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K. David Harrison
Swarthmore College, dharris2@swarthmore.edu

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A Tuvan Hero Tale,
with Commentary, Morphemic Analysis, and Translation

K. DAVID HARRISON
SWARTHMORE COLLEGE

INTRODUCTION

Tuvan is a Turkic language spoken by both nomadic and sedentary populations in South Siberia, Western Mongolia, and the People's Republic of China. The Tuvan epic tale represents a living but endangered oral genre of considerable antiquity. In the example tale presented here, the heroine, a girl named Bora-Šeelei, must conceal her sex, assume her dead brother's identity, and embark on a difficult quest with the ultimate goal of restoring her brother (Boktu-Kiriš) to life. She sets out, armed only with her own wits, her magical powers, a bow and arrows, and clever talking horse. In the course of the tale, she overcomes challenges and works feats of deception, prowess, and magic needed to bring about the happy ending. The text presented here is a phonemic transcription, with annotation and translation, of a short version of the tale told in 1998 by a prominent Tuvan storyteller, Mr. Šojdak-oool Xapilakovič Xovalig (born 1929). The tale and accompanying analysis afford insights into Tuvan grammatical structures, performativity, oral genres, and the culture of Inner Asian nomads. It is prefaced with a commentary describing the cultural context of epic tales, the social context of this endangered genre, and structural (linguistic) aspects of the tale itself. A video recording to accompany this article may be downloaded at http://tuvan.swarthmore.edu. The video shows the tale told in its natural setting at a nomadic camp, to a Tuvan audience, with domestic animals and ambient sounds.1

TUVA MATERI AL AND SPIRITUAL CULTURE

Tuvans are linguistically a Turkic people (Castrén 1857, Katanov 1903, Menges 1955), residing in what is considered to be the ancient Siberian homeland of the Turks, the Altai mountain region extending across South Siberia and Western Mongolia. According to a 1989 census (cited in Mongus 1996), there are over 198,000 Tuvans in the titular republic, and a few thousand more outside its borders, including some just to the north in the Krasnoyarsk district, several thousand in Western Mongolia, and a few hundred in Xinjiang, China.

Though Tuvans have been traditionally transhumant pastoralists and hunters, most are now sedentary, residing in villages and towns. It is difficult to get an accurate estimate of the

None of this work would have been possible without the talent and generosity of the storyteller, Mr. Šojdak-oool Xovalig, to whom I am deeply grateful. This tale was recorded in August 1998 in the course of fieldwork funded by IREX. Subsequent field expeditions in 2000–2004 were funded by a grant from VolkswagenStiftung. Initial transcription was done by Mr. Muslim Doržu and Mr. Alexander Ondar; the latter also assisted with translation. The author thanks Stephanie Jamison for her editorial oversight, two anonymous JAOS reviewers for their instructive and detailed comments, Tuva experts Dr. Gregory D. S. Anderson, Dr. Theodore Levin, and Stefan Kamola for assessing drafts, and Robbie Hart and Luke Smith for editing final copy. Students in my “Structure of Tuvan” seminar at Swarthmore College in the spring of 2005 contributed many helpful comments. Any mistakes rest with the author.

1. Recorded in August 1998 near Argyg-U兹ii village in central Tuva, on Hi8 digital videotape and DAT audio tape, assisted by Mr. Afanasiý Myldyk. The materials shown here and in the video file should be regarded as the intellectual and cultural property of the storyteller and the Tuvan people.
numbers of Tuvans who still live as nomads, but knowledgeable estimates put that number at approximately one-quarter of the current Tuvan population, perhaps under 70,000 people. Nomadic Tuvans migrate with their animals four to five times a year to long-established seasonal campsites. A typical nomadic camp (aal) will have from two to five yurts housing from two to eight people, usually all members of an extended kin group. Yurt camps vary in composition and membership depending on the season, location, resources, and other factors. The basic dwelling is the yurt (öğ), made of a collapsible wooden lattice frame covered with a thick layer of handmade felt. Tuvan nomads herd (subject to local conditions) domesticated yaks, cows (or yak-cow hybrids), camels, horses, sheep, and goats. Hunting of birds, marmots, bears, wild pig, wild deer, squirrels, and mountain goats supplements their diet and provides fur. Traditional technologies central to nomadic life include the processing of milk products, production of leather and felt, blacksmithing, making of wooden household implements, sewing, hunting, and animal domestication (Vainshtein 1980). The nomads’ material culture and transhumant, pastoralist life figure prominently in this and all Tuvan stories.

Spiritual culture also figures prominently in Tuvan oral tradition. Tuvans are animists who believe in the presence of local or “earth” spirits (čer čeezi) residing in significant topographical features (e.g., springs, mountain passes, caves) and animals (especially the bear). The Tuvan cosmology also includes a large number of supernatural beings (demons, devils) inhabiting the lower world and a similar number in the upper world or “nine heavens” (tos deer). Inspirational practitioners known as xam (“shamans”) were and remain a traditional accompaniment (though not an essential element) to the practice of animism. Tuvans are also, since the seventeenth century, Lamaist Buddhists, and they have long practiced Buddhism and animism in parallel and to a significant degree in syncretism (Mongus 1994). It is the pre-Buddhist Tuvan animist cosmology that appears in epic tales. In fact, such tales, along with shamans’ songs (Kenin-Lopsan 1994) and other sacred texts, provide the primary source for knowledge about this belief system.

**THE TUVAN EPIC TALE**

Storytelling was once a profession in Tuva, as well as an avocation practiced by both men and women living as nomadic herders. An itinerant storyteller (tooldžu) might visit a nomadic encampment for an extended period, telling a single epic story in installments over a succession of evenings. A story would typically begin at evening teatime, after the day’s major outdoor chores had been completed and the animals were in the stockade. With the opening words šijaa am, formulaic speech roughly translatable as “once upon a time,” a story would begin. Listeners might from time to time call out šijaan, intended to urge on the teller in his or her performance. Many older Tuvans, when interviewed, could recall storytelling sessions from their childhood that would extend late into the night and continue for several evenings. A tale could be accompanied by playing the igil, a bowed horse-head fiddle made of wood, or bizaanči, a bowed two-stringed instrument with a skin-covered resonator, but instrumental accompaniment was not essential.

The tale presented here, *Boktu-Kiriš Bora-Şeelei*, is a hero tale (Grebnev 1960), the continuation of an ancient oral tradition. The Turkic epic tale has survived as a living, spoken genre in a number of Turkic daughter languages (Chadwick and Zhirmunsky 1969, Reichl 1992, Shoolbraid 1997). The most celebrated of these is the Kyrgyz epic *Manas*, said to comprise over half a million lines. A number of motifs common to folktales the world over appear in *Boktu-Kiriš*. These include the arming of the warrior; wrestling; disguised identity,
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cross-dressing, and gender play; a talking horse that gives advice; magical objects (e.g., a ring); magical powers (e.g., divination, shape-changing ability); successions of three (e.g., competitions, beasts, circumambulations); the use of a cave as a hiding place; animals symbolizing specific traits (e.g., hare = swiftness), and use of symbolic numbers (e.g., three, four, nine). Other motifs more specific to the Tuvan context include references to animal organs (e.g., fat, liver, intestines); the “taiga” (mountain forest); Tuvan-style wrestling; images of meat piled high to denote abundance; a metaphor of the future as being located behind and the past out in front; frequent reference to cardinal directions.

The Tuvan epic tale, called a tool, has two recognized subgenres: maadirlig tool, ‘hero tale’, and simply tool (all other types) (Orus-oool 1997). The longest Tuvan epic tale in print is a version of Boktu-Kiris in Tuvan numbering 9,654 lines and consisting of portions told by various storytellers edited into a single, amalgamated tale (Orus-oool 1995). A shorter version numbering 5,060 lines with parallel free translation into Russian was published in 1997 by the Russian Academy of Sciences (Orus-oool 1997). Though a few Tuvan texts have been translated into Russian (Taube 1994, Orus-oool 1997), German (Taube 1978, 1980), and English (Kenin-Lopsan 1997), no Tuvan epic tale has been translated into English. Linguists have been audio-recording Tuvan oral genres since at least 1962 (Orus-oool 1997). Recordings from the 1960s and later are effectively unavailable, existing only on reel-to-reel and other legacy format tapes in the archives of the Tuvan Institute for Humanitarian Researches (TIGI) located in Tuva’s capital city of Kyzyl. Making new recordings in digital video should be an urgent priority, given the perilous status of the genre.

