressed in simple, worn clothes, riding an old horse. He takes young Tegin into the forest, where they cut trees and produce charcoal. Er-Kishi teaches that warriors of the past forged their own weapons and that true strength comes from self-reliance. He explains that coal heats iron, iron becomes strong, and tools and weapons are shaped by human hands. As they work, Tegin grows tired, but Er-Kishi continues without fatigue, showing endurance and discipline. Er-Kishi also teaches that nature has sacred spirits. Forests, animals, and land are protected by their own guardians, and taking more than needed brings punishment. Humans must respect balance in nature. Through hard labor and guidance, Tegin learns that a warrior must not only fight but also create, understand nature, and control his own strength. In the end, he realizes that real power comes from knowledge, effort, and harmony with the world.

The Forging of Strength A seven-year-old bull was sacrificed and its horns placed on a birch trunk as a ritual for Zengi-Baba, the spirit of cattle. The fire was stoked by strong men using bellows made from ox hides, turning coal into glowing heat. The iron pieces gradually softened and were shaped into weapons like swords and axes. Young Tegin learned to strike the iron and build his strength through labor. Er-Kishi did not tire and guided him through work and wisdom. After days of forging, they rested, feasted, and returned to the village with tools and weapons. The story shows how discipline, labor, and tradition transform both iron and people.

Adyltay Ajo's Judgment and Er-Kishi's Wanderings

Adyltay Ajo (Khagan, Ruler) – The Council of War and the Fracture of Unity News spreads that a raid is coming, and warriors prepare for battle. Disagreement arises over who should give orders. Some insist that only the khan should command, while others follow strong leaders Erdene and Urdana. Arrogant and ambitious, the two generals lead troops without consulting Adyltay Ajo. They attack the Izgil tribe, believing them to be enemies, and cause destruction and suffering. Although they gain wealth and prisoners, they also break the unity of the people. Adyltay Ajo becomes disappointed, seeing that his commanders act selfishly and ignore wisdom. The once-united tribes begin to weaken. The passage shows how pride and disunity can harm even a strong nation.

Adyltay Ajo and the Breakdown of Unity Adyltay Ajo seeks to maintain unity among the tribes after years of conflict and fragmentation. At first, the people begin to recover, rebuild their settlements, and restore a sense of order. However, this fragile stability is disrupted when the commanders Erdene and Urdana act independently, ignoring the authority of Adyltay Ajo. Their decision to attack the Izgil tribe without proper judgment causes unnecessary destruction and suffering. Although they gain wealth and captives, the consequences are severe, as trust between tribes begins to collapse. The passage highlights how personal ambition and unchecked military power can damage collective harmony and weaken political unity.

Justice, Punishment, and Political Order As tension grows, Adyltay Ajo is forced to respond to the actions of his commanders. The council debates responsibility, and it becomes clear that the unity of the

people has been seriously harmed. Erdene and Urdana are brought before Adyltay Ajo and judged for breaking the principles of order and attacking their own kin group. Their defense of military necessity is rejected, as the act is seen as violating sacred unity. Ultimately, punishment is demanded to restore balance and moral authority. The passage emphasizes that justice in leadership is essential, and without accountability, even strong societies can fall into chaos and division.

Adyltay Ajo: Justice, Unity, and the Fall of the Two Generals The Ajo and his council declare that the two commanders are guilty and must be punished. Despite earlier unity, Erdene and Urdana are stripped of their weapons and condemned for breaking tribal order and attacking their own kin. The Ajo emphasizes that unity among the forty tribes is sacred and that internal conflict only strengthens external enemies. Even powerful warriors must obey collective law. The accused accept their fate; their status as “heroes” is removed, and they are humiliated before the people. One is left in despair, the other in exile-like shame. The people conclude that even great heroes can become “living dead” when they destroy unity.

Adyltay Ajo: the Burden of Leadership Adyltay Ajo listens to the young prince Jash-Tegin, who praises the warrior Er-Kishi and dreams of glory in battle. Jash-Tegin believes that courage and strength define true leadership and sees commanders Erdene and Urdana as examples of heroic power. However, Adyltay Ajo warns that uncontrolled bravery leads to disorder and the collapse of unity among the tribes. He emphasizes that wisdom, restraint, and political balance are more important than raw force. The Ajo explains that internal ambition weakens society and makes it vulnerable to external enemies. Reflecting on threats from neighboring powers, he insists that only disciplined leadership and unity can protect the people.

Whispers of the Eternal Wind The elder guided the young one across the steppe, where ancient stones whispered tales of ancestors. “The path bends where shadows embrace the moon,” he murmured, pointing to distant peaks veiled in mist. The youth listened, sensing hidden truths in the wind’s hymn. “Each step carves destiny,” the elder emphasized, “yet tread softly—spirits scent haste.” Ravens circled above, their cries threading secrets into the horizon. Together, they navigated valleys where rivers sang of forgotten kings, the elder’s voice weaving tales as the sun dipped low. Twilight deepened, stars emerging like scattered beads. “Remember,” the elder urged, “the stars are scribes. Their light maps journeys unseen.”

Echoes beneath the Eternal Sky At dawn, fires flickered amid ash-strewn plains, their smoke curling toward amber skies. The elder handed the youth a drum, its hide stretched taut with life’s pulse. “Strike it when lost,” he instructed, “and listen—ancestors speak through its throat.” The rhythm quivered, summoning visions: a horseman cloaked in storm, a wolf’s midnight howl. “Fear not the dark,” the elder vowed, “for shadows cloak more than threats.” They parted ways at a stone arch, the youth clutching a feathered charm. Behind him, the elder vanished into gorse, his parting words lingering: “Seek where earth cracks sky. Tengri’s breath rides the untrodden.” The wind carried echoes of their bond, merging past and promise.

Er-Kishi and Teke: Mercy, Honor, and Survival in the Wilderness Er-Kishi and Teke are hunting in a vast mountainous landscape filled with rivers, reeds, and wild animals when they witness a chaotic chase involving deer and predators. They later discover a wounded hunter, Teke, who has been injured by a wild boar during the struggle, and Er-Kishi stops to help him, showing compassion, guiding him through survival, stitching wounds, and reflecting on the harshness of nature, the cycle of violence, and the importance of honor, forgiveness, and resilience in warrior culture, while Teke recognizes past enmity and seeks mercy and reconciliation before possibly facing death or recovery and understanding gained.

Er-Kishi and Teke: Peace on the Steppe Er-Kishi raised his hand for silence asking everyone to sit. He told Teke he was not enemy but fellow warrior. He came not with hatred but peace. In battle blood is shed and wounds remain yet old conflicts should not destroy people. He respected ancestral law and called for white ram white lamb to be sacrificed. He proposed they drink together become sworn brothers. The community agreed and prepared ritual meal. After eating Teke stood and embraced Er-Kishi. They forgave each other became friends and the group watched them depart in silence as harmony returned to the peaceful steppe land.

Er-Kişi among the Cha and Agush

The Gathering of Warriors Stop, brothers and companions! The gathered men fell silent and sat again as Er-Kishi, respected among them, raised his hand. They were prepared to carry out Er-Kishi's judgment over Teke. Er-Kishi spoke calmly, saying Teke was not his enemy nor the enemy of their people. He recalled the clash where he was wounded and declared that in battle blood is shed yet old grudges should not remain. He proposed reconciliation and brotherhood according to warrior custom. The crowd listened amazed as he insisted that honor requires forgiveness. A sacrificial animal was prepared and shared food and drink strengthened their bond.

The Struggle of Power and Tradition Between Doo-Ake and Er-Kishi This text describes an epic confrontation between Doo-Ake and Er-Kishi. Events unfold around a coal mine, where discussions arise about missing animals and a death. Er-Kishi tries to calm Doo-Ake by claiming a family connection and explaining the situation regarding Tekesh's death. However, Doo-Ake is overwhelmed by rage and grief, appearing to have lost his sense of justice and control. In the end, Er-Kishi's skill and composure help to ease Doo-Ake's anger, and they recognize a kinship between them. The passage reflects themes of ancient nomadic traditions, warrior honor, rituals of death, and social values shaped by a harsh and dramatic world.

Farewell to Tekesh After Tekesh's death, Doo-Ake and the people perform a solemn ritual of mourning. His ashes are placed in a sealed vessel and kept above the forge, symbolizing that his spirit remains among them. Doo-Ake, overwhelmed by grief, first resists accepting that Kuluk-Apa cannot be sent off with her husband, but later leads the community in honoring Tekesh as a heroic warrior and master of the forge. The people mourn deeply, praising his bravery and labor. After collective agreement, they decide to keep his ashes for a year before burial, while life and work continue under Doo-Ake's guidance.

Doo-Ake and Er-Kishi among the Steppe Camels Er-Kishi reflects on Doo-ake's idea of leadership and sacred strength. Doo-ake sees Er-Kishi as a chosen warrior and spiritual authority, guiding rituals for the fallen Tekesh and preserving his memory. The group travels across the vast steppe and encounters a massive herd of camels. Mistaking them for enemies, armed herders surround them with bows ready. Tension rises until Er-Kishi calmly identifies himself and explains their peaceful journey. He describes the land, trade routes, and the importance of camels as protected wealth and survival. The confrontation ends without bloodshed, as both sides reach understanding and the travelers continue onward together safely.

The Capture of Er-Kishi The warriors tied Er-Kishi with ropes, but he remained calm and did not resist, hoping their anger would pass. His companion Bars cried, while others were taken away to the camp. The nomadic caravan was large, moving like an army that protected its herds and people. Life on the steppe was organized around defense, migration, and survival. Suddenly, guards accused Er-Kishi of being an enemy leader and demanded answers. A tall, powerful chief appeared, and Er-Kishi recognized him as a former opponent from battle. Despite the tension, Er-Kishi chose silence and revealed nothing about his identity as he was surrounded.

The Encounter of Er-Kishi and Agush Tarpang dismounted and knelt before Agush, saying he had brought a captive. Agush silently signaled him to stop, and Tarpang obeyed. At that moment, Agush recognized Er-Kishi, a once-famous warrior known from past battles. Er-Kishi also recognized Agush, though he remained bound and powerless.

Agush recalled their earlier clash and the great war between their tribes. Despite Er-Kishi's vulnerable state, he showed restraint. Er-Kishi spoke calmly, and Agush replied without anger. Their exchange brought back memories of past struggles and mutual honor as enemies. In the end, Agush chose mercy and allowed Er-Kishi to live, ending the confrontation peacefully.

