2005

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

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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-Şelei, 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-Kiriş) 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. Şojdak-ool 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 MATERIAL 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

¹. Recorded in August 1998 near Aryg-Uzii village in central Tuva, on Hi8 digital videotape and DAT audio tape, assisted by Mr. Afanassij 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 eezi) 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 šjjaan am, formulaic speech roughly translatable as “once upon a time,” a story would begin. Listeners might from time to time call out šjjaan, 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 bızaanči, a bowed two-stringed instrument with a skin-covered resonator, but instrumental accompaniment was not essential.

The tale presented here, Boktu-Kiriš Bora-Seelei, is a hero tale (Grebev 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,
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-ool 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-ool 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-ool 1997). Though a few Tuvan texts have been translated into Russian (Taube 1994, Orus-ool 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-ool 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 (jöreel), tongue-twisters (dürgen čugaa), shamanic chants (algiš), stories (čugaa), metered verse (šiišii), Buddhist prayers (mörğiił), songs (ir), aphorisms (üleger sös), and riddles (tiwiiš). 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 Süücki 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. Tuvan 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 Šojjak-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-Uzüi 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 Sojdak-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-ŚEELEI

tiva ulustun boktu-kiriš, bora-śeelej dep,
Tuvan people-GEN Boktu-Kiriš Bora-Śeelei QUOT
1. A Tuvan people's tale called Boktu-Kiriš Bora-Śeelei,
dika xoj janzi tool-dar-i bar.
very many different tale-PL-3 COP
2. of which there are many different versions.
    ol kajgamčik-ñig solun tool-dar-niŋ en-ne kiska-zi-n,
this wonderful-ADJ interesting tale-PL-GEN most-EMPH brief-3-ACC
3. The briefest of these wonderfully interesting tales,
on beš-le minut bol-gaš doors-t-u be-er kiska tool-du,
ten five-EMPH minute be-ss finish-PERF-CV AUX-PF brief tale-ACC
4. a short one, finished in just fifteen minutes,
siler-niŋ kicēengej-iğer-ge baraalg-a-dt-pt-ajn. šijaan am
you-GEN attention-2.PL-DAT present-CAUS-PERF-PFL FORM FORM
5. I present to your attention. Once upon a time . . .
[recitative style begins with line 6]
    šijaa am, ertengi-niŋ erte-zin-de, burungu-niŋ murmun-da,
FORM FORM morning-GEN early-3-LOC long.ago-GEN before-LOC
6. Once upon a time, in the very earliest morning of time, before the long, long ago,
    ekti šag-niŋ ekt-in-de, bagaj šag-niŋ baž-in-da,
good time-GEN shoulder-3-LOC bad time-GEN head-3-LOC
7. at the end of the bad times, before the good times,
    elik xīlbūs, sīn mijgaa ezim-in-ge sīnįş-pas,
white.tailed.deer.stag doe elk.stag elk.doe forest-3-DAT fit.into-RCP-NEG
8. when the deer and doe, the wild elk stag and elk doe overflowed from their woods.

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.

argan čunma, kojgun, torlaa arga-zin-ga sinj-š-pas,
forest wild.mountain.goat hare grouse forest-3-DAT fit.into-rcp-NEG
9. the mountain goat, the hare, and the grouse overflowed from their forests,
magadandžig baj bajlak ekki šag-da čiweŋ irgin.
wonderful rich plentiful good time-LOC DISC DISC
10. a rich, wonderful, and plentiful good time it was, so they say.
štjaan am aralčula-ar čiraaj sajak
FORM FORM change.gait-PF brown.with.black.mane.and.tail mixed.gait
11. Once upon a time, (riding along) on a mixed-gait brown horse with black mane and tail,
ajan-kula ut-tig
A-K horse-ADJ
12. named Ajan-Kula,
alin iškaš kaas čaraš
gold like well-dressed handsome
13. was splendid as gold, handsomely dressed (Boktu-Kiriš),
bora-šeelej kis dijma-lig,
B-Š girl younger.sibling-ADJ
14. with his younger sister Bora-Seelei,
boktu-kiriš, sajin er-i čor-up tur eves be.
B-K Sajin male-3 go-cv aux neg ques
15. Boktu-Kiriš of the Sayin clan. He was going along, wasn’t he?
štjaan am boktu-kiriš, bora-šeelej
FORM FORM B-K, B-Š
16. Once upon a time Boktu-Kiriš and Bora-Seelei,
ališki-lar, deerge. ēdi i eg-i-n aš-kan,
post meat-3 shoulder-3-ACC pass.over-PST
17. 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
18. and livestock reaching higher than their heads.
övür čer-niŋ özën-in-ge döŋ-ne-p xavir-ar
southern place-GEN hollow-3-DAT hill-vsF-cv round.up-PF
19. In a southern land in a hollow on a hill they rounded up
öle -bula čügi-lig,
gray -gray3 horse.herd-ADJ
20. the herd4 of gray horses.
ari čer-niŋ arga-zin-ga
northern.slope place-GEN forest-3-DAT
21. In a forest on a northern slope
döŋ-ne-p xavir-ar ala šokar inek-ter-lig,
hill-vsF-cv round.up-PF striped -spotted cow-PL-ADJ
22. they rounded up the striped and spotted cows.
xovu čer-niŋ delgem-in-ge
field place-GEN wide.space-3-DAT
23. On a wide and even plain