Tuvan epic storytelling is now a seriously endangered genre. In expeditions undertaken in Tuvan and Mongolia in 1995, 1998, 2000, and 2003, the author found no competent storytellers under the age of forty-five. By contrast, it is still easy to locate speakers of all ages who can recite some other oral genres including praise songs (maktal), blessing songs (jöree!), tongue-twisters (dürge? cüga?), shamanic chants (algi?c?), stories (cüga), metered verse (ši?líc?), Buddhist prayers (mörgüli?), songs (ir), aphorisms (üleger sös), and riddles (tivizi?c?). There are hopeful signs, however, that within some families the epic tradition is indeed being passed on. In western Mongolia in 2000, the author recorded a female storyteller, age fifty-two, whose nineteen-year-old son sat next to her and lip-synched many of her lines as she told the story, but would not himself consent to tell a story solo. The demise of epic storytelling can be attributed to many factors. Among these are the invasion of pop culture, which diminishes the attraction of oral tales, the decrease in the nomadic lifestyle which is the most natural setting for tale-telling, and the advent of widespread literacy, which diminishes the perceived need to memorize long tales. Unlike “throat-singing,” the immensely popular Tuvan cultural export (Levin and Edgerton 1999, Levin and Süçük?c? 2006), epic storytelling has not yet attracted a foreign audience. Nor is it likely to, given its relative lack of theatrics and demanding linguistic complexity. Tувan youth with talent are increasingly drawn exclusively to throat-singing and its promise of a lucrative stage career, leading to a neglect of epic genres. This neglect was most evident in a Tuva-wide story-telling competition held in 2003, in which master storyteller Şojdak-oool Xovalig took first prize in the epic genre category. He wistfully recounted that his reward was “twelve tea bowls and an empty thermos.” This modest prize may be compared to the horse and cash prize awarded in the biennial throat-singing competition and the new car awarded annually to the best Tuvan wrestler. Professional throat-singers with whom the author discussed the status and lack of support for the epic tale genre expressed little desire to learn it personally or incorporate it into their repertoires. Nor is there any obvious reason why they should. Throat-singing does not seem to have been a necessary part of tale-telling, which requires only minimal,
recitative-style singing. Though a few talented individuals might have done both, they are largely separate avocations. One genre now thrives while the other withers away.

LINGUISTIC STRUCTURES

Tuvan syntax follows SOV order and is characterized by pro-drop and frequent use of auxiliary verbs. Morphologically, the language is almost exclusively suffixing, and has agglutinating morphemes. In the transcription presented here morpheme boundaries are marked by hyphens in both the first tier (phonemic transcription) and second tier (morpho-syntactic tagging). Abbreviations for morpho-syntactic tags are given at the end of the article. Tagging conventions largely follow those used in a recent grammar of Tuvan (Anderson and Harrison 1999). For a fuller discussion of Tuvan grammar, I refer the reader to that work. Here, I shall merely point out those linguistic devices that most directly serve the epic storytelling style. These include the following:

(i) frequent use of emphatic/focus enclitic =daa ~ =taa (line 37), and emphatic/focus suffix -la ~ -na ~ -le ~ -ne (lines 38, 40).
(ii) reference to antagonists using full names plus kinship terms, which appear in 3SG possessed form, e.g., ‘his younger sister’, ‘her elder brother’ (lines 29, 33).
(iii) a special ameliorative register that palatalizes word-final consonants (lines 201, 213).
(iv) alliteration of first words in successive or paired lines (lines 25, 26, 27 and lines 185, 186, 187 all begin with [k]). Longer stretches of text show mnemonic structure. For example, lines 242–53 consist of four sets of three lines, each beginning with a similar consonant (d d t / e e e / k x x / k k k). Within each triplet, an adverb appears as the first element, an animal name as the second, and a body-part as third or successive: ‘very’ / ‘kite’ (birdname) / ‘head’; ‘very’ / ‘eagle’ / ‘shoulder’; ‘very’ / ‘hare’ / ‘... tailbone’, etc.
(v) emphatic prefixing reduplication (line 49).
(vi) special narrative past form, constructed by adding to a verb root the same subject marker followed by the genitive case marker (lines 52, 58).
(vii) archaisms, including many compound forms (lines 27, 31).
(viii) special phrasing, prosody, and intonation (not described herein, but may be observed by viewing the video clip).
(ix) recitative-style singing (lines 6–62).
(x) a heptasyllabic line scansion (for reasons of space, scansion is omitted herein in favor of longer lines. Punctuation within the phonemic tier indicates phrasing).

With the exception of (viii) through (x), none of these features individually marks the narrative as an epic tale, but taken all together they unmistakably characterize the genre.

THE STORYTELLER AND THE SETTING

The version presented here was told in August 1998 by Mr. Šojdak-ool Xovalig (b. 1929), of the village of Arig-Uzüü in central Tuva. By profession a combine driver on a collective farm, Mr. Xovalig recalls learning tales at a young age from his grandmother and others, and, as an adult, reciting them during his many hours driving combines in the wheat fields. He told stories throughout his adult life as an avocation, but reported in 2001 that finding an audience had become more and more difficult. By that time he was being invited just once or twice a year to tell stories at the village community center. He lamented that the size and
attention span of his audiences had dwindled with the popularity of television and “Jackie Chan” action films on video.

When this author first approached Mr. Xovalig in 1998 with the request to tell part of an epic tale, he immediately agreed. But he insisted he could tell it only in its proper setting with an audience, not simply sitting before a video camera in his small log house in the village. And so the next morning we set off to visit his relatives, nomadic horse herders, who were camped about ten miles outside the village. We arrived at their camp at about 7:00 A.M. and entered the yurt to find sleepy faces and inquisitive glances at Šojdaq-ool’s announcement, “I’m going to tell a tale.” Within twenty minutes people had dressed and washed, morning chores had been partially done, and the horses let out of their stockades. To the dismay of the entire camp, one horse had disappeared during the night and was presumed stolen. That misfortune notwithstanding, tea bowls were set out and the entire extended family of eight persons, ranging in age from about seven to over eighty, assembled on the grass at the side of the yurt to hear the tale. Mr. Xovalig donned a traditional Tuvan robe and hat. Adults present assumed the traditional seated pose with one knee up, one leg folded under. The youngest family member, a seven-year-old girl was exhorted by the eldest, a man of over eighty, to “listen well!” and the tale began. The text below may be read to the accompaniment of the video file.

A TUVAN HERO TALE: BOKTU-KIRIŠ BORA-ŠEELEI

1. A Tuvan people’s tale called Boktu-Kiriš Bora-Šeelei, of which there are many different versions.

2. The briefest of these wonderfully interesting tales, a short one, finished in just fifteen minutes,

3. I present to your attention. Once upon a time . . .

[sung recitative style begins with line 6]

2. Literally, “with the good times at (over) the shoulder and the bad times at the head”; the future is interpreted as located physically behind a person, with the past out in front.
the mountain goat, the hare, and the grouse overflowed from their forests,

magadandzig baj bajlak ekki ŋag-da čiveŋ irgin.

wonderful rich plentiful good time-LOC disc disc

Once upon a time, (riding along) on a mixed-gait brown horse with black mane and tail,

ajaŋ-kula ʻut-tīŋ
A-K horse-ADJ

named Ajan-Kula,

aldin ʻiskaš kaas čaraš
gold like well-dressed handsome

was splendid as gold, handsomely dressed (Boktu-Kiriš),

bora-ʻseelej kis dinja-šlig,
B-Ś girl younger.sibling-ADJ

with his younger sister Bora-Seelei,

boktu-ʻkiriš, sajin er-i ʻor-up tur ʻeves be.
B-K Sajin male-3 go-CV AUX NEG QUES

Boktu-Kiriš of the Sayin clan. He was going along, wasn’t he?

ajaŋ-am boktu-ʻkiriš, bora-ʻseelej
FORM FORM B-K, B-Ś

Once upon a time Boktu-Kiriš and Bora-Seelei,

ališki-lar, deerge. ʻe-d-i eg-i-n aš-kan,
sibling-PL post meat-3 shoulder-3-ACC pass.OVER-PST

these two siblings, had meat (piled) higher than their shoulders,

mal-i baž-i-n aš-kan,
livestock-3 head-3-ACC come.OVER-PST

and livestock reaching higher than their heads.