Camel Fight and Tarpang's Honor At a festival, people gather to watch a traditional camel fight, a contest that brings honor to the winner and shame to the loser. Agush organizes a dramatic match under the moonlight between two powerful camels, one black and one white. The crowd watches in silence as the

animals clash violently like mythical beasts. Later, Tarpang faces a fierce trained camel in combat. The struggle is intense, and Tarpang is injured, nearly defeated. However, he gathers his strength and delivers a decisive blow, bringing the camel down. His courage restores his honor and earns him respect among the people.

The Journey to Jashyl-Kol Agush and Er Kishi travel with Buylash and a group of young warriors across a vast land of mountains, forests, and the green lake of Jashyl-Kol. The journey is long and difficult, yet Jash-Tegin, Bars, and others endure hunger, fatigue, and hardship without complaint. They hide their suffering to remain worthy of their mission and honor. Er Kishi closely observes the young warriors, testing their character through silence and challenge. When Bars speaks proudly of his ancestors, Er Kishi reminds him that true strength comes from deeds, not lineage. Under Agush's leadership, the group gradually grows in discipline, unity, and mutual respect throughout the journey.

Er-Kishi and the Jash-Tegin Camp In the steppe, Jash-Tegin and others sit freely, digging and working while joking and laughing without worry. Their camp feels calm and carefree. Among them, Er-Kishi, the experienced warrior, quietly eats, chewing hot fat meat with satisfaction after a life of struggle. Suddenly, he senses something unusual. The silence returns. Er-Kishi stretches, turns his neck, and becomes alert as if awakened from rest. His body tightens with awareness. Nearby horses react immediately, snorting and shaking their heads in fear. The riders look around, and tension spreads. Er-Kishi realizes danger is approaching the camp, breaking the calm moment.

The Cha Raiders' Arrival From the reeds, armed riders of the Cha tribe rush in, strange and heavily armed with clubs and curved swords. Their appearance is frightening and warlike. Jash-Tegin and other youths grow angry and ready themselves, while Er-Kishi watches carefully, understanding this is no ordinary meeting. The riders claim they are searching for fugitives and speak of conflict between regions, saying large forces are already fighting. Threats and accusations spread quickly between both sides. Confusion turns into confrontation. Captured men are seized and forced away as prisoners. Fear fills the camp as peace collapses under the pressure of armed arrival and tension.

Encounter at Chagyldyr Camp Er-Kishi and young Jash-Tegin were brought to Chagyldyr's camp, where a large armed host had already gathered in anticipation. The captives were forced to dismount, yet Er-Kishi did not show fear and spoke calmly, reminding the warriors of honor and fate. Elchur, the hundred commander, hesitated, sensing his authority had been challenged. Chagyldyr observed from among the assembled ranks, uncertain whether the arriving figure was truly Er-Kishi or a sign of something greater. The surrounding warriors debated whether to execute the prisoners or follow orders. Tension spread through the camp as respect and fear merged in the confrontation.

Elchur's Encounter with Er-Kishi Elchur, the hundred-man commander of the Chagyldyr tribe, stood guard as Er-Kishi arrived at the camp. He ordered Er-Kishi to dismount and show respect to the leader Chagyldyr. At first, he tried to act firm and follow the rules of the camp. However, when Er-Kishi spoke calmly and refused to submit, Elchur hesitated.

Er-Kishi said that the Chagyldyr tribe was fighting against another Kyrgyz tribe called Az. He explained that such internal fighting was weakening the people. He reminded them that other tribes were also divided and struggling. He declared that all Kyrgyz tribes, including Chagyldyr and Az, should stop fighting each other and unite under Ajo. As tension grew, Elchur lost confidence and began to fear him. In the end, he admitted his mistake, asked for mercy, and bowed before Er-Kishi, accepting his higher authority.

Er-Kishi Stops the Battle and Calls for Unity Er-Kishi saw the Chagyldyr army moving into the valley and forming battle lines against the Az forces. The two sides prepared for a violent clash, raising their banners and shouting war cries. The battlefield became tense as both groups advanced. At that moment, Er-Kishi led his group forward and stopped in the middle of the field. He ordered his warriors not to continue fighting. He sent Jash-Tegin as a messenger to Az leaders to bring dialogue instead of war. Another leader, Bayirkuu, came forward from the Az side. Er-Kishi stepped between the two armies and called for peace and unity.

Er-Kishi Stops the War and Makes Peace Er-Kishi intervened as the Chagyldyr and Bayirkuu forces prepared to fight. Both leaders accused each other of injustice and loss, and anger grew between them. Bayirkuu claimed his people had suffered and been enslaved, while Chagyldyr leader Chagyldyr blamed Bayirkuu for stealing honor and causing conflict. The two men raised their weapons, but Er-Kishi ordered them to stop and dismount. He demanded they hand over their reins and listen. Jash-Tegin supported him and separated the sides. Under pressure, both leaders finally stepped down and agreed to peace. Er-Kishi called for unity and ended the conflict between the two groups.

Sun/Sky Prayers and “Alas” Cleansing After reconciliation, the people gathered by the river to perform sacred rituals. They turned their faces toward the open Sky and the Sun, offering prayers for strength, fertility, and protection. In a solemn rhythm, they called upon nature to bless their land, livestock, and families. The ritual chants of “Alas” echoed through the valley, meant to cleanse misfortune and drive away evil spirits. Elders spoke blessings for the earth to become fertile and for the herds to thrive without disease. The ceremony ended in silence, as if the natural world itself had accepted their prayers, sealing peace between people, nature, and spirit.

Oath of War and Tribal Unity At the edge of the steppe, the alarm of invasion spread like fire. Riders returned with dust-covered faces, shouting that Chinese Tabgach forces had crossed the borders. Er-Kishi rose among the gathered clans, and silence fell. One by one, warriors stepped forward—thousands, hundreds, tens—binding themselves into ranks under his command. They struck their chests and swore: never to flee, never to abandon the saddle, even if the Sky itself judged them. “Let my head split, let the Sky strike me,” they cried. The wind carried their voices as sacred oath and fear turned into unity before the coming war.

Tabgach Envoy and the Politics of Words (Scene) After the death of Er-Kulchur, the valley filled with mourning, yet foreign riders arrived with gifts and silk banners. Sen-Lin-Ha, the Tabgach envoy, stepped forward speaking softly, praising the fallen warrior and offering peace. His words were smooth like water over stone, promising protection and alliance under the Chinese court. The Kyrgyz leaders stood in mourning robes, but Adyltay watched closely, unmoved by ceremony. “These are sweet words hiding sharp iron,” he warned quietly. Around him, elders whispered agreement. They understood: the Tabgach did not only fight with swords, but with speeches meant to divide tribes and weaken unity from within.

Er-Kishi's Teachings and the Legacy of Oghuz Khagan

Er-Kishi's Journey and War Teaching Er-Kishi continued his journey with young warriors while reflecting on the deceitful strategies of the Tabgach. The youths around him looked at him with trust, listening carefully to every word. When they reached a spring, the horses drank and the soldiers washed their hands in the cold water. Er-Kishi reminded them that travel itself is as difficult as war and stressed the importance of discipline. “There is no weakness on the road,” he said. “Enduring thirst is like enduring the enemy.” The young men took his words deeply. He warned them about invisible traps of the Tabgach and urged unity and vigilance as they moved forward through the mountains.

Er-Kishi and the Power of the “Great Word” When the epic of the “Great Word” was heard on the road, the soldiers fell into deep silence. Er-Kishi held the reins of his horse, touched the water, and looked up at the sky. It was believed that the spirits of the ancestors were invisibly watching them. The young warriors felt that every word carried the weight of war itself. Er-Kishi moved forward, setting off without looking at anyone. He knew that true power lay not only in the sword, but also in words and faith. The tricks of the Tabgach were a great hidden danger from within. As the journey continued, the meaning of the “Great Word” grew deeper, and everyone silently felt the approaching war of fate.

Er-Kishi and the Wisdom of Strategy Er-Kishi spoke with calm authority, explaining that true strength is not only in the sword but also in skill and wisdom. In earlier times, warriors wore wooden or iron armor, and even protective garments were used against arrows. Yet Oghuz Khagan, the legendary ancestor, developed better strategies and weapons to protect his people. Er-Kishi reminded the young warriors that confidence alone is not enough; without knowledge and discipline, bravery becomes weakness. He

warned them not to rush blindly after the wounded beast. A single warrior cannot defeat a strong enemy by force alone—skill and timing decide victory in battle.

Er-Kishi and the Legacy of Oghuz Khagan and the Persian King Er-Kishi continued his teaching, reminding the young warriors that great leaders shaped the fate of nations. He spoke of Oghuz Khagan, who united tribes and strengthened his people through wisdom, courage, and strategy. He also referred to a powerful Persian king, whose empire grew through discipline, order, and strong leadership. Er-Kishi explained that true power does not come only from weapons, but from vision, unity, and wise governance. The warriors listened carefully, realizing that both conquest and stability depend on intelligent rule. In this way, past leaders became lessons for the strength and survival of future generations.

Oghuz Khagan's Great Battle against the Tabgach Army Er-Kishi described a legendary battle between Oghuz Khagan and a vast Tabgach army. The enemy relied on skilled archers who darkened the sky with arrows, but Oghuz Khagan used clever tactics. His archers attacked first, then withdrew to draw the enemy forward, allowing cavalry warriors to strike from different directions. A fierce battle followed, lasting for days. Warriors endured thirst, exhaustion, and wounds without retreating. During the struggle, a powerful sandstorm swept across the battlefield, blinding both armies and causing chaos. Many Tabgach soldiers perished in the desert, while Oghuz Khagan's forces survived and secured a great victory.

Diplomacy and Rivalry between Oghuz Khagan and the Tabgach After suffering major defeats, the Tabgach ruler realized that Oghuz Khagan could not be defeated through warfare alone and adopted a different strategy. He sent envoys, offered valuable gifts, and sought to establish friendly and family ties between the two peoples. For a time, these efforts reduced tensions between the sides. However, Oghuz Khagan remained cautious, continuing to strengthen his army, improve weapons, and defend his borders. Years later, internal conflicts weakened the Tabgach state, and some of its commanders joined Oghuz Khagan. At the height of his power, Oghuz Khagan sent a bold letter to the Tabgach ruler, openly asserting his strength and challenging their authority.