3. öle-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 com-
ounded works may lack independent lexical meaning.
4. The unit čügi denotes a herd of (about) forty horses.
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döng-ne-p xavir-ar xoor -sarig teve-lığ,
hill-VSF-CV round.up-PF brown -yellow camel-ADJ
24. they rounded up the brown and yellow camels.

kaşpal čer-nîq xaja-zîn-ga döng-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

kažan siy-mas xaragan=deg xoj öşkü-lığ,
livestock.pen3 fit.into-NEG\$ 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-nîq baj -şiţrak, aţîl -işi şi
amazing-ADJ rich -strong work -effort
27. Amazingly rich, wealthy,⁶ and hard-working

alişki-lar, čüvey irgin iija og,
sibling-PL DISC DISC DISC DISC
28. were the siblings, so they say,

şişan am boktu-kiriş aki-zi
FORM FORM B-K elder.brother-3
29. And so it was that elder brother Boktu-Kiriş

arg a sin-nîq an-în aynă-ar,
forest mountain.ridge-GEN animal-3-ACC hunt-PF
30. hunted animals of the forested mountain ridge.

ekker -eres adîğţi, brave -courageous archer
31. He was a brave archer,

bizani-ir, čazani-ir, dargan-na-ar, bizaj-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 diyına-zi
B-S girl younger.sibling-3
33. Bora-Seelei his younger sister

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

aş 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,

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

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

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

5. A kaţan 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 širak literally ‘rich strong’, meaning ‘very rich’. 
39. went hunting on the forested mountain ridge,

40. and disappeared without a trace.

41. Bora-Seelei his younger sister

42. was a person who could read divining bones.

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

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

45. had died.

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

47. And so it was that his younger sister Bora-Seelei

48. was a shape changer.

49. She immediately changed into a hawk,

50. and flew to that place.

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

52. Ajan-Kula said:

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

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

55. and I failed to notice a bear’s den.
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iji xol-um ki-ir bas-kaš, dongaj-a düž-er-im-de,
two arm-1 enter-pf fall.into-ss stoop.down-cv descend-pf-1-loc
56. When my two arms 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-tiq, 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.

ol-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 düma-zi
B-Š girl younger.sibling-3
60. Bora-Šeelei his younger sister

aki-zi-niŋ 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 čež=daa igla-ar-ga
nonetheless=emph however.much=emph cry-pf-dat
63. But no matter how much she may have cried,
ažik daza čog-u-n bil-ip ka-ap-kaš, igla-ar-i-n soska-di-p-kaš-tiq,
use help neg-3-acc find.out-cv aux-perf-ss cry-pf-3-acc stop-caus-perf-ss-gen
64. she understood that crying was of no use or help, so she made herself stop crying.

öl-gen aki-zi-n kandža-p dirgiši-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-ir.
divining -bones place-cv inch-perf-pf
66. she began to lay out her divining bones.8

šo -tölge sal-gaš kö-ör-ge,
divining -bones place-ss see-pf-dat
67. When she laid out the divining bones, she saw

bireves bora-šeelej kis düma-zi
if B-Š girl younger.sibling-3
68. (what would happen) if Bora-Šeelei 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 (kažīk), 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 kişî bo-op xuul-up al-gaş-tîq
male person PROB-CV change.into-CV SBEN-SS-GEN
70. by changing into the man
čige songu čûk-tî eţel-ej töre-en
straight north direction-ACC rule/occupy-CV BORN-PST
71. born to rule the lands directly to the north.
şâng xaan-nîj čarâş kiż-i
Ş. X.-GEN beautiful girl-3
72. (And if he would take) the beautiful daughter of Şâng Khan,
Angîr-cheçen al-dîn dangina-nî kadaj kil-d-îr
A.-Ç. golden princess-ACC wife do-CAUS-PF
73. the golden princess Angyr-Chechen, as his wife
kudala-p ekke-er bol-za, ol-la al-dîn dangina
wed-CV bring-PF AUX-COND this