övär ʻer-nīŋ ʻozen-in-ge döŋ-ne-p xavir-ar
southern place-GEN hollow-3-DAT hill-VSF-CV round.up-PF

In a southern land in a hollow on a hill they rounded up

öl-e ʻula čügi-šlig,
gray -gray3 horse.herd-ADJ

the herd4 of gray horses.

aɾi ʻer-nīŋ arga-zin-ga
northern.slope place-GEN forest-3-DAT

In a forest on a northern slope

döŋ-ne-p xavir-ar ala ʻšokar inek-ter-šlig,
hill-VSF-CV round.up-PF striped -spotted cow-PL-ADJ

they rounded up the striped and spotted cows.

xolv ʻer-nīŋ delgem-in-ge
field place-GEN wide.space-3-DAT

On a wide and even plain

3. ölē-bula is a compound, which as a whole means ‘gray’. Compounds are shown in the phonemic tier herein as two elements separated by a tab-space, with a hyphen inserted before the second one. In Tuvan, one or both compounded works may lack independent lexical meaning.

4. The unit čügli denotes a herd of (about) forty horses.
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döŋ-ne-p xavir-ar xoor -sarig teve-lig,
hill-VSF-CV round.up-PF brown -yellow camel-ADJ
24. they rounded up the brown and yellow camels.

kašpal čer-niŋ xaja-zin-ga döŋ-ne-p xavir-ar
ravine place-GEN cliff-3-DAT hill-VSF-CV round.up-PF
25. At a cliff in a ravine they rounded up

kažaa siŋ-mas xaragan=deg xoj öški-lüg,
livestock.pen³ fit.into-NEG=VV tumbleweed=like sheep goat-ADJ
26. their sheep and goats—they were as numerous as tumbleweeds and nearly didn’t fit into their pen.

kajgamčik-tiŋ baj -šiŋrak, ažil -išči
amazing-ADJ rich -strong work -effort
27. Amazingly rich, wealthy,⁶ and hard-working
ališki-lar, čüveŋ irgin ijiŋ og.
sibling-PL DISC DISC DISC DISC
28. were the siblings, so they say.

şiJaan am boktu-kiriš aki-zi
FORM FORM B-K elder.brother-3
29. And so it was that elder brother Boktu-Kiriš

ärğa siŋ-niŋ anš-i-ŋ aŋna-ar,
forest mountain.ridge-GEN animal-3-ACC hunt-PF
30. hunted animals of the forested mountain ridge.

ekker -eres adigši,
brave -courageous archer
31. He was a brave archer,
bizani-ir, čazani-ir, dargan-na-ar, bizan-na-ar.
butcher.wild.animal-PF sharpen-PF smith-VSF-PF carpenter-VSF-CV
32. he could butcher wild animals, sharpen tools, do blacksmithing and carpentry.

bora-seelej kis diŋma-zi
B-S girl younger.sibling-3
33. Bora-Seelei his younger sister

mal-i-n maga-ni-n kadar-ar xavir-ar,
livestock-3-ACC cattle-3-ACC herd-PF round.up-PF
34. herded the livestock, watched the cattle,

aš čem-i-n, sa-an sava-zi-n išteni-ir,
food food-3-ACC milk-PST container-3-ACC fill-PF
35. filled up the food and milk containers,

daaran-i-ri-i-n, šuptu kil-ir,
sew-PF-3-ACC everything do-PF
36. and could sew and make anything.

kondžug=daa us -šever ališki-lar, čüveŋ irgin ijiŋ og.
very=EMPH art -master sibling-PL DISC DISC DISC DISC
37. The siblings were extremely skilled, so they say.

şiJaan am bir-le kattap boktu-kiriš aki-zi
FORM FORM one-EMPH once B-K elder.brother-3
38. Once upon a time, her elder brother Boku-Kiriš

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5. A kažaa is an animal pen or stockade. Depending on locally available resources, these may be made of split logs, woven branches, or stacked stones.

6. baj šiŋrak literally ‘rich strong’, meaning ‘very rich’.
39. went hunting on the forested mountain ridge,

39a. forest mountain.ridge-ADL hunt-CV GO-PERF-SS

40. and disappeared without a trace.

41a. bora-šeelej kis dișma-zi,
B-S girl younger.sibling-3

42. Bora-Šeelei his younger sister

42a. šo -tölge sal-ir kizi čüü bo-or,
divining -bones do-PF PN DISC PROB-PF

43. was a person who could read divining bones.

43a. šo -tölge sal-gaš kör-üp olur-ar-ga,
divining -bones put-SS see-CV AUX-PF-DAT

44. When she had laid out the divining bones, she saw (that)

44a. aki-ži arzajti de-er ala tajga-nin aar ij-in-dže
elder.brother-3 A. call-PF A. taiga-GEN northern.slope-3-ALL

45. her elder brother, on a northern slope named Arzaity in the Ala mountains,

45a. öl-üp kal-gan,
die-CV AUX-PST

46. had died.

A-K horse-3 side-3-LOC cry-CV AUX-PF thus PROB-CV AUX NEG=QUES

47. And his horse Ajan-Kula stood crying at his side, so it seemed.

47a. šišan am bora-šeelej kis dişma-zi,
FORM FORM BS girl younger.sibling-3

48. and so it was that his younger sister Bora-Šeelei

48a. xuul-üp-tar kizi čüü boor,
change.appearance-PERF-PF PN DEIC PROB

49. was a shape changer.

49a. dop=doraan xartiga bo-op xuul-up al-gaš-tiŋ,
RED=immediately hawk PROB-CV change.into-CV SBEN-SS-GEN

50. She immediately changed into a hawk,

50a. už-üp čed-e ber-gaś-tiŋ,
fly-CV arrive-CV SBEN-SS-GEN

51. and flew to that place.

51a. ajan-kula ñdi-ñdi=bišle čuğala-ţ-i ber-ipt-ir.
A-K horse-3=INS speak-RCP-CV INCH-PERF-PF

52. She began to speak with Ajan-Kula, his horse.

52a. ajan-kula tur-gaš-tiŋ;
A-K AUX-SS-GEN

53. Ajan-Kula said:

53a. men iškaš bagaj at kajda bo-or,
Me like poor/bad horse where.to PROB-PF

54. “A poor horse like me, what could I do?

54a. aŋ sivir-üp čuğur-üp olur-gaš,
animal chase-CV run-CV AUX-SS

55. (I was) tracking animals, galloping along,

55a. xajirakan ụŋűr-ű-n kör-be-en,
bear cave-3-ACC see-NEG-PST

56. and I failed to notice a bear’s den.
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iji xol-um ki-ir bas-kaš, doŋgaj-a düž-er-im-de,
two arm-1 enter-PF fall.into-SS stoop.down-CV descend-PF-1-LOC
56. When my two arms7 went into that hole and I suddenly fell down,
boktu-kiriš sajin er, ekki ee-m,
B-K S. male good master-1
57. Boktu-Kiriš of the Sayin clan, my good master,
apdar-il-gaš-tuŋ, moldura-u čar-il-gaš, öl-ilp kal-gan,
fall.back-PASS-SS-GEN spine-3 break.apart-PASS-SS die-CV AUX-PST
58. having fallen off me, broke his neck and died.
oł-la=dir dep igla-p tur-ar mindig bo-op tur eves=pe.
that-EMPH=DEIC QUOT cry-CV AUX-PF thus PROB-CV AUX NEG=QUES
59. And that’s it,” said (the horse), crying, “that’s what happened.”
bora-šeelej kis düŋma-zi
B-Ś girl younger.sibling-3
60. Bora-Seelei his younger sister
aki-zi-niq aži-i-n aži-p,
elder.brother-3-GEN bitterness-3-ACC swallow-CV
61. swallowed her bitterness about her elder brother,
cry-CV-EMPH AUX-PST cry-CV-EMPH AUX-PST cry-CV-EMPH AUX-PST
62. and she sat and cried and cried.
[Sung recitative ends with line 62; spoken narrative style is used hereafter.]
indžalza-daa čeže=daa igla-ar-ga
nonetheless=EMPH however.much=EMPH cry-PF-DAT
63. But no matter how much she may have cried,
ažık duaž u-n bil-ip ka-ap-kaš, igla-ar-i-n soska-di-p-kaš-tuŋ,
use help NEG-3-ACC find.out-CV AUX-PST cry-3-ACC stop-CAUS-PERF-SS-GEN
64. she understood that crying was of no use or help, so she made herself stop crying.
oł-gen aki-zi-n kandža-p dirgizi-p al-ir čo-or dees,
die-PST brother-3-ACC do.how-CV make.live-CV SBEN-PF AUX-PF POST,
65. To find out how she could make her dead brother live again,
šo -tölge sal-a ber-ipt-i.r.
divining -bones place-CV INCH-PERF-PF
66. she began to lay out her divining bones.8
šo -tölge sal-gaš kő-ör-ge,
divining -bones place-SS see-PF-DAT
67. When she laid out the divining bones, she saw
bireves bora-šeelej kis düŋma-zi
if B-Ś girl younger.sibling-3
68. (what would happen) if Bora-Seelei the younger sister
boktu-kiriš aki-zi bo-op,
B-K elder.brother-3 PROB-CV
69. would become Boktu-Kiriš the elder brother,