Oghuz Khagan's Proposal to the Tabgach Queen At the height of his power, Oghuz Khagan sent a bold and insulting letter to the Tabgach queen. In the message, he compared himself to her, saying that both rulers were growing old and lonely. He jokingly suggested that they should join together and expressed his desire to marry her. The proposal was intended less as a sincere request and more as a display of confidence and superiority. The Tabgach queen was enraged by the letter and considered retaliation. However, her advisers persuaded her to respond through diplomacy rather than war, using gifts, alliances, and careful strategy to deal with the powerful nomadic ruler.

Lay-Fu Becomes Bilgi Hatun The Tabgach ruler sent the noble and beautiful Lay-Fu to Oghuz Khagan with valuable gifts, servants, and a rich dowry. Messengers began to travel between the two states, and instead of war, they started to speak of peace. Lay-Fu, who left the comfort of palace life, understood the importance of her mission. She was seen not only as a bride but also as a bridge between two hostile peoples. After becoming Oghuz Khagan's wife, Lay-Fu gained great respect and was given the name Bilgi Hatun. Known for her wisdom and wise behavior, Bilgi Hatun helped strengthen the relations between the two peoples and became a symbol of peace.

Er-Kishi and the Story of Oghuz Kağan Er-Kishi told his warriors the story of Oghuz Kağan during their journey. Jash Tegin, Bars, Jolbors, Aguul, and Bozuul listened as they moved through difficult lands. He spoke about Oghuz Kağan's strength and his battles, and how he united the people and fought many enemies. The warriors traveled on tired horses but continued to listen carefully. Er-Kishi described how the old ruler was powerful and wise, and how his actions shaped the past. The story continued as they moved forward on their journey, facing hardship and long roads together under Er-Kishi's leadership.

The 2nd Chapter

Adyltay Ajo and the Unity of the Kyrgyz

Adyltay Ajo and the Importance of Unity Adyltay Ajo, as a wise ruler who had lived a long life, speaks about the future of his people. It is believed that the clans carry a sacred power inherited from their ancient ancestors. During times of peace and abundance, the people hold celebrations, organize competitions, and live together in harmony. Adyltay reminds them that in the past there were great wars and disasters. He says that the people must remain united and strong against enemies. He emphasizes that the “fire must not be extinguished,” meaning that the state and order must be preserved. He explains that internal conflicts weaken the people. Leaders and warriors listen to him with respect. In the end, Adyltay once again stresses that the unity of the people must be protected.

The Oath of the Sacred Sword Adyltay raised his hands. Jash-Tegin presented a golden cup to the elder. The baba drank kumis and placed the cup back. Then he asked for a warrior’s weapon. Jash-Tegin brought a silver tray, and Er-Kishi placed his sword upon it. Adyltay held the sword and spoke solemnly, saying its blade must not harm the innocent but strike only in justice. The sword gleamed in the light, and all were silent. Leaders stood, named their tribes, and swore oaths. Each called upon the Sky, Earth, and Sacred Fire as witnesses. The air filled with sacred words of unity, strength, and loyalty.

The Ritual Around the Sacred Fire At the solemn feast, juniper branches were placed before each person and fire was lit. The oily, leafy green juniper burned, sending flames stretching up to the sky. Shamans circled the fire like butterflies. Some wore fox skins on their heads and carried snake-wrapped staffs. Some wore eagle skins and moved while biting mysterious short sticks, as if performing an ancient ritual. Others appeared to ride bulls, swaying forward in a crouched motion. Their clothing did not look ordinary; they seemed like mythical, magical beings from a legend, dressed in animal fur. They trembled and moved around the fire in a trance-like state. The “fur” on their bodies did not burn in the flames.

The Sacred Fire Oath of Adyltay Adyltay spoke to the gathered people about unity and trust. He reminded them that past wars and betrayals had weakened their tribes when they fought among themselves. Many had once suffered loss and slavery because of internal conflict. Now, the wise leaders united the forty tribes and called them to peace. Adyltay warned that trusting enemies blindly had brought disaster before, but strength came from awareness and unity. He said life is balance between light and darkness, and people must learn from both. Then all gathered around the sacred fire, swearing oaths of loyalty, justice, and protection of the innocent before the Sky, Earth, and Fire.

The Ancient Word In the sacred gathering, Adyltay’s words shaped the order of the people. Elders sat in honor, while women and servants worked quietly by the fire. The “Great Word” was respected as law, and no one dared to interrupt it. Children once played joyfully, dividing colored stones into symbolic tribes, but now they sat still, learning discipline. Adyltay reminded the people that unity came from ancient traditions of fire and sky worship, passed down by wise ancestors. He warned that forgetting these values would lead to division and suffering. The leader hoped future generations would preserve harmony and strength together always.

The Kyrgyz Tribes The Kyrgyz people were not only shaped by skill or knowledge but by strong leadership under khans, nobles, and elders. Their military system was well organized with commanders of ten, fifty, hundred, thousand, and ten thousand. Through many battles, their forces became experienced and powerful. It was said, “The Kyrgyz sword is sharp and made of iron,” which made neighboring powers cautious. The khan did not reveal secrets to enemies, and unity among tribes strengthened their defense. However, internal rivalry often threatened this unity. Despite conflicts, the Kyrgyz saw themselves as one people, sharing blood, culture, and destiny in peace and war.

The Hunt in the Deep Winter Wilderness The year changed, and a heavy winter came early with deep snow covering the land. Animals struggled to survive; horses and cattle dug through snow for grass, while camels endured the cold with difficulty. Herds moved in search of food, leaving trails in the frozen steppe. Hunters and herders also suffered as resources became scarce. One day, news came that enemies were

approaching. The leader Er-Kishi sent warriors to defend the borders. Among them, Jash-Tegin led the troops. In a fierce battle, he fought a tiger and showed great courage, using both skill and intelligence. His bravery made him a respected commander.

Başh-Teğın and the Winter Army of Provision and Power When Jash-Tegin returned to the army after his heroic deeds, killing a tiger, a white mare was sacrificed and food was distributed to the people along the river. The crowd blessed him, saying the path of the hero is open and his leadership is supported by the people. From that moment, Jash-Tegin became known as Başh-Teğın. During the harsh winter, his ten-thousand-strong army guarded the borders while also preserving livestock. Animals were slaughtered and preserved as food supplies for soldiers. Meat was dried, frozen, and stored so it could last through the year. This careful preparation ensured the army remained strong and well-fed despite the severe winter.

Saykal, Talmyz, and the Defenders of the People

Suspicion and the Harsh Mountain Pass Elteres's army advances through a harsh winter mountain pass, where doubts arise about their guide Kergen's intentions. Tensions grow amid internal distrust and fear of betrayal from the Uch-Suu people. The extreme cold, deep snow, and difficult terrain exhaust the soldiers, making the journey even more dangerous. Elteres suspects that Kergen may be leading them into an ambush and confronts him angrily. Kergen insists that the route is difficult but correct, swearing that he has no treacherous intent. The conflict escalates, yet Kergen explains the strategic importance of the pass against the enemy forces. Despite suspicion, Elteres decides to continue the march, leaving the truth to be revealed in time.

The Night Ambush and Battle at the Pass In the dark of night, Elteres's army launched a sudden and fierce attack on Başh-Teğın's sleeping camp after crossing the snow-covered mountain pass. Exhausted and unprepared soldiers were caught in their sleep as chaos erupted. Weapons clashed, and the battlefield filled with cries, sparks, and falling bodies. Most of Başh-Teğın's forces were forced to fight on foot after losing their horses, but they resisted fiercely. Despite heavy losses on both sides, Elteres's forces inflicted greater damage. The battle turned into a brutal struggle of survival in freezing conditions, where exhaustion and cold were as deadly as swords and axes. The fighting continued through the night and into the next day.

Duel of Leaders and the Turning Tide Amid the chaos, Başh-Teğın confronted the enemy leader Jölbörs in direct combat. Both skilled warriors clashed fiercely on horseback, exchanging blows with spear and axe. Jölbörs initially gained the upper hand, but Başh-Teğın's resilience and tactical skill began to shift the fight. Wounded and exhausted, Jölbörs was eventually surrounded and weakened. Seeing their leader falter, his troops lost morale. Başh-Teğın's forces pressed forward, pushing the enemy back toward disorder. The battle's momentum shifted as Elteres's army struggled to maintain control. The confrontation marked a decisive turning point, showing both the cost of war and the rise of Başh-Teğın's dominance on the battlefield.

The Power of the Eternal Sky and a Forced Truce As the battle raged, it seemed that the great power of the Eternal Blue Sky itself weakened both armies equally. The harsh winter, deep snow, and freezing winds exhausted warriors and horses alike, reminding humanity of its smallness before nature's forces. Dark clouds gathered overhead, and the fighting gradually came to a halt. Neither side could claim a decisive victory. Had the enemy been a distant foreign power, the losses might have been easier to accept, but this conflict was fueled by rivalry and hostility between neighboring peoples. Even Elteres Khagan of the Eastern Turkic Khaganate, though a formidable leader, was driven by ambition and domination. The warriors were left battered, grieving, and aware that pride and vengeance had brought devastation to both sides.

Elteres' Failed Campaign against the Kyrgyz Encouraged by Kergen's warnings that Bash-Tegin planned to attack Uch-Suu, Elteres Khagan of the Eastern Turkic Khanate abandoned his plans against the Tang and marched on the Kyrgyz. Despite omens of heavy snow and the advice of the wise Salim to turn back, Elteres continued the campaign. Kergen promised a secret route and easy victory, but the in-

vasion met fierce resistance. Bash-Tegin and his warriors fought relentlessly, and when the veteran leader Adyltay arrived, the balance shifted. Elteres was forced to retreat after suffering losses and wounds. Blaming Kergen for the disaster, he ordered his execution, and the defeated army withdrew through the snow in exhaustion.

Adyltay's Final Testament After Elteres's devastating attack, the Kyrgyz people mourned their losses. The aged leader Adyltay gathered his family, warriors, and elders in the royal hall, where a mourning banner symbolized the nation's grief. Refusing to surrender to despair, he delivered a final testament based on ancestral law. He urged unity, courage, loyalty, and resistance against cowardice, theft, betrayal, and division. Adyltay reminded his people that the Kyrgyz had survived many hardships and would rise again. The leaders swore sacred oaths upon the ancestral sword to uphold these principles. As Adyltay entrusted the future to them, the hall fell silent with sorrow and determination.

Saykal Ana's Ordo and War Preparation Saykal Ana's ordo is filled with skilled women in these days. They work day and night preparing clothing for war, sewing armor and garments. Order and discipline dominate the ordo; everyone prepares for the coming battle. Men hunt, animals are slaughtered, and supplies are gathered. The whole community becomes one unity, with everyone from elders to youth taking responsibility. Under Saykal Ana's leadership, the ordo turns into a strong center of production and preparation. The emphasis is on unity, courage, and duty before war. Every effort is collected for the future struggle. The people enter a sacred process of preparation, obeying the leader's words. The ordo becomes the heart of both training and war organization, where solidarity and determination grow stronger than fear.

Armor and Resolve before Battle Saykal's ordo is filled with artisans preparing for war. Women work day and night sewing armor and battle garments, while others prepare food and supplies. The entire community shares responsibility, from elders to the young. A woman worries about her husband's protection and asks whether thick armor is suitable. Saykal explains that properly crafted armor, layered with iron and silk, protects without becoming too heavy. She recalls older traditions of wooden armor and early weapons.

The Counsel of Umai and the Preparation of the Ordo Umai Mother's arrival was announced by the sound of bells. Saykal welcomed her with respect as Umai entered the ordo guarded by warriors. She inspected the work of the artisans and reminded them of their duties. She emphasized discipline, preparation, and unity for the coming battle. Umai spoke of armor strength, food supplies, and the importance of readiness. She guided Saykal and the women with wisdom learned from her past. Her words carried authority, and everyone listened carefully. The ordo remained busy, yet more focused under her guidance. Tradition, knowledge, and leadership shaped the preparations for war and survival.

Origins of the Kyrgyz Identity Umai Mother explains why the people are called Kyrgyz. According to ancient scholars and storytellers, the name comes from survivors of a great war who formed a small remaining tribe called Kyrgyz. Mythic accounts also link them to the wolf ancestor and wider Turkic origins. Umai emphasizes that truth is preserved through oral history and "*bitik*" — sacred written records on silk that pass knowledge to future generations. She instructs Saykal to record wisdom carefully, as words written in *bitik* become eternal memory. Identity, she says, is rooted in ancestral Turkic heritage and preserved through both speech and writing.

Turning Point in the Battle of Şer Despite his young age, Sher displays extraordinary courage on the battlefield and suddenly launches an attack when the enemies least expect it. Surprisingly, instead of a regular warhorse, he advances on a horned ox. This unusual sight creates both shock and hesitation among the opposing side. In the most intense moment of the conflict, he uses his sword with determination and moves forward shouting "Zengi!" His sudden move disrupts the enemy formation and changes the balance of the battle. This action becomes a key turning point that determines the outcome of the war. Sher's behavior later becomes an event widely told among the people, and the course of the battle is remembered as having changed because of his intervention.

Sher and the Sacred Order of the Kyrgyz In a Kyrgyz epic village people perform rituals with juniper smoke and prayers to Tengri. Seeking blessings, they gather, sacrifice, and honor ancestral spirits through fire and communal prayer. The shaman leads ceremonies, and a mysterious naked boy named Sher emerges as a destined hero. He grows into a fearless warrior who unites tribes, fights enemies, and protects his people. Through battles and hardship, Sher becomes a symbol of unity, sacred tradition, and strength. His lineage and the Three Words oath reinforce respect for elders, spiritual law, and communal order. Aruuke and Saykal preserve his legacy within an enduring sacred cultural tradition of the Kyrgyz people forever.

Aruuke, Daughter of Sher Aruuke is the noble daughter of Sher, the legendary Kyrgyz warrior, and Gul-kaiyr. Raised within a world shaped by ancestral law, honor, and the “Three Words” tradition, she embodies purity, discipline, and cultural continuity. As she grows, Aruuke becomes connected to the powerful Bash-Tegin lineage through marriage, linking Sher’s heroic bloodline with the ruling elite. Within Saykal’s ordo, she is respected as an intelligent and composed young woman who upholds tribal values. Aruuke represents the peaceful legacy of Sher’s warrior world, transforming conquest and struggle into unity, family alliance, and the preservation of Kyrgyz cultural identity.

The Forty Maiden Archers Forty maiden archers and forty young male archers competed to prove their skill. First they hunted wolves, and then swans, striking their targets with remarkable accuracy. In both contests, the women surpassed the men, earning honor and fame throughout the land. Humiliated by defeat, the young men remained near Green Lake. Soon, however, they were captured by a Persian king who sought to weaken the Kyrgyz people. When news reached their homeland, the maiden archers felt responsible for their rivals’ fate. Refusing to remain passive, they disguised themselves as warriors, swore an oath of loyalty, and set out on a dangerous journey to rescue the captured men and defend their people.

Talmyz’s Dream and the Captivity of the Forty Warriors After a long journey across deserts and mountains, Talmyz and the women warriors arrived at a beautiful valley filled with clear water, fish, and forests. While resting there, Talmyz had a dream in which the spirit of one of her ancestors appeared and warned her to leave the valley immediately. The spirit explained that remaining there would prevent them from fulfilling their mission. Upon waking, Talmyz quickly gathered her companions and led them away. Meanwhile, the forty Kyrgyz warriors captured by the Persian ruler suffered in deep prisons. Once free hunters and defenders of their homeland, they now endured humiliation and captivity. The Persian king hoped their imprisonment would force the Kyrgyz people into submission, but the Kyrgyz remained determined to protect their freedom, honor, and ancestral traditions. This marked the beginning of a great struggle.

Talmyz’s Defiance before the Shah Talmyz boldly confronted the Shah and demanded justice for the imprisoned hunters of her homeland. Refusing to bow or show fear, she challenged the authority of the empire and exposed the injustice committed against her people. Through courage, intelligence, and careful planning, she and her companions had already captured the prince and his nobles without bloodshed. Standing before the royal court, Talmyz declared that her people desired freedom, not conquest, and demanded the release of the captives. Her fearless words astonished the Shah and his advisors, demonstrating that determination and honor could be stronger than military power.

Talmyz’s Courage and the Rescue of the Captives Talmyz bravely entered the shah’s palace to demand justice for her people and the release of the imprisoned Kyrgyz hunters. Refusing to bow in fear, she confronted the ruler and revealed proof that his son, the prince, and several noblemen had been captured. Talmyz offered a fair exchange: the captives on both sides would be freed unharmed. Her intelligence, determination, and loyalty forced the shah to accept her terms. As a result, the imprisoned hunters returned safely to their homeland. The people celebrated their return, honoring Talmyz and the women warriors for their courage, sacrifice, and leadership.

Edil Ajo’s Memorial Feast and Adyltay’s Accession After the death of Edil Ajo, his descendant Adyltay was ceremonially raised on a white felt carpet and proclaimed the new Ajo (ruler). While the people welcomed him enthusiastically, some tribal leaders were already considering ways to limit his authority.

ty. A grand memorial feast was organized in honor of the late ruler, requiring months of preparation. Thousands of yurts were erected, guests arrived from distant lands, and respected warriors were appointed to maintain order and security. During the gathering, tribal chiefs and allied leaders swore solemn oaths to uphold peace and respect the sacred traditions of the feast. Through this ceremony, Edil Ajo's legacy was honored, and Adyltay's leadership was publicly recognized and legitimized before the assembled peoples.

Saykal: The Legendary Female Archer On the fourth day of the grand memorial feast, a traditional archery competition was held. Among all the competitors, the young warrior Saykal captured everyone's attention. Raised by her father as a warrior from childhood, she rode horses, guarded her people, joined military campaigns, and became a master archer. During the contest, she skillfully guided her black pacing horse and struck the target with remarkable precision, earning the admiration of the entire gathering. The crowd praised her courage, beauty, and exceptional talent. Saykal became a symbol of female strength, proving that women could equal men in bravery and skill. Among those who watched her was Ajo Adyltay, the ruler of the Kyrgyz people. Deeply impressed by her abilities, he secretly admired Saykal, though the customs of the time and his own position prevented him from openly pursuing his feelings.

The Great Wrestling Contest at Edil Ajo's Memorial Feast As the major competitions of the memorial feast continued, wrestling became one of the most anticipated events. Thousands of spectators gathered around a natural arena, sitting quietly to maintain order and respect. The wrestlers entered according to ancient tradition, paying homage to the earth and the sun before facing their opponents. Wrestling was not only a test of strength but also of skill, patience, and strategy. Experienced wrestlers carefully studied each other's movements, sometimes outsmarting their rivals before making a decisive throw. Victories brought tears of joy to supporters, while defeat left others disappointed and ashamed. The contest reflected the Kyrgyz values of honor, discipline, and athletic excellence, making it one of the most memorable spectacles of the grand feast.

Akboz's Victory in the Great Horse Race Three hundred eighty prized horses entered the great race, with awards prepared for the first thirty finishers. No riders were allowed to drive the horses from behind; each horse's fate depended solely on its own strength and endurance. The race covered a long distance, testing both the horses and their trainers. As the crowd anxiously waited, expert horsemen predicted which steeds were best prepared. By evening, the racers appeared on the horizon, raising clouds of dust. In a dramatic finish, Adyltay Ajo's famous horse Akboz crossed first, bringing immense pride to its owner and people. Adyltay was moved to tears, seeing the victory not as a personal triumph but as a symbol of his nation's honor and strength. Several exhausted horses died during the race, reminding everyone of the harsh demands of such competitions and the responsibility of their trainers.

Saykal's Leadership in the Resistance of the Toolos People After the death of Ajo Ata, conflicts erupted among neighboring tribes. Sazan Khan of the Kypchaks and Jamgyrchy Khan of the Eshtek people attacked the Toolos people while they were mourning the loss of a great warrior. Their livestock was seized, many young men and women were taken captive, and the community suffered greatly. Deeply angered by this betrayal, Karachur, the ruler of the Toolos, sought to restore his people's strength. At this critical moment, his daughter Saykal stepped forward. Dressed as a warrior, she proposed forming a force of women to rescue the captives and defend their homeland. Her courage, determination, and leadership inspired the Toolos people and transformed her into a symbol of resistance and national honor.

Adyltay Ajo's Council and Support for Toolos News spread throughout the land that the Toolos people, led by the brave woman Saykal, were preparing to avenge the attack on their homeland. When this report reached Adyltay Ajo, he welcomed it and summoned his nobles, warriors, and commanders to a grand council. During the meeting, Adyltay reminded them of their sacred duty to protect justice and support their kin. The council agreed that the suffering Toolos should not stand alone. Adyltay therefore sent a force under Chogultur's command to aid Karachur. His decision demonstrated wise leadership, loyalty to allies, and a commitment to unity among the Kyrgyz tribes.