7. The horse not only talks and cries, but is anthropomorphized to the extent that he has ‘arms’ or ‘hands’, not legs or hooves.
8. Divination is still widely practiced in Tuva, and is by no means limited to specialist practitioners (e.g., shamans). Common methods include sheep knuckle bones (kažık), a sheep shoulder blade (čarin) burned in the fire, and divining pebbles (xuvaanak). Divination requires inducing some pattern (either by burning, or by (re)arranging objects in a ritual fashion), then interpreting that pattern for good or ill omens.
er kiži bo-op xuul-up al-gaš-tiq
male person PROB-CV change.into-CV SBEN-SS-GEN
70. by changing into the man
čĩge sõngũ čük-tũ ešel-ej töre-en
straight north direction-ACC rule/occupy-CV be.born-PST
71. born to rule the lands directly to the north.
šaŋ xaan-niŋ čaraš kiž-i
Š. X.-GEN beautiful girl-3
72. (And if he would take) the beautiful daughter of Šaŋ Khan,
Angir-čečen aldın dangina-ni kadaj kil-d-ir
A-Č golden princess-ACC wife do-CAUS-PF
73. the golden princess Angyr-Chechen, as his wife
kuda-la-p ekke-er bol-za, ol-la aldın dangina
wed-CV bring-PF AUX-COND this-EMPH golden princess
74. and marry her, then that very same golden princess
boktu-kiriš-ti ošũm -čidim-den=daa kanga-la-ar,
B-K-ACC death -demise-ADJ=EMPH protect-PF
75. would protect Boktu-Kiriš, even from death.
öũši-p=daa ka-ar-ga dirgiz-i domna-p ekke-er,
die-CV=EMPH AUX-PF-DAT make.live-CV do.by.magic-CV bring-PF
76. And even if he had died, she would make him live again,
mindig kondzug ertem -šiši-liŋ dangina=dir dep
thus such knowledge -magic-ADJ princess=DEIC QUOT
77. because the princess possessed such strong magic.
šo -tölge korgüs-ken=dir.
diving -bones show-PST=DEIC
78. So the divining bones showed.
kąžûr bora-šeelej kis dıŋma-zi,
poor B-Š girl younger.sibling-3
79. Now poor Bora-Šeelel his younger sister
xuul-up-ar kiži čuš bo-or,
change.shape-PERF-PF PN DISC PROB-PF
80. was a shape-changer.
boktu-kiriš aki-zi kil-d-ir xuul-up-la egele-en=dir.
B-K elder.brother-3 do-CAUS-PF change.into-CV-EMPH begin-PST=DEIC
81. She began to make her elder brother Boktu-Kiriš by changing herself into him.
xuul-up xuul-up al-gaš,
change.into-CV change.into-CV SBEN-SS
82. After changing and changing,
körëndžük-ke kör-dü-ŋ-gen körëndžük-ke kördü-ŋ-er-ge
83. she looked at herself in the mirror. When she looked at herself in the mirror,
kirbej kara sal-dig, čoon kara kežege-liŋ,
short/thin black beard-ADJ thick black braid-ADJ
84. she had a thin black beard and a thick black braid of hair,
kaddr xavak-tig, kalčan baš-tig, ajak=deg ala karaš-tig,
steep forehead-ADJ bald head-ADJ tea.bowl=like striped eye-ADJ
85. her forehead was steep, her head was shaved bald in front, and her eyes were striped and big as a tea-bowl.
albis şubus aks-i=deg ažok ulug aas-tig,
devil demon mouth-3=like very large mouth-ADJ
86. Her mouth like a devil’s was extremely large.
aki-zi kara olčaan, arn-i baž-i,
elder.brother-3 completely similar face-3 head-3
87. She was just like her brother, like his face and head,
möček-möček šingan-nar-ług
strong-RED muscle-PL-ADJ
88. and she had strong, strong muscles,
möge şirak, ulug čaagaj-i deerge
wrestler powerful big full.grown-3 POST
89. full-grown and big like a wrestler’s.
ana bir adig -maażalaj=deg, appar-gan=daa bol-za,
simply one bear -bear=like become-PST=EMPH COP-COND
90. She had become just like a bear, but nevertheless
kis kiţi-ninger sin-i-n kaasta-an,
girl person-GEN figure-3-ACC decorate-PST
91. she still had a girl’s figure,
čaja-an čaza-an iji emi-i xeever,
create-PST carve-PST two breast-3 same.as.before
92. created and carved out with two breasts.
baza aži-töl-dü čaja-ap božu-ur,
also offspring-offspring-9 ACC be.fated-cv give.birth-to-PF
93. And she had something created to give birth to children,
aći-lig bujan-nig aldin ežik,
kind.heartedness-ADJ nobleness-ADJ golden door
94. a noble and kind golden door,
kis xindi-i baza xeever bo-op=tur eves=be
girl genitals-310 also as.before PROB-CV=COP NEG=QUEST
95. she still had her woman’s genitals, the same as before, so it seemed.
am kandžal-zi-m-za ekki=l? dep
now do.thusly-COND-lSG-COND gOOd=DEIC QUOT
96. “Even though I’ve changed, what good is it?”
ajan-kula àd-in-dan ajtir-gan=dir.
A-K horse-3-ABL ask-PST=DEIC
97. she asked her horse Ajan-Kula.
ajan-kula àd-i mindža de-en=dir.
A-K horse-3 thus say-PST=DEIC
98. Her horse Ajan-Kula said:
SEN ol iji emi-ig-ni=daa, kis xindi-ig-ni=daa
you these two breast-2-ACC=EMPH girl genitals-2-ACC=EMPH
99. “Those two breasts of yours and your girl’s genitals,
kandža-ar=daa öšker-ti-p šida-vas sen,
do.thus-PF=EMPH change-CAUS-cv be.able-NEG-F you
100. you cannot change in any way.
indžalza=daa janz-i-būri arga-lar-ni ažig-la-p tur-gaš-ting
nonetheless=EMPH different=QUAN methods-PL-ACC use-NSF-cv AUX-SS-GEN
101. However, by using various methods,
even your two breasts and your woman's genitals

I will not let anyone see.

As your elder brother Boktu-Kiriš, as a man,

overcoming and winning all the competitions,

born to rule in the lands directly to the north,

(taking) Sang Khan’s beautiful, golden daughter,

Angyr-Chechen, the golden princess,

and bringing her as his wife to wed,

you are the person who's able to bring your dead brother back to life.

Hurry up now, put on the shoes and the clothes of your elder brother,

and let’s go, the two of us.

For the announced competition is just about to begin.

all suitors-

As for all the suitors,

they have already gathered to compete;"

said the horse.