Adyltay Ajo's Reinforcements and Kulchur's Hope When Karachur saw the disciplined army approaching from afar, he realized that it was the force sent by Adyltay Ajo. The reinforcements were led by

Chogultur and Adyltay's son, Kulchur. The two sides met in friendship, demonstrating solidarity and mutual support. Karachur explained that he was waiting for a response from his enemies before taking action, following the traditional code of honorable warfare. Meanwhile, the young warrior Kulchur found himself thinking about Saykal. He admired her courage, skill, and determination as a warrior. Adyltay hoped that Kulchur and Saykal would form a bond through their own choices rather than through an arranged marriage, valuing mutual respect and freedom.

Chogultur's Guidance and Kulchur's Awakening As the warriors prepared for battle, Chogultur carefully observed the young Kulchur, recognizing both his courage and his inexperience. He believed that a true hero must be tested and shaped through hardship, just as a young tree bends before it grows strong. During a night encampment, Kulchur slept on bare stone to strengthen his endurance. His thoughts turned to Saykal, the brave warrior maiden he admired, and he dreamed of proving himself worthy of her. Chogultur sensed his feelings and reminded him that people often ride into battle inspired by their stars. Through Chogultur's wisdom, discipline, and leadership, Kulchur began his journey toward becoming a respected warrior and defender of his people.

Saykal's Courage and Orok's Repentance After riding far ahead on a scouting mission, Saykal and her companions encountered villagers from the land of Jamgyrchy Khan. Expecting enemies, Saykal prepared for battle, determined to defend her people's honor. Instead, the villagers approached peacefully and revealed that they had turned against their cruel khan. Their leader, Orok, confessed his past mistakes and explained that he had killed Jamgyrchy after realizing the injustice he had supported. Seeking judgment rather than mercy, Orok offered himself to Karachur. Impressed by his honesty and courage, Karachur declared that Orok's fate should be decided fairly, recognizing his repentance and renewed loyalty to justice.

Saykal Ana and the Strength of the People Saykal Ana entered the palace deep in thought, sensing that danger might be approaching her people. The women of the palace welcomed her, sharing stories of bravery from the past. They spoke of Talmyz and other heroic women whose courage became legend. Saykal listened carefully but reminded them that these were not just stories, but real events meant to guide future generations. She emphasized that every young warrior would soon face battle, and they must be prepared in strength and unity. The palace grew quiet as her words settled deeply, reminding everyone that peace and war both come from fate.

The Blacksmith's Forge and the Spirit of Unity In a winter village, an old blacksmith worked tirelessly, shaping steel into swords while humming as if music guided his hands. His forge became a symbol of strength and unity, where iron was tested, cooled, and reforged. Villagers quietly prepared for a larger struggle, believing that discipline, cooperation, and inner strength would protect them from danger. Warriors learned that pure strength alone was not enough—wisdom and strategy were equally important. Through hardship and preparation, the community grew stronger, bound together by a shared purpose and the belief that survival depended on unity, skill, and courage in the face of looming threats.

The Warrior's Farewell and the March to Battle As the time for battle arrived, warriors prepared to leave their homes and families. Parents blessed their sons, reminding them to be brave, honorable, and loyal to their people. Mothers prayed for protection, fathers offered swords and wisdom, and wives wished for their safe return. No tears were shed, for crying was believed to bring misfortune to a departing warrior. The army assembled in disciplined ranks, carrying banners and ancient traditions. United by duty, courage, and the desire to defend their homeland, thousands of warriors rode forward together, determined to restore honor and defeat their enemies.

The 3rd chapter

The Rise of Elteres and the March to War

Elteres and Uch-Suu Elteres was the leader who united the Uch-Suu tribes into one strong people. Before him, the tribes were divided and weak against their enemies. Elteres brought them together under a single banner and built discipline, courage, and unity among the warriors. Under his leadership, Uch-Suu became powerful and ready for war. Elteres believed that the only way to protect the people was through unity. With this idea, he strengthened the army and led them against their enemies. His rule marked the transformation of many tribes into one nation with a shared destiny.

The Sending of Envoys to Elteres Bagır sent seven envoys from the Kyrgyz people to Elteres during a tense period among the tribes of the Uch-Suu region. The unity of the people had been shattered by Kergen's betrayal, which had led to distrust and bloodshed. Elteres received the envoys harshly and questioned their intentions, while Bagır insisted on fulfilling his diplomatic duty despite the hostile atmosphere. The envoys delivered their leader's message under the threat of war. Elteres declared that he recognized no external authority and emphasized his own power. The meeting became a critical confrontation marked by political tension and a struggle for dominance between the two sides.

Elteres' Decision Bagır walked toward Elteres' tent, followed closely by his companions. A black-bearded commander blocked his path and ordered him to stop. Elteres sat calmly in front of the tent, though he remained alert and observant. Bagır approached, knelt, and announced that an envoy of Kyrgyz blood had arrived. Elteres responded with mockery and hostility, belittling the envoy from the outset. Bagır explained that seven envoys had come seeking justice. Enraged, Elteres ordered their execution. Bagır reminded him that killing envoys violated traditional law and custom. Nevertheless, Elteres refused to reconsider his decision. Driven by pride and hostility, he commanded that the envoys be killed and preparations for war begin immediately.

Dawn on the Bokon Plain A heavy silence settled over the Bokon Plain as two armies stood facing one another. Banners trembled in the wind like wounded birds, while the earth itself seemed to groan beneath the weight of approaching destiny. From a distant ridge, Wei Hu watched Koon's cavalry spread across the plain like a dark tide. No voices could be heard; only the restless snorting of horses broke the stillness. Then the first assault began, and the plain absorbed the deafening sounds of war. Arrows pierced the sky like burning threads, and flashes of steel shattered in the light of dawn. The ground shook beneath the collision of human wills as everything changed under the shadow of imminent destruction.

Silence Before the Clash As the sun leaned toward the west, the vast steppe sank into silence. The two opposing armies waited motionless upon their horses, as if carved from stone. The wind brushed through the grass, yet not even dust rose from the earth. Time itself seemed to stand still. Anger and conviction intertwined in the warriors' eyes. Each man regarded his opponent not merely as an enemy but as a test of fate. The distant sound of drums was the only sign that life still moved. The commanders exchanged sharp glances while speaking few but weighty words. Tension grew like an approaching storm ready to burst. The silence became sharper than swords. It seemed that a single command would alter the course of the world. Even the horses' breath hung suspended in the cold air as both sides waited for the first move that would determine their destiny.

Courage and Victory On the battlefield, Kara Sorun emerged as one of Elteres' most feared warriors. Clad in black armor and renowned for his strength, he inspired terror among his enemies. Before the great battle commenced, the Kyrgyz army agreed to settle the matter through single combat and selected champions such as Doo-Ake and the young Jolbors. Unexpectedly, Jolbors stepped forward despite his fear. The duel began with the clash of swords and axes and the violent collision of horses. Although Kara Sorun initially appeared superior, Jolbors fought with determination, tears in his eyes, and unwavering courage. As the struggle continued, he gained confidence and delivered a powerful blow to Kara Sorun's head. His unexpected triumph altered the balance of the conflict and astonished everyone who witnessed it.

Elteres and the Battle of Ak Dalgasi The conflict between Elteres' forces and the opposing army became increasingly brutal and chaotic. Relying on a military strategy based on successive waves of attack, Elteres expected a swift victory. However, the resistance proved far stronger than anticipated. Elite warriors were sent into battle repeatedly, yet the battlefield filled only with exhaustion, wounded soldiers, and the dead. As the struggle dragged on, Elteres' certainty gave way to anger and frustration. He came to realize that numerical superiority alone could not guarantee success. The opposing side continued to resist fiercely, and the balance of power shifted unpredictably, exposing the limitations of Elteres' original strategy.

Hidden Forces and the Trickster Warrior of Ak Dalgasi Elteres questioned the existence of concealed thousand units, while Salim insisted that three additional forces were waiting behind the hills for the right moment to enter the battle. Although Elteres could not see them, the possibility of being outnumbered filled him with concern. Meanwhile, the battlefield remained in constant flux. The warriors of Ak Dalgasi sometimes advanced and sometimes retreated under immense pressure. At that moment, a mysterious horseman named Shap appeared and bewildered enemy soldiers through cunning tactics that lured them away from the main engagement. His unpredictable actions unsettled both sides. As evening approached, fatigue spread throughout the armies, and the intensity of the fighting gradually diminished.

The Hidden Ambush and the Rise of Ak Dalgasi The army of Ak Dalgasi launched a powerful offensive that drove the Kyrgyz forces back toward the blue banner. Despite their resistance, El Kishi's troops struggled and began to retreat. Er-Kishi, however, remained composed. He waited patiently to signal the counterattack he had carefully planned, trusting in the strategic advantage offered by the Bokon Valley. Three hidden thousand units, led by Bash-Tegin, Bars, and Buylash, stood ready as they awaited the sound of the drums. Once the signal was given, they attacked simultaneously. At the very moment Elteres believed victory was within his grasp, an unexpected army emerged as if from beneath the earth, dramatically transforming the course of the battle once again.

The Duel Between Elteres and Doo-Ake Elteres was consumed by anger when the army of Ak Dalgasi broke through the battlefield and forced his troops backward. Although his forces retreated, he remained convinced that he would conquer all Kyrgyz lands and beyond. Determined to reverse the tide, he ordered a fierce counteroffensive. The battlefield descended into chaos as hidden units appeared and the balance of power shifted repeatedly. Refusing to acknowledge defeat, Elteres challenged Er-Kishi to single combat. Although his advisers warned against such a decision, pride compelled him to proceed. During the conflict, he confronted the mighty warrior Doo-Ake, and the two engaged in a dramatic struggle. Their duel became a powerful symbol of strength, pride, and fate.

Elteres's Battle and the Aftermath of Defeat Elteres realized it was too late when his strength on the battlefield began to fade. He faced the giant Doo-Ake, whose unexpected resistance put Elteres in a difficult position. The battle grew fiercer, swords were broken, horses were exhausted, and both sides suffered heavy losses. For the first time, Elteres felt the taste of defeat, yet he refused to retreat. The sky darkened, the battlefield filled with bodies, and nature itself seemed to fall silent in response to the destruction. Birds descended on the fallen, and the earth was covered in blood. Days later, the field remained devastated. This great clash became a harsh lesson and a turning point for Elteres's army, marking a deep and painful defeat.

Burial after the Battle The Son of Man began cleaning the battlefield where the battle had taken place the day before, clearing it of corpses. Burying the dead was difficult, exhausting and emotionally heavy work as warriors searched for their own fallen comrades. They dug countless graves, struggling with stones, soil and the weight of loss after the devastating battle. The dead were honored, and each soldier was buried with respect and prayers for peace. Even the survivors reflected on life, death and the cruelty of war while working silently. War leaves sorrow and demands remembrance of every fallen life. The work continues silently.