Thus say-PF as.soon.as B-S girl younger.sibling-3 what

So that her dead elder brother would not rot and stink,
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don èt=deg kil-di-r don-ur tarbida-p-kaš-tiŋ,
frozen meat=like do-CAUS-PF freeze-PF do.magically-PERF-ss-GEN
119. she magically turned him into frozen meat.
dedir aas-tiŋ kara kuj-ga suk-kaš-tiŋ,
back mouth-ADJ black cave-DAT put.in-ss-GEN
120. She put him into the mouth of a black cave,
ask-i-n bûdân turug xaja kil-d-ir duj tarbida-p-kaš-tiŋ,
mouth-3-ACC whole vertical cliff do-CAUS-PF tightly.shut do.by.magic-PERF-ss-GEN
121. magically concealed the cave’s mouth with a vertical cliff,
aki-zi-nîng bûrûn idîk -sêv-i-n ket-keš,
elder.brother-3-GEN all shoe -clothing-3-ACC put.on.clothing-ss
122. put on her brother’s shoes and clothes,
çu-gu suku-u-cu xaja kil-d-ir duj tarbida-p-kaš-tiŋ,
mouth-3-ACC whole vertical cliff do-CAUS-PF tightly.shut do.by.magic-PERF-ss-GEN
123. took up his bow and arrows, mounted the horse Ajan-Kula,
ãkî-jing u-za-du-p u-za-du-
straight north direction-ALL fly.away-CAUs-cv go-PERF.PST
124. and made the horse fly away directly to the north.
çe suko suku u-za-du-p u-za-du-
straight north(ern) direction-LOC S. X.-gen campsite-3-DAT come-PF-PST
125. When she came in a straight northerly direction and arrived at Sang Khan’s campsite,
át baţi orgu-p, kizi baz-i kizirt.
horse head-3 spread.out-cv person head-3 multiply
126. there were horses and people spread out as far as the eye could see.
çon=bile çûgaala-ž-îk kü-ôr-ge,
people=INS talk-RCP-cv aux-pf-dat
127. After having talked to people,
am daarta ada-an mûörej egele-er.
now tomorrow call-PST competition begin-PF
128. (she found out) the announced competition would begin tomorrow.
şa̱g xaan-ûş mûörej çûla-an.
Š. X. three competition announce-PST
129. Sang Khan had announced three events:
bir-le dugaar-in-da eres adigû-zi-n kü-ôr,
one-EMPH number-3-LOC brave archer-3-ACC see-PF
130. “First of all we will find out who is the bravest archer;
kûde-ler-în ças-pas ad-ar-i-n kü-ôr çâ -sogun=bile.
suitors-PL-GEN miss-NEGAR shoot-PF-3-ACC see-PF arrow -bow=INS
131. we will see who of the suitors will not miss the target with bow and arrow,
two number-3-LOC wrestler -strength-3-ACC see-PF wrestling-REcip-CAUS-PF
132. During the second competition we will find out who is the strongest wrestler.
ûş dugaar-in-da eres -kašpûgaj-i-n kü-ôr, çûrî-tir-ar.
three number-3-LOC strong -agility-3-ACC see-PF horse.race-CAUS-PF
133. During the third competition we will find out who is the most agile horseback rider.
şa̱k ol üš mûörej-ge až-îp ün-gen ey eres kûde-lê
that very this competition-DAT win-cv go.out-PST most brave suitors-PL-GEN
134. To the winner of those three competitions, to the bravest suitor,
ûru-ûm-nu kâdaq kil-di-r be-er men,
daughter-1-ACC wife do-CAUS-PF give-PF I
135. I shall give my daughter as a wife,
xamik aldin mõngün-ü=bile, mal -magan-i=bile, all gold silver-3=INS, cattle -livestock-ACC=INS

and with all her gold and silver, and with all her livestock, ara -albati-ci=bile, dep slave -servant-3=INS QUOT

137. and with her slaves;”

šan xaan mindig čarkik ün-dür-gen=dir.
Š. X. such announcement go.OUT-CAUS-PST=DEIC

138. Šang Khan announced.
čaa, kütür er-ler=daa beletken-i-le ber-gen.
DISC poor male-PL=EMPH prepare-CV-EMPH AUX-PST

139. So, even the poorest men began to prepare for the competition.
daarta xun-de xamik er čiïi bo-or,
tomorrow day-LOC all male DEIC PROB-CV

And the next day what did all the men do?

baški tanđi-nîŋ edeente
B. T.-GEN mountain.foot-LOC

141. At the foot of Bashky-Tangdy mountain,
ča -sogun-u-n keze-geš tur-up-kan.
arow -bow-3-ACC prepare-SS AUX-PERF-PST

disc they began to prepare their bows and arrows.
songu tanđi-nîŋ edeente
S. T.-GEN mountain.foot-LOC

143. At the foot of Songu-Tangdy mountain,
üç araattan an-nar-ni ilcirbe-le-p ka-an.
three wild animal-PL-ACC chain-vsF-CV aux-pst

There were three wild animals already chained up.
ol araattan an-nar deerge karži xajirakan,
those wild animal-PL disc cruel bear,

145. These wild, predatory animals were a cruel bear,
ajil-dig arzilaŋ, xan-ga pòk-pes kòk bûrû,
danger-ADJ lion blood-DAT quench-NEG/F gray/blue wolf

146. a dangerous lion,11 and a bloodthirsty gray wolf.
ol xaan kürû-ne-n mal -magan-i-na an-mey-in-ge,
that khan state-GEN cattle -livestock-3-DAT animal-RED-3-DAT

147. They all threatened the livestock, the wild animals,
ara -albati kütî-ler-in-ge deerge ajiil-dig bajdal-di turguz-up,
FIG -servant person-PL-3-DAT POST danger-ADJ condition-ACC create-CV

148. and the peasants of the Khan’s state, creating dangerous conditions,
kalçara-p tur-gan araattan-nar.
get.aggressive-CV AUX-PST wild.animal-PL

149. and becoming more aggressive.
xaan-nîŋ kadîg xoolu-zun-ga
khan-GEN firm law-3-DAT

150. So, by the firm law of the Khan,

11. Tuvan arzilaŋ, a common Turkic word reborrowed into Tuvan from Mongolian (Tatarintsev 2002), denotes
a lion, but also a mythical beast often depicted as a beneficent protector.
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ami-zi-n alzi-ir kil-di-r šii-tir-gen.
life-3-ACC take.away-PF do-CAUS-PF decide-CAUS-PST

151. they were sentenced to be killed.

xaan-niŋ xamik ag -šeri-i algi -kiški=bile bar-gaš-tiŋ, khan-GEN all LEX -army-3 outcry -shout=INS go-ss-GEN

152. The Khan’s entire army went after them with shouts,

dirig-ge takula-aš-tiŋ am ilčirbe-le-p ka-an, alive-DAT catch.with.barking.dogs-ss-GEN now chain-VDVF-CV AUX-PST

153. caught them alive, accompanied with a great barking of dogs, and chained them up.

onu xöj er ě-sogun=bile baški dag-niŋ edeen-den, them many male arrow-bow=INS B. mountain-GEN mountain.foot-ABL

154. All those men with bows and arrows were to go from the foot of Bashky mountain

songu dag-niŋ edeen-če bad-ar užur-lug, di-ves-ler be. northern mountain-GEN bottom-ALL go.down-PF obligation-ADJ say-NEG-F-PL QUES

155. down to the foot of the Songu mountain to shoot (them), don’t you say?

čaa! mūorej=daa egele-en okay competition=EMPH begin-PST

156. Okay, the competition has begun!

xamik eriŋ=daa ad-ip kir-ip<(le)->t-ken. all male=EMPH shoot-CV INCH-PERF-EMPH-CAUS-PST

157. All the men began to make the arrows shoot.

dūš-ke čedi-ri at-kan xöj eriŋ deerge, noon-DAT reach-PF shoot-PST many male POST

158. The many men shot until noon,

čangis=taa kiži-niŋ sogun-u čet-pes. single=EMPH person-GEN arrow-3 reach-NEG-F

159. but not a single man’s arrow reached the targets.

boktu-kiriš dep at-tiŋ, kirbej kara sal-diŋ er, B-K QUOT name-ADJ short black beard-ADJ male

160. But the man by the name of Boktu-Kiriš with a short black beard,

ča -sogun-u-n čük-te-p al-gan arrow -bow-3-ACC load-CV SBEN-PST

161. although carrying his bow and arrows,

at-pas=taa, kilaštu-p tur-ar, mindig. shoot-NEG=EMPH walk-CV AUX-PF thus

162. did not shoot, but simply walked around like this.

bo kandaaj er sen? this what.kind.ofAMEL male you

163. “What kind of man are you?

čüge at-pa-jin tur sen? dep ōöri-ä mindžan-gan dir. why shoot-NEG-PST AUX you QUOT friend-3 do.thus-PST DEIC

164. Why don’t you shoot, friend?” asked the others.

indža deerge, men, aki-lar-im, this POST I elder.brother-PL-1

165. When they asked him he said: “My elder brothers,

čerle mūorej-ge kir-ź-ip kör-be-en bol-gaš always/still competition-DAT enter-RCP-CV see-NEG-PST COP-SS

166. I have never taken part in a competition,

korg-up tur šeej men, fear-CV AUX DISC I

167. so I am afraid,
"I'm afraid and my heart will not let me do it," he answered.

"Oh! You're just a little woman,"

"Oh! You're just a little woman, aren't you, friend?" asked the other men.

"Well, I can be a woman, I can be whatever,"

"But what can I do, my elder brothers?"

"That is just the way I am," he said,

"and he just kept standing right there in that same way.

At the very end only the man by the name of Boktu-Kiriš,
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185. His arrow broke right through the forehead bone of the cruel bear.

186. And having shot through the flat shoulder blade of it,

187. put out its black liver

188. with the very first shot.

189. The hero (readied) his second shot,

190. pulled, pulled, pulled back and let fly,

191. and shot out the teeth of the dangerous lion,

192. then shot apart its six twisted necks.

193. Then the hero, taking the third arrow,

194. pulled, pulled, pulled back and let fly.

195. And having shot out the guts of the bloodthirsty gray wolf,

196. he shot its round head right off.