Grave Digging after Battle As they worked through the night, the men forgot rest. Chisels struck stone, sparks flashed, and soil kept sliding. Digging graves proved endless and exhausting work. Even soft soil

hid countless buried stones beneath the sunbaked plain. These stones marked ancient warriors who had fallen in earlier battles, now forming large mounds across the land.

An old soldier and a young one spoke while digging. The elder said war always brings heavy loss, and each person carries their own fate. The young man questioned who bears responsibility for so many deaths. The elder replied that in war, each soul bears its own burden. Rain then began to fall, but they continued working in silence.

The Burial of Tarpang Tarpang's body was found resting on the back of a black camel, still tied as he had arranged before battle. He believed that a warrior should never fall and remain idle; even in death he should "ride" into war. The soldiers were deeply moved when they saw his body returned in this sacred way. They buried him with his weapons, armor, and bow. His trusted camel, once his companion in battle, cried loudly and refused to leave. The old soldier finally struck it down, and it was buried beside him. A stone was placed over the grave, remembering Tarpang's sacrifice, bravery, and final journey in war.

The Endless Battle Field War raged without pause, the ground shaking under endless hoof beats and cries. Elteres watched as his soldiers clashed with the enemy from dawn to night, neither side gaining victory. Smoke covered ruined villages, and silence fell only over empty lands. Leaders shouted orders, but pride and rage kept the battle alive. Suddenly, a trick unfolded—Shap's strange deception confused the warriors, making them attack shadows and fear illusions. Horses reared, arrows flew, and chaos spread again. Elteres tightened his grip, refusing to retreat, knowing this war would not end easily or soon on this broken land of sorrow.

The Battle of Felt Soldiers Elteres's army watched the enemy from a valley while a cunning leader named Shap sent forward his felt soldiers. From a distance, these figures looked real, raising dust across the steppe as they charged. The enemy could not tell whether they were men or animals and was struck with fear. The archers, confused and terrified, began to retreat. Using this strategy, Elteres and his commanders trapped the enemy in a narrow pass. The real cavalry remained hidden while the fake felt army created confusion. The battle quickly turned into chaos, and the enemy was forced to withdraw. Victory went to Elteres.

The Illusion of the Puppet Warriors Er-Kishi leads a cunning assault using puppet soldiers to intimidate enemy ranks. Despite volleys of arrows, the strange troops appear invincible, causing panic among archers and cavalry. Shap, the mysterious commander, spreads fear through illusions of spirits and animal totems, making the enemy believe supernatural forces fight alongside him. The enemy and his forces become confused and demoralized, unable to resist the psychological warfare. Later, Adyltay Ajo reflects on unity, warning tribes that internal division weakens them. He urges solidarity under Elteres, emphasizing that only a united people can withstand powerful external enemies together.

The Wounded Hero and the Healer's Wisdom Er-Kishi, a legendary warrior, is wounded in battle by a mysterious arrow that causes a serious and persistent injury. Despite severe pain and weakening, he refuses to give up, driven by pride, duty, and belief in his destiny. His companions bring him to a skilled healer known for ancient herbal knowledge and spiritual healing traditions passed down through generations. The healer carefully examines the wound, cleans it, and applies medicinal plants to reduce swelling and infection. Over time, Er-Kishi slowly recovers, though not completely restored. The experience teaches him that even the strongest hero depends on healing, patience, and wisdom.

Er-Kishi after the Battle

Er-Kishi's Inner Reflection Er-Kishi is a warrior who has spent his life in battles as harsh as snow and ice. He has fought in countless wars, facing thousands of enemies and experiencing both victory and loss. He is known as strong, fearless, and often merciless. Yet, as he grows older, he begins to question his past. He wonders whether all his victories were truly just and whether innocent people suffered because of his actions. He remembers the destruction left behind by war—tears, ruins, and orphaned children. In this deep reflection, he struggles to understand whether his deeds were fate or mistake. In the end, he turns to God, silently evaluating the meaning and morality of his life's path.

Er-Kishi's Conscience and the Puppy Er-Kishi reflects on his past wars and begins to question the destruction and suffering he has caused. After witnessing the devastation of a village, he sees that nothing living remains except a small puppy. The puppy is hungry, frightened, and alone, becoming a symbol of the cruelty left behind by humans. Er-Kishi calls it, gives it food, and realizes its helplessness. In that moment, he understands how destructive his own power has been. The innocence of the puppy deeply moves him, and he feels sorrow for the harm done to life and nature. He begins to see that true value lies not in strength or violence, but in compassion, and he reconsiders the meaning of his entire life.

Er-Kishi's Reflection on War and Compassion Er-Kishi, a war leader, reflects on violence and the cost of conquest after a devastating campaign. He recalls a helpless puppy during the massacre, symbolizing innocence amid brutality. This memory awakens compassion and regret. He honors wisdom of elders like Umai and Saykal, who embody care and continuity. Funeral rituals of leaders emphasize duty and legacy. He rejects greed and urges restraint in war. The narrative closes with reflection on leadership, cycles of conflict, and hope for wiser future generations. Ultimately, Er-Kishi recognizes that true strength lies in mercy, balance, and remembering the suffering of ordinary living beings forever remembered.

The Weight of Leadership and Fate He said: "Do not let the wild ones be scattered, O leader. While we are here, tribes remain united; fools do not drift apart. They followed us in their youth and stayed close. Yet in a world that turns like a sharp blade, humans are never the same; they change and shift. Even the strongest heroes do not cross the sacred boundary. I believe in this truth."

Er-Kishi ordered the camel to be led away, its sorrowful eyes reflecting grief. He thought about war, alliances, and death, accepting that fate cannot be avoided. He praised courage, mourned fallen heroes, and urged unity among his people as they faced uncertain battles ahead with resolve and quiet strength.

The Age of Wars and Weary Warriors Months pulled the reins of years, and years pulled the reins of centuries. Centuries flowed on their path, continuing their journey. Wars, clashes, bloody battlefields, and heartbreaking struggles never ended. In these endless battles, humankind felt torn apart within itself. People said if this struggle were real, nations would gain land. In villages, alarms rose: enemy is coming, mount horses, take weapons. The people stood in anger, and weary warriors set out. Hunger, poverty, and loss grew inside them as they marched. Villages emptied, herds diminished, and roads stretched endlessly behind them. Weary soldiers moved forward with faint hope remaining.

The Voices of the Stone Tombs The weary soldiers wept silently reading ancient inscriptions carved on towering red stones that recorded past lives and heroes. One stone spoke of Adyltay son of Edil, a just ruler who served his people, and warned leaders not to trust Tabgach silk and words. He told them to protect the nation; disobeyers were lost to history. The soldiers hungry and exhausted knelt before the tombs and asked forgiveness feeling the echo of past battles shake earth. The stone graves of heroes like Er Kishi and witty Shap seemed alive laughing through their carvings giving strength to broken warriors continued onward.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Er-Kishi

In the novel, Er-Kishi stands as the moral and martial heart of the Yenisei Kyrgyz people. Initially known as a hardened, legendary warrior whose life was defined by the clash of swords, he gradually transitions into a wandering sage and the primary mentor to the young protagonist, Jash-Tegin. Er-Kishi undergoes the most profound psychological evolution in the narrative. Moving beyond the fleeting glory of combat, he transforms into a philosopher who guides the next generation. His journey is not just across the physical steppe, but an internal quest to understand the true cost of war and the value of peace.

Devoted Er-Kishi's greatest contribution is not his battlefield victories but the warriors and leaders he shapes. From the moment he places sacred soil into young Jash-Tegin's mouth at his father's grave, he assumes the role of spiritual father. He designs every challenge — night rides, forest labor, hunger, silence — to test character rather than skill. He does not simply train soldiers; he builds honorable men. His teaching method combines physical hardship with moral lessons, ensuring that the next generation car-

ries not just swords but also conscience. Through Jash- Tegin, Jolbors, Bars, and others, Er-Kishi's wisdom outlives him, becoming the living legacy of Kyrgyz values.

Compassionate Er-Kishi's deepest transformation comes through compassion. After a lifetime of conquest and destruction, he encounters a helpless puppy — hungry, frightened, and utterly alone in a devastated village. This small creature becomes a mirror reflecting the cruelty he has caused. For the first time, Er-Kishi sees war not through the eyes of a victor but through the eyes of the innocent. He feeds the puppy, and in that simple act, his entire worldview shifts. He begins questioning whether his victories were truly just and whether countless lives were destroyed needlessly.

Wise Er-Kishi consistently demonstrates that true power lies in words, not weapons. While he is a formidable fighter, he chooses diplomacy and ritual over violence whenever possible. He reconciles bitter enemies like Teke through shared meals and sacred oaths rather than bloodshed. He teaches young warriors that a leader must think before striking. When Bars boasts proudly about his ancestry, Er-Kishi reminds him that real strength comes from personal deeds, not inherited glory. His lessons on blacksmithing reinforce this belief — just as iron must be heated, hammered, and shaped patiently, a warrior must be forged through discipline, labor, and knowledge rather than brute force alone.

Strategic Even as he embraces peace, Er-Kishi remains highly strategic, possessing an unmatched tactical mind. However, he repurposes his intellect to prevent unnecessary bloodshed. He uses his sharp strategic insight to act as a peacemaker, bravely stepping between rival tribes to resolve conflicts through diplomacy and shared ancestral honor. When battle becomes absolutely unavoidable, Er-Kishi relies on psychological warfare rather than sheer numbers. By using cunning deceptions, such as deploying terrifying puppet soldiers to confuse the enemy, he outsmarts arrogant foes like Elteres. His strategic brilliance proves that preventing a war requires far more intelligence and courage than starting one.

Jash-Tegin/ Bash-Tegin

In the novel, Jash-Tegin represents the enduring spirit and future of the Yenisei Kyrgyz people. Introduced as a silent, grieving child standing by the grave of his heroic father, Er-Kulchur, he swallows sacred earth to internalize his father's legacy. Under the wise guidance of his mentor, Er-Kishi, Jash-Tegin undergoes a profound coming-of-age journey. He transforms from a vulnerable boy into Baş-Tegin, a supreme military commander capable of leading thousands. His character arc symbolizes the survival of a nation, demonstrating how ancestral tragedy can be forged into strength, discipline, and visionary leadership during a brutal historical era.

Resilient Jash-Tegin is remarkably resilient, proving his strength through relentless physical and mental hardships. From early childhood, his training under Er-Kishi is brutally demanding. He is forced to ride untrained horses through dark, terrifying forests, endure freezing winter campaigns, and perform exhausting manual labor, such as forging iron weapons from raw coal. Initially struggling with fear and inexperience, he refuses to give up. Instead of complaining, he hides his fatigue and learns to conquer his inner doubts. This exceptional resilience allows him to adapt to the unforgiving steppe, transforming every failure and hardship into a stepping stone toward ultimate mastery.

Courageous As he matures, Jash-Tegin becomes exceptionally courageous, facing terrifying threats without hesitation. His bravery is not born of arrogance, but of a deep commitment to protect his people. This fearlessness is famously demonstrated during a brutal winter campaign when he encounters and single-handedly kills a fierce tiger, an act that earns him the exalted title of Baş-Tegin, or Head Commander. On the battlefield, he leads by example, bravely engaging in a fierce, direct duel against the formidable enemy commander Jolbors. Jash-Tegin consistently places himself at the forefront of danger, proving that true courage requires both physical bravery and tactical composure.

Dutiful Jash-Tegin is profoundly dutiful, bound by a sacred sense of responsibility to his ancestors and his nation. From the moment he tastes the soil from his father's grave, his life is no longer his own; it belongs to the Kyrgyz people. He deeply respects traditional laws and the wisdom of elders like Adyltay

Ajo and Er-Kishi. Unlike ambitious, self-serving generals who fight for personal glory or wealth, Jash-Tegin fights solely to preserve the unity and freedom of his tribes. His unwavering loyalty and sense of duty ensure that he never abuses his immense military power, making him the ideal, honorable leader.

Adyltay Ajo

Adyltay Ajo is the supreme sovereign of the forty Kyrgyz tribes. During the Göktürk period, the Yenisei Kyrgyz uniquely called their paramount ruler the "Ajo," a royal title equivalent to a Khagan or King. Adyltay embodies the immense burden of this absolute leadership. Unlike the impulsive, glory-seeking warriors of the steppe, he acts as a stabilizing, philosophical pillar for his people. He is driven not by the desire for conquest, but by the desperate need to preserve his nation's survival against ambitious foreign empires and internal fractures, representing the pinnacle of nomadic statesmanship.

Just Adyltay is profoundly just, strictly enforcing ancestral laws even when it is politically difficult. He understands that a society without discipline will inevitably collapse. When two of his most powerful military commanders, Erdene and Urdana, arrogantly act on their own and attack an allied tribe for plunder, Adyltay does not overlook their crimes. Despite their heroic status, he publicly brings them to trial, strips them of their ranks, and punishes them for breaking tribal order. His unwavering commitment to justice proves that no individual's military prowess or personal ambition is above the sacred laws and survival of the Kyrgyz state.

Unifying As the supreme ruler, Adyltay's most defining trait is his deeply unifying nature. He constantly battles the historical fragmentation that threatens nomadic societies. Through sacred rituals around the eternal fire and solemn oaths sworn on ancestral swords, he binds the forty divided Kyrgyz tribes into a single, cohesive nation. He repeatedly warns his commanders that internal rivalry and unchecked ambition are far more dangerous than any external enemy. By prioritizing collective harmony over individual pride, Adyltay transforms a vulnerable collection of scattered clans into a formidable political and military force capable of standing against massive neighboring empires like the Göktürks.

Perceptive Finally, Adyltay is exceptionally perceptive, possessing a sharp political mind that easily sees through deception. While his younger warriors are often impressed by the physical might of their enemies or the rich gifts of foreign diplomats, Adyltay remains highly skeptical. When the Tabgach (Chinese) empire sends envoys bearing smooth words and luxurious silk banners, he instantly recognizes the hidden danger. He warns his council that these sweet diplomatic words are merely "sharp iron" meant to divide and weaken the Kyrgyz from within. His astute geopolitical awareness ensures that his people are not seduced by the cunning strategies of rival empires.

THEMES

Politics:

The Shadow of the Khanate

The novel transports readers to the rugged, windswept basin of the Yenisei River between the 6th and 8th centuries. This was the era of the Göktürk Khanate, a time when massive nomadic empires dominated the Eurasian steppe. Yet, nestled within this harsh and unforgiving terrain were the Yenisei Kyrgyz, a proud civilization fiercely determined to hold onto its identity. Grounded deeply in historical fact, the narrative breathes life into ancient echoes, drawing from the weathered Orkhon-Yenisei stone inscriptions, Chinese chronicles, and generations of oral legends to resurrect a people who refused to be erased by larger powers.

Though living in the geopolitical shadow of the mighty Göktürk Empire, the Kyrgyz fought tooth and nail to maintain their sovereign governance and cultural autonomy. The heart of the novel beats around this existential struggle. The central conflict pits the independent spirit of the Kyrgyz against the relentless, imperial expansion of the Eastern Göktürk ruler, Elteris Khagan, who believes it is his destiny to force all tribes under a single banner.

Illustrative Moment: Driven by unchecked ambition and pride, Elteres Khagan marches his vast army through a deadly, freezing mountain pass in the dead of winter, convinced that sheer numbers and imperial might will crush the Kyrgyz resistance.

However, the Kyrgyz do not meet him with brute force alone. Guided by their wise leader Adyltay Ajo and the brilliant tactician Er-Kishi, the Kyrgyz use their intimate knowledge of the harsh land to their advantage. Instead of a straightforward clash, Er-Kishi deploys psychological warfare—setting up terrifying "felt puppet" soldiers that emerge from the blizzard to confuse and panic the Göktürk cavalry.

Religion:

Tengrism and the Spiritual World: The Cosmology of the Steppe

In the novel, the survival of the Yenisei Kyrgyz is not solely dictated by the sharpness of their iron; it is deeply anchored in their profound cosmological beliefs. The spiritual world of the Kyrgyz forms one of the novel's richest layers, painting a portrait of a people who live in absolute reverence for the unseen forces of the universe. At the heart of their cosmology is Tengrism, a belief system where the Eternal Blue Sky (Tengri) and the sacred Earth-Water (Yer-Su) spirits govern the delicate balance of life.

This deep spirituality permeates both their daily existence and their statecraft. The novel vividly describes "Alas" purification ceremonies, where the fragrant smoke of burning juniper cleanses the people of misfortune and dark energies. Around blazing sacred fires, shamans draped in eagle and fox skins spin in hypnotic trances, acting as mystic bridges between the mortal realm and the ancestors. Anchoring this spiritual compass is Umai Ene, the revered matriarch and guide, who ensures that the blessings of Tengri constantly protect the tribes.

Furthermore, the Kyrgyz do not view nature as a resource to be exploited, but as a living entity to be respected. The veteran warrior Er-Kishi teaches his young disciples that every forest, river, and animal is watched over by guardian spirits; taking more from nature than is strictly necessary invites divine punishment. Even political unity is sealed through the cosmos: when leaders swear oaths of loyalty, they pledge upon a sacred ancestral sword, calling upon the Sky, Earth, and Fire as eternal witnesses. Ultimately, this intricate belief system reveals that the Yenisei Kyrgyz were not mere warlords, but a profoundly spiritual civilization whose existence was tied to the harmony of the universe.

Illustrative Moment:

The profound connection between the divine and mortal realms is beautifully illustrated when the elders gather to determine the future of young Jash-Tegin. Praying to the Eternal Blue Sky for a sign, a tribal leader releases a sacred falcon into the air. The crowd watches in breathless silence as the majestic bird circles above the white yurts. Suddenly, guided by an unseen spiritual force, the falcon descends and gently lands on the young boy's arm. For the Kyrgyz, this is no mere coincidence; it is an undeniable, divine omen from Tengri, sealing Jash-Tegin's destiny as the chosen leader of his people.

Economy:

Blacksmithing, Production, and Self-Reliance: The Iron Identity of the Kyrgyz

Historically, the Yenisei Kyrgyz were renowned across the Eurasian steppe as master blacksmiths, and this defining characteristic is woven deeply throughout *Kok Asaba*. In the novel, iron is far more than a material for crafting weapons. It is a powerful symbol of independence, strength, and the Kyrgyz refusal to depend on anyone else for survival. The ability to forge one's own sword meant the ability to defend one's own land, and this connection between production and sovereignty runs through the heart of the narrative.

Er-Kishi, himself the son of a blacksmith, embodies this philosophy completely. He does not merely teach young Jash-Tegin how to fight; he takes the boy deep into the forest, where together they cut trees, burn charcoal, and learn the ancient art of transforming raw earth into glowing metal. Er-Kishi explains that warriors of the past forged their own weapons with their own hands, and that true strength is born not from inherited glory but from labor, skill, and self-reliance. His teaching carries a profound message: a warrior who cannot create is only half a warrior.

This theme also serves as a sharp political commentary. Throughout the novel, the Tabgach Chinese attempt to seduce the Kyrgyz with gifts of silk, silver, and fine words. Adyltay Ajo warns his people

that accepting such gifts creates dangerous dependency. "These are sweet words hiding sharp iron," he cautions, recognizing that economic reliance on a foreign power is simply another form of conquest. The Kyrgyz answer to this threat is their forge — the ability to produce their own iron, shape their own tools, and arm their own warriors without bowing to any empire.

Ultimately, blacksmithing in *Kok Asaba* becomes a metaphor for national character itself. Just as raw iron must be heated, hammered, and cooled repeatedly before it becomes a strong blade, the Kyrgyz people must endure hardship, discipline, and sacrifice before they become a resilient nation. The forge is not just a workshop; it is the birthplace of Kyrgyz identity.

Illustrative Moment: Deep in the forest, Er-Kishi hands young Jash-Tegin a heavy axe and tells him to cut wood for the charcoal fire. The boy struggles, his arms trembling under the weight, blisters forming on his soft palms. Er-Kishi watches without helping, his own hands steady and tireless despite his age. Hours pass. The boy grows exhausted, but Er-Kishi does not stop. When Jash-Tegin finally collapses beside the glowing coals, Er-Kishi speaks quietly: "Coal heats iron. Iron becomes strong. But only the hand that labors can shape it." In that moment, the boy understands that strength is not a gift but something earned through sweat and persistence.

History: Cultural Memory and the Legacy of the Ancestors:

In the novel, cultural memory is portrayed as one of the fundamental pillars of Yenisei Kyrgyz survival. The novel repeatedly emphasizes that a people cannot endure through military strength and territorial defense alone — they must also preserve their ancestors' wisdom, laws, and spiritual values. For this reason, Orkhon-Yenisei inscriptions, *balbals* (stone grave markers), *bitiks* (writing system), and the oral tradition play a central role throughout the story.