197. “The first competition was won by the young man who’s come from the south

198. and goes by the name of Boku-Kiris!” announced the Khan.

199. Then the Khan’s spy, who secretly knew all,

200. ran quickly to him and whispered in his ear:

12. Sound symbolic for clattering or intensity.

e\textsuperscript{13}, xaan \textit{šak ol bo boktu-kiriš dep tur-ar eriŋ,}
excl\textsuperscript{13} khan very that this B-K QUOT AUX-PF male
201. “Look, Khan, that very man, the one whom they call Boktu-Kiriš,
er eves kis kiži čůve=dir.
male NEG girl person PN=DEIC
202. is not a man at all, but a woman.
\textit{daarta xüreš uje-zin-de xin-ap kör-uŋer, dep xaan-ga mindžan-gan.}
tomorrow wrestling time-3-LOC check-CV AUX-2PL\textsuperscript{14} QUOT khan-DAT do.thus-PST
203. Check it tomorrow during the wrestling,” he asked the Khan.
a kandža-ar xina-ar ulus bis? dep xaan ajiir-gan=dir.
and do.how-PF check-PF PN we QUOT khan ask-PST=DEIC
204. “And how are we supposed to check it?” asked the Khan.
če, xaan čarlin-dan ert-ken čůve bar eves?
okay khan announcement-ABL pass.by-PST PN COP QUES
205. “Well, an announcement of the Khan is something not to be disregarded, is it?
\textit{daarta xüreš uje-zin-de šuptu čanagaš xüreži-ir, xožlen čok.}
tomorrow wrestling time-3-LOC everybody naked wrestle-PF shirt NEG
206. Tomorrow during the wrestling, say that everybody must wrestle naked, shirtless.
\textit{indžan kis kiži-niŋ iji emi-i kóst-i-le ber-gej!}
thus girl person-GEN two breast-3 show-cv-EMPH INCH-CNCL
207. Then the breasts of the woman will be revealed!”
\textit{xaan=daa čarlik-ti ūn-dür-gen dir:}
khan=EMPH announcement-ACC GO.OUT-CAUS-PST DEIC
208. So, the Khan put out an announcement:
\textit{daarta šuptu xožlen čok, čanagaš xüreži-ir!}
tomorrow everybody shirt NEG naked wrestle-PF
209. “Everybody will wrestle shirtless\textsuperscript{15} and naked tomorrow!”
\textit{onu diŋma-p-kaš, boktu-kiriš aki-zi bo-op xuul-up al-gan}
that hear-PERF-SS B-K elder.brother-3 prob-cv change-CV SHEN-PST
210. Having heard this, she who had changed into her elder brother Boktu-Kiriš,
\textit{bora-šeelej kis diŋma-zi}
B-S girl younger.sister-3
211. younger sister Bora-Seelei, 
\textit{ajan-kula ād-in-ga sir-mang-i=bile kel-gen.}
A-K horse-3-DAT SYMB-running-3=INS come-PST
212. came running pell-mell to her horse Ajan-Kula.
\textit{kandžaani, čooni, ekki ād-im?}
how do\textsuperscript{16} what do\textsuperscript{16} good horse-1
213. “What can I do now, my good horse?
\textit{daarta xožlen čok čanagaš xüreži-ir čůve dir.}
tomorrow shirt NEG naked wrestle-PF PN DEIC
214. It turns out that everybody will have to wrestle shirtless and naked tomorrow.

\textsuperscript{13} Added palatalization on final consonants (e.g., \textit{[ti]} instead of expected \textit{[t]}) marks a special ameliorative or pejorative register, considered vulgar and colloquial vis-à-vis standard Tuvan.
\textsuperscript{14} The verb meaning ‘see’, used here as an auxiliary, denotes a polite request, as does the use of the second person plural suffix on a form addressed to a single individual.
\textsuperscript{15} The traditional dress of the Tuvan wrestler includes high boots (idik), tight shorts (šodak), and a jacket (šolag) with long sleeves and a back piece, but nothing covering the chest or stomach. Some accounts explain the bared chest as intended to prevent women from wrestling in disguise.
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two breast-1-ACC do/how-PERF-l\MOD QUOT do.thus-CV ask-CV=DEIC NEG QUES

215. What shall I do about my two breasts?” she asked, didn’t she?

ajaŋ-kula äd-i tur-gaš-ting mindž-a dep dir.
A-K horse-3 AUX-SS GEN do.thus-CV QUOT DEIC

216. And her horse Ajan-Kula said:

ol deerge anaa, könğüs anaa çève dir.
this POST fine just fine PN DEIC

217. “It’s fine, just fine.

seeŋ aki-iq-niŋ tos kât čona-a-ning ara-zin-da
your elder.brother-2-GEN nine layer saddle.blanket-3-GEN between-3-LOC

218. Inside the nine-layered saddle blanket belonging to your brother,

erte küzûn at-kan tas dük-tüŋ xajirakan keez-i bar.
early in.autumn shoot-CV short.haired hair-ADJ bear skin-3 COP

219. there’s a short-haired hide of a bear that was shot down in early autumn.

šak ol xajirakan keez-i-n
very, same that bear hide-2-ACC

220. From that very same bear hide,

xbore-en-γe æj-le-j tugerekt-ej biš-kaš,
breast-2-DAT fit-VSF-CV make.flat.object.round-CV cut-SS

221. cut out a round piece that will fit your chest,

iji emi-im-ni duj17 xirbala-n-dir čišpir tari-di-ŋt-ar-iŋ-ga
two breast-2-ACC tightly.fit glue-PASS-CAUSIMP stickIMP fit-CAUS-PERF-PF-2-DAT

222. and when you’ve glued it tightly over your breasts,

ol-la=dir.
that-EMPH=DEIC

223. well that’s that.

indžan dük-tüŋ xorek-tiŋ er-la bo-or dir sen.
then hair-ADJ chest-ADJ male-EMPH PROB-PF DEIC YOU

224. Then you’ll be a hairy chested man!”

šak indža-ar xerueer kil-di-r kil-ip al-gaš-ting,
the, very do.thus-PF the.same do-CAUS-PF do-CV SBEN-SS GEN

225. Having done just that,

kulugurj=daa çüü bo-or, daarta xojlen-i-n ust-a
hero=EMPH what PROB-CV tomorrow shirt-3-ACC take.off-CV

226. the next day, our poor hero took off his shirt,

sok-kaš okta-aš-tiŋ,
hit-SS throw.away-SS GEN

227. threw it aside,

xoj möge-le-rin-ŋiŋ ara-zin-ga olur-up-kan.
many wrestler-PL GEN distance.between-3-DAT sit.down-PERF-PST

228. and sat down among the many wrestlers.

xmik möge-le-rin-ŋiŋ, möörej-či-ler-riŋ, er-le-rin-ŋiŋ kara-a
all wrestler-PL GEN competition-AGENT-PL GEN male-PL GEN eye-3

229. The eyes of all the wrestlers, competitors, and other men

boktu-kiriš dep anijak er-niŋ xore-en-de.
B-K QUOT young male-GEN chest-3-LOC

230. were on the chest of the young man named Boktu-Kiriš.

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17. An adverb, meaning ‘by fitting into tightly’, e.g., a cork in a bottle.
231. “What kind of creature is it?

232. Its chest cannot be compared in any way to a man’s chest.

233. It is such a manly chest,

234. and on top of all that, it has bear hair growing out of it.

235. He must still have some bear ancestry,

236. so there’s no way a man can wrestle with him.

237. What kind of creature is it?”

238. Many of the wrestlers’ calves began to tremble.

239. So the wrestling began!

240. Being changed into her poor brother Boktu-Kiriš,

241. younger sister Bora-Seelei was made to begin wrestling.

242. When a very strong wrestler came up, waving his arms in an eagle dance,¹⁸

243. and dropped him upside down on top of his head.