For the Kyrgyz, history is not simply a record of the past; it is a living force. The spirits of the ancestors are believed to continue guiding the living through Tengri's will. Forgetting the past, therefore, means breaking the sacred chain that connects generations. This is why preserving cultural memory is considered both a spiritual duty and an act of survival.

Stone inscriptions (*balbals*) serve as permanent voices of the dead. Heroes' deeds and final testaments are carved into stone so that their words may continue to speak long after their bodies have returned to the earth. Equally important are the *bitiks* — sacred written records, often inscribed on silk or special materials. Umai Ana stresses that while oral tradition is vital, some knowledge must be written down in *bitiks* to ensure it survives unchanged across centuries. These written documents function as the eternal memory of the nation.

The oral tradition, known as "Uluu Söz" (The Great Word), is treated with equal reverence. When Adyltay Ajo speaks, his words carry the weight of law, and the entire gathering listens in absolute silence.

Ultimately, the novel presents cultural memory not as passive nostalgia, but as an active, sacred responsibility — the act of keeping the soul of the nation alive through time.

Illustrative Moment: One of the novel's most powerful and symbolic scenes takes place at the grave of the fallen hero Er Kulchur. Following ancient custom, Er-Kishi scoops up a handful of sacred soil from the grave and places it into the mouth of young Jash-Tegin. The boy swallows it without shedding a tear. This ritual is deeply meaningful: by consuming the earth of his father's resting place, Jash-Tegin symbolically absorbs his father's spirit, courage, and the collective memory of his people. Er-Kishi then places the remaining soil in a small leather pouch and hangs it around the boy's neck. From that day on, Jash-Tegin literally carries both his father's legacy and his nation's cultural memory with him wherever he rides.

The Unity of the Forty Tribes: Preserving Internal Cohesion

In the harsh reality of the Eurasian steppe, the survival of the Yenisei Kyrgyz did not depend on having the largest army or the most devastating weapons. Instead, it rested on a much more fragile and difficult foundation: internal unity. The novel *Kok Asaba* portrays the Kyrgyz not as a single, monolithic entity, but as a complex confederation of forty distinct and fiercely independent tribes. Because each clan is led by proud chieftains, internal rivalry, greed, and fractured loyalties are presented as far greater

threats than any foreign invasion. The novel beautifully underscores that the true test of a nation is not just how fiercely it fights its enemies, but how well it holds itself together from within.

At the center of this relentless struggle is the supreme ruler, Adyltay Ajo. He deeply understands that maintaining this cohesion requires profound statecraft, the strict enforcement of ancestral law, and shared spiritual devotion. He knows that if the forty tribes fight as forty separate pieces, they will be easily swallowed by neighboring empires like the Göktürks or the Chinese Tabgach.

Illustrative Moment: This delicate balance is perfectly illustrated when two of the nation's most powerful and celebrated military commanders, Erdene and Urdana, allow their personal ambition to overshadow tribal loyalty. Driven by arrogance, they launch an unauthorized raid against a neighboring kin tribe, plundering wealth and breaking the sacred bonds of the Kyrgyz confederation.

Rather than turning a blind eye to the transgressions of these famous war heroes, Adyltay Ajo takes decisive, uncompromising action. He summons a grand council and publicly strips the two legendary generals of their weapons, ranks, and honor. He declares before the leaders of the forty tribes that no individual's military prowess can ever be placed above the unity of the people.

Following this severe but just punishment, Adyltay gathers the remaining chieftains around a blazing sacred fire. Placing an ancestral sword on a silver tray, he leads them in a solemn oath to the *Eternal Blue Sky (Tengri)* and the Earth, binding their blood and fate together. Through this profound scene, the novel demonstrates that true unity is not forged by words alone, but by absolute justice, accountability, and a shared reverence for the laws of the

Gender:

The Strong Place of Women in Society

In the novel, Yenisei Kyrgyz society is not portrayed as a rigidly patriarchal world where women are confined to the margins of life. On the contrary, the novel presents women as essential participants in social, political, and military life. In this world, women are not merely those who are protected; they are also protectors, organizers, producers, and, when necessary, warriors. Through these depictions, the novel makes clear that among the Kyrgyz, the defense of the homeland and the maintenance of the state depend not on gender, but on courage, skill, intelligence, and merit.

One of the strongest embodiments of this theme is Saykal Ana. She is not only a wise maternal figure but also a capable organizer and leader. Before war, she oversees the preparation of armor, clothing, and provisions for the army, placing women at the very center of production and survival. Under her leadership, the *ordo* becomes more than a domestic space; it turns into the heart of military preparation. This shows that women's labor is not secondary but central to the endurance of the community.

Talmyz, meanwhile, represents the courage and strategic intelligence of Kyrgyz women. In her mission to rescue captured Kyrgyz warriors, she relies not only on bravery but also on planning and diplomacy. Her fearless entrance into the shah's court and her demand for justice reveal her political maturity and moral strength. Talmyz proves that women in the novel are not simply victims of war; they are agents capable of altering its outcome.

The motif of the forty maiden archers is equally significant. These young women surpass men in archery contests, demonstrating that heroism and martial skill are not male qualities alone. Their presence highlights a society that values talent above gender.

Ultimately, the novel depicts a Kyrgyz world sustained by the shared responsibility of women and men alike. Women are shown not only as bearers of life, but also as builders of collective resistance and guardians of the nation's future.

Illustrative Moment: One of the most striking scenes in the novel takes place in Saykal Ana's *ordo*, where women work day and night preparing for war. Some sew armor, others make clothing, while others organize food supplies. The entire camp moves with discipline and purpose, for the coming battle concerns the whole people, not just the men. When one woman anxiously asks whether the armor will be too heavy for her husband, Saykal responds calmly and knowledgeably, explaining which layers protect best and which materials provide strength without burden. In that moment, she appears not merely as a caring mother, but as a confident, respected, and highly capable leader.

Ethics:

Patriotism

Patriotism in the novel is rooted in action rather than proclamation. In the novel, patriotism is inseparable from the homeland, and that homeland is the Yenisei basin—the ancient cradle of the Kyrgyz people. The name itself carries deep meaning. “Yenisei” is often connected to the Kyrgyz expression “Ene-say”: *ene* meaning mother, and *say* meaning river. Thus, the homeland is imagined as a Mother River, life-giving and protective. This linguistic connection strengthens the emotional and spiritual bond between people and land.

Through Er-Kishi’s guidance, devotion to the country is shown as responsibility. Leadership requires standing where danger begins. Protection is not glory-seeking; it is steady commitment to the safety of families, herds, and tradition. The welfare of the people depends on vigilance.

The memory of Er-Kulchur deepens this idea. He enters battle at a young age, answering the call not for reputation, but because invasion endangers survival. His courage is tied to duty. Even loss in combat carries meaning when it safeguards others. In this way, sacrifice becomes part of national continuity.

Adyltay broadens the theme further. His loyalty is expressed through fairness and integrity. He understands that survival depends not only on armed defense but also on unity and moral strength. To divide the people or betray ancestral values would be as destructive as an external enemy.

Across generations, commitment to the homeland is passed from elder to youth. Experience, memory, and instruction ensure that identity endures. Patriotism in the novel therefore emerges as disciplined care for land, community, and heritage—a quiet but enduring force that binds past, present, and future.

Illustrative moment: Er-Kishi leaves Jas Tegin alone on night watch by the river.

The night is deep, and the wind lightly moves the grass along the Yenisei riverbank. In the distance, the campfire is fading. Er-Kishi silently signals Jas Tegin and places him at the edge of the water. His task is simple: to listen and to wait.

At first, Jas Tegin thinks it is an ordinary guard duty. But as time passes, the sound of the river, the movement of the forest, and distant indistinct noises begin to take on a different meaning. When Er-Kishi returns, he asks only one question: “Did you hear this water?”

This question is not merely a test of attention. The river represents continuity, the life-giving essence of Yenisei (Ene-Say, Mother River). Here, Er-Kishi teaches that protecting the homeland is not only about defending against enemies, but about sensing, hearing, and maintaining a constant moral and emotional connection with it.

Heroism

In the novel, ancient Kyrgyz heroes are described not through distant legend, but through living examples such as Jash Tegin’s father, Er-Kulchur, and his mentor, Er-Kishi. Through them, the author shows what makes a hero—and how even heroes fall.

Er-Kulchur, Jash Tegin’s father, is remembered as a warrior who rode into battle at fourteen. He did not wait for comfort or safety. When enemies approached, he mounted his horse without hesitation. The author describes such men as shaped by the saddle and the bow from childhood. Their courage is not sudden; it is trained. They hunt wild beasts, endure winter marches, and learn to sleep lightly. When Er-Kulchur fought, he did not shout empty boasts. He rode straight, struck precisely, and stood firm even when wounded. If he had to fall, he fell facing the enemy. His death is not described as weakness, but as fulfillment of a warrior’s duty. A hero may die, but he does not bend.

Er-Kishi represents the hero who survives long enough to carry memory and responsibility. He has seen battles, lost companions, and endured hardship. Unlike the young, he does not rush blindly. He tests Jash Tegin constantly—through night rides, hunting trials, and silent observation. When Tegin misses the snow leopard, Er-Kishi does not scold him; instead, he teaches him that strength without awareness is useless. In this way, the author shows that ancient Kyrgyz heroes fight with both body and mind.

Through Er-Kulchur and Er-Kishi, heroism is shown as continuity. One generation fights; the next learns. Heroes may fall in combat, but their courage survives in those they train. The true strength of the ancient Kyrgyz hero lies not only in battle, but in loyalty to land, people, and honor.

Illustrative moment: One of the most vivid scenes that expresses the theme of heroism is the moment when Er-Kulchur takes young Jash Tegin on his first real hunting and tracking experience. In this episode, Er-Kulchur teaches not only how to reach a target but also the cost of reaching it.

At dawn, when the mist has not yet lifted, they enter the forest. Jash Tegin is excited; his eyes are restless, his attention scattered. Er-Kulchur remains silent. He does not offer long explanations or unnecessary words. He only gestures and moves forward.

At one point, the animal they have been tracking appears. Jash Tegin hastily raises his bow, but his shot misses. The animal escapes. Silence deepens. As Jash Tegin tries to explain his mistake, Er-Kulchur stops him. He teaches not through words, but through silence and gaze.