¹⁸ The eagle dance (ezir sam) is a mimetic display that begins and ends Tuvan traditional wrestling matches. Wrestlers take wide, slow steps, executing small hops and turns and waving their arms slowly in the air as if flapping wings. They then bring their arms down and slap their palms against their inner and outer thighs. While dance skill has no bearing on the outcome of a match, it is intended to intimidate the opponent and display one’s physique and prowess before the match (and afterwards as well, for the victor). Though the routine is mostly fixed, individual wrestlers’ creativity in executing dance steps is appreciated and cheered on by spectators.
emin orta šūrak möge eškedeti-p kel-ir orta
very middle strong wrestler strut-CV CLOC-PF while
245. When another very strong wrestler strutted up to her,
ezir kaš-tuq eze-i=bile eešen-den al-gaš-tiq
eagle bird-GEN courage-3=INS heel-ABL take-SS-GEN
e she took his ankle with the courage of an eagle,
etk-i-n19 ažir šivada-p,
shoulder-3-ACC across throw.down-CV
247. flung him over her shoulder, and threw him down.
kajgamčik šūrak möge xal-ip ke-er orta,
amazing strong wrestler run-CV CLOC-PF while
248. When an amazingly strong wrestler ran up to her,
xarti-nga kašpiqaj-i=bile kattaj kak-kaš-tiq
falcon-GEN agility-3=INS together start.running.towards-SS-GEN
she ran towards him simultaneously with the agility of a falcon
xajt kil-di-r dāžšir-ūp,
SYMB do-CAUS-PF make.fall.down-CV
250. and made him fall down in a flash.
kondžug šūrak möge korgu-du-p kel-ir orta
very strong wrestler fear-CAUS-CV come-PF while
251. When another very strong wrestler approached, trying to frighten her,
kosun-nga kašpiqaj-i=bile, xos ođe xala-aš-tiq,
hare-GEN agility-3=INS empty.space through run-SS-GEN
252. she slipped between his legs with the agility of a hare,
kurg čer-ge kurguldaj-i-n kuruldur olar-t-a
empty earth-DAT tailbone-3-ACC painfully sit.down-CAUS-CV
253. and she made him fall very painfully on his tailbone on the bare ground.
okta-p tur-za tur-za tur-za,
throw-CV AUX-COND AUX-COND AUX-COND
254. So, throwing one after the other,
šaptu möge-ler-ni kira okta-p ün-e ber-gen.
all wrestler-PL-ACC on.back throw-CV go.out-CV BEN-PST
255. she beat all of the wrestlers by throwing them on their backs.
i ji duqar mőrjet-ni murnau čuk-tőn kel-gen anjak er,
two ORD competition-ACC southern direction-ABL come-PST young male
256. “In the second competition it is the young man who comes from the south
boktu-kirįš čala-p al-di, dep xaan čarla-an.
B-K take.as.winner-CV SBEN-REC.PST QUOT khan announce-PST
257. named Boktu-Kirįš who has won,” the Khan announced.
xaa-nga bűdūš bil-ir šišiškin-i xaa-nga tir-maŋ=bile kel-geš,
khan-GEN secret know-PF spy-3 khan-DAT SYMB-run=INS come-SS
258. But the Khan’s spy, who knew all the secrets, ran quickly to him
kala-an-ga simir-an-ip=tir, orta čoor be, kūžir xaan-im?
ear-3-DAT whisper-CV=DEic middle/right what QUES dear khan-1
259. and whispered in his ear: “It’s so, weird, my dear Khan,
on boktu-kirįš dep tur-ar kiži-ner
that B-K QUOT AUX-PF PERSON-2PL
260. that man of yours whom they call Boktu-Kirįš

19. Possible metathesis; cf. same form line 7 with [kt] instead of [tk].
er eves kis kiţi čiwe dir,
male NEG girl person PN DEIC

261. is not a man at all, it’s a woman.
daarta čariš Żje-zin-de xina-p kör-ūner, dep mindžan-gan=dir.
tomorrow horse.race time-3-LOC check-CV AUX-2PL IMP QUOT do.thus-PST=DEIC

262. Check it tomorrow during the horserace,” he said.
če, kandža-ar xina-ar ulus biš? dep.
disc do.how-PF check-PF PN WE QUOT

263. “Well, how are we supposed to check it?” the Khan asked.
če, xaan čari-in-dan ērt-ken čiwe eves?
okay khan announcement-3-ABL pass.by-PST PN NEG

264. “Well, who would disregard an announcement by the Khan?
daarta ʃuptu-ə-n šaldaŋ čariš-tir-əvit.
tomorrow everybody-3-ACC naked ride.horse-CAUS-PERF IMP

265. Make everybody race naked tomorrow.
a šak indžan kis kiţi-niŋ kis xindi-i kös-tū-le ber-gej,
and the same thus girl person-GEN girl genital-3 see-CV-EMPH INCH-CNCL

266. And thus let the girl’s female genitals be revealed.
xaan=daa čarlik-ti ūndir-gen-ne;
khan=EMPH announcement-ACC go.out-CAUS-EMPH

267. So the Khan made an announcement:
daarta ʃuptu šaldaŋ čariš-ir!
tomorrow everybody naked ride.horse-PF

268. “Tomorrow everybody will race on horseback naked!”
onu diŋa-p ka-aš-tiq boktu-kiriš aki-zí bo-op
thatVACC hear-CV AUX-SS-GEN B-K elder.brother-3 PROF-CV

269. Having heard this, being changed into her brother Boktu-Kiriš,
xxul-up al-gan bora-seelej kis diŋa-zi Ajan-kula àd-in-ga
change-CV SBEN-PST B-S girl younger.sibling-3 A-K horse-3-DAT

270. younger sister Bora-Seelei came quickly to her horse Ajan-Kula,
sir-man-i kel-geš, čugalaš-tə-kan=dir.
symb-run-3 come-SS talk-RECIP-PST=DEIC

271. running pell-mell, and had a talk.
kandžaanə, čoonə, ekki àd-im?
how\AMEL what.do\AMEL good horse-1

272. “What shall I do now, my good horse?
daarta ʃuptu-zə šaldaŋ čariš-ir čiwe=dir,
tomorrow everybody-3 naked race.horse-PF PN=DEIC

273. It turns out that tomorrow everybody must race horseback naked.
kis xindi-im-ni kandža-pə-əjin?
girl genitals-1-ACC do.how-PERF-1MOD

274. so what should I do about my woman’s genitals?”
ət tur-gaš mindža de-en=dir;
horse AUX-SS thusly say-PST=DEIC

275. Then her horse said:
ol deerge kingly anaa čiwe.
that POST just okay PN

276. “As for that, it’s just fine.
doo tur-gan arzaʃi de-er ala tajga-ŋə
DIST AUX-PST A. say-PF striped taiga-GEN

277. Way over there in a striped mountain forest called Arzaity,
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northern side-GEN lake-LOC many-EMPH white geese-PL swim-CV AUX-PL

278. on its northern side in a lake are swimming a lot of white geese.

ol ak kas-tar-niŋ arazin-da
this white geese-PL-GEN among-LOC

279. Among those white geese,

cuduruk=deg močak kızıl xaaj-lig askir ak kas bar=dir.
fist=like big red bill-ADJ male white goose COP=DEIC

280. there’s a white gander with a big red bill like a fist.

šak ol askir ak kas-ti sok-kaš,
the.very that male white goose-ACC hit-SS

281. Having killed that white gander,

kež-i-n soj-up okta-p-kaš-tiŋ, ak kas-tiŋ köske-e-n
skin-3-ACC peel-CV throw-PERF-SS-GEN white goose-GEN goose.part-3-ACC

282. and peeled off its skin, take the white gander’s parts,

er kiži-niŋ xap-či-i kil-di-r,
male person-GEN sack-DIM-3 do-CAUS-PF

283. and make from them a man’s testicles,

a cuduruk=deg močak kızıl xaaj-i-n
and fist=like big red beak-3-ACC

284. and take its fist-like big red beak,

mojn-u=bile kattaj xaa-a er kiži-niŋ er xindi-i kil-d-i
neck-3=INS together create-CV male person-GEN male genital-3 make-CAUS-PF

285. together with its neck, and make from them a man’s genitals,

kis xindi-in-ni duj xirba-na-n-di-r tarbid-ip aar-iŋ-ga
girl genital-2-ACC shut.tight glue-VSF-PASS-CUS-PF do.magically-CV AUX-2SG-DAT

286. and when you’ve magically glued shut your woman’s genitals with them,

ol-la=DIR!
DEIC-EMPH=DEIC

287. that’s that!

sidi-iŋ kisitg-a ber-ze,
piss-2 flow.out-CV INCH-COND

288. If you need to piss,

kas-tiŋ xaaj-i-n ködür-üp sikte-er-iq-ge
white goose-GEN bill-3-ACC raise-CV piss-PF-2-DAT

289. then you’ll raise the beak of the goose to piss,

imaar şarinajn-ip-la ber-gej dep mindža-p=šir eves be.
there run.out.noisily-CV-EMPH INCH-CNCL QUOT do.thusly-CV=DEIC NEG QUES

290. and let the piss trickle out through it,” the horse said, didn’t he?

ol-la xeeveer kil-ip al-gaš
that-EMPH the.same do-CV SBEN-SS

291. Having done exactly so,

daartaa=daa xoj er-niŋ ara-zin-ga
tomorrow=EMPH many male-GEN space.between-3-DAT

292. the next day among the numerous men,

kžiʁ boktu-kiriš aki-zi bo-op xuul-up al-gan
poor B-K elder.brother-3 PROB-CV change-CV SBEN-PST

293. being changed into her poor brother Boktu-Kiriš,

bora-seelej kis dınaa-zi kaldanjan-gaš olur-up-kan.
B-Š girl younger.sibling-3 get.naked-SS sit.down-PERF-PST

294. younger sister Bora-Seeleli sat there naked.
The eyes of all the men were on the man named Boktu-Kiris.

"What kind of man is this? With such a chest,

and on top of all that, bear’s hair is growing out of it.

And as for his genititals, his testicles are as heavy as a teapot,
But while she was changed into a gray hare,

it wasn’t proper for her to compete with people.

So, she didn’t actually change into one,

but simply took on the running speed of a gray hare.

And with the running speed of a gray hare, she ran far away.

She immediately passed the men who were running way over there.

Hah! before the guys had even reached the halfway point of the race-course,

Boktu-Kiriš came running up to that place, and what did she do next?

She ran three circles around the gathered crowd.

Then in order to put her clothes back on,

she ran off, back towards Bashky mountain.

“Well, in the third competition

the young man from the south,

Boktu-Kiriš, has won.

I’m giving him as a wife my beautiful daughter.

My golden princess Angyr-Chechen
a kūde-em-ge boktu-kiris kūde-em-ge ber-ip tur men,
and son.in.law-1-DAT B-K son.in.law-1-DAT give-CV AUX I
327. I hereby give to my son-in-law, Boktu-Kiris.

xamik ag -šeri-i. ara -albat-i-n baza čarti-i-n ber-ip tur men,
all FIG -army-3 FIG -slave-3-ACC also half-3-ACC give-CV AUX I
328. I'm also giving half of all of my mighty army and slaves.

mal -magan-im-ni ekki čarti-i-n baza ber-ip tur men, dep
livestock -FIG-1-GEN good half-3-ACC also give-CV AUX I QUOT
329. I'm also giving him the good half of my livestock,"

xaan čartlig ūn-dār-gen.
the Khan announced go.out-CAUS-PST
330. the Khan announced.

a mege-či šiviškin-i čuva megele-p,
and lie-AGENT spy-3 PN lie-CV
331. And the deceitful spy, who lied

xaan-niŋ xamik șagnal-i-n čettir-ip tur-ar-i dees-tiŋ,
Khan-GEN all prize-3-ACC desire/seek-CV AUX-PF-3 AUX-GEN
332. and desired to win all the Khan's prizes,
si kīmē-la-t-kaš, ojla-di-p-kan.
strongly riding.crop-VSF-CAUS-SS chase.away-CAUS-PERF-PST
333. was given a sound beating with a riding crop and chased away.

kūžir boktu-kiris čuua bo-or am.
poor B-K what PROB-CV now
334. And what did poor Boktu-Kiris do next?

șan xaan-niŋ čaraš kīz-i-n,
Š X-GEN beautiful girl-3-ACC
335. (She took) Sang Khan's beautiful daughter,

angir-çečen aldin daggina-ni
golden princess-ACC A-Č golden princess-ACC
336. golden princess Angyr-Chechen,

köžir-üp al-gaš, čurt-un-dże čan-ip čor-up or-gan.
migrate-migrate-CV BEN-SS homeland-3-ALL go.home-CV go.CV AUX-PST
337. and traveled back to the homeland.

aal-i-niŋ čoog-un-ga čor-up kel-çeš-tier;
yurt.camp-3-GEN proximity-3-DAT go.CV CLOC-SS-GEN
338. When they came up close to the yurt,

čaa, am aal irak eves,
okay now yurt.camp far NEG
339. "Well, the yurt camp is not far from here,

men ög öög-i-n až-ip ēda-jin, de-çeš-tier,
I yurt button-3-ACC open-CV AUX-1MOD say-SS-GEN
340. I'll go to unbutton the door," she said.

xal-i-p ēd-i-p ke-er siler, de-çeš-tier,
rise-CV arrive-CV CLOC-PF 2PL AUX-SS-GEN
341. "You come running after me," she said.

aal-in-ga xal-i-p ēd-e ber-çeš-tier,
yurt.camp-3-DAT run-CV reach-CV BEN-SS-GEN
342. And having reached the yurt camp,

doo kuj-da su-p ka-an öl-gen aki-zi-n
that-PST cave-LOC put.in-CV AUX-PST die-PST elder.brother-3-ACC
343. (went) to that cave she had put her dead brother in,
uşt-up  al-gaş-tiŋ,
take.out-CV SBEN-SS-GEN
344. and took him out.
ög  orn-un-da  ekke-p  sal-gaš,
yurt bed-3-LOC bring-CV put-ss,
345. Having brought him and placed him on the bed in the yurt,
ergiz-ip  tarbida-p  ka-aš-tiŋ,
thaw-CV do.magically-CV AUX-SS-GEN
346. and magically thawed him out,
bod-u  čaštiŋ-a  ber-gen,
self-3 hide.self-CV INCH-PST
347. she hid herself.

šan  xaan-niŋ  čaraš  kiz-i  angir-čečen  alđin  daygina
Š.  X.-GEN  beautiful  girl-3  A-Č  golden  princess
348. And Šäng Khan’s beautiful daughter, the golden princess Angyr-Chechen,
köč-üp  ēd-ip  ke-er-ge,
move/migrate-CV arrive-CV CLOC-PF-DAT
349. when she arrived at the camp,
deebm  čaa  xal-di-p  čor-uj  bar-gan  aš-a
just  new  run-CAUS-CV go-CV TLOC-PST husband-3
350. saw her husband, who had just made her run (to the yurt),
öl-üp  kal-gan,  orun  kirin-da  bo  čiit-kan
die-CV AUX-PST bed  top-LOC DEIC lie-PST
351. lying there dead on top of the bed.

oon  sóol-ūn-de  kondžug  ertem  šílig-liq  dangina=daa  čüü  bo-or,
this  behind-3-LOC  very  knowledge  skill-ADJ princess=EMPH DEIC PROB-CV
352. And what could a princess with magic powers do then?
mönqum  čištii-ūn  uşt-up  ekkel-gaš-tiŋ;
silver  ring-3-ACC take.out-CV bring-SS-GEN
353. She took out her silver ring,
meen  aša-am  boktu-kiriš  šin  bol-za,
my  husband-1  B-K  true  COP-COND
354. (and she said) “If it is truly my husband Boktu-Kiriš,
siŋ-gan  sōög-ū  dutč-u  ber-zin,
break-PST bone-3 connect-CV BEN-IMP3
355. let his broken bones join together,
üzül-gen  šoönđiži-zii  ettin-e  ber-zin,
tear.up-PST intestines-3 become.good-CV AUX-IMP3
356. let his torn up guts recover,”
de-eš  domna-ar-ga,
say-SS do.magically-PF-DAT
357. she said, and magically made it happen.
čarl-ip  kal-gan  molduru-u  anaa  appar-gan,
break.up-PST AUX-PST backbone-3 good become-PST
358. And then his broken backbone healed.
če,  meen  aša-am  boktu-kiriš  šin  bol-za  tur-a
okay  my  husband-1  B-K  true  COP-COND stand.up-CV
359. “Well, if this is truly my husband Boktu-Kiriš, he will stand up.
xal-ip-la  ke-er  ijaan,  deš  domna-ar-ga,
run-CV-EMPH CLOC-PF DISC POST do.magically-PF-DAT
360. and surely come running (to me),” she said, working her magic.
After then he really did stand up and came running right to her.

And he said "Oh, fuck! Did I oversleep?

I thought that it was just a dream,

but I really did marry,

and bring her home, apparently," he said.

And as for the golden princess Angyr-Chechen,

he took her and kissed and licked her, and everybody simply admired them.

And when they looked over yonder, (they saw) his younger sister Bora-Seelei

together with her own lover,

Kara-Chüvelekä, the brave son of Karatä Khan.

Here they came laughing and walking together.

So right after that, the two siblings, with his brother-in-law and her sister-in-law,

the four of them together,
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377. encamped their yurt on the hilly lands,

378. and brought their livestock up to the high ground,

379. they evened out the vales and hills,

380. and have gone on living there ever since. The end.

381. Clap your hands!

23. öön tip < ög tiger ‘to set up / pitch / construct a yurt’.

MORPHO-SYNTACTIC TAGS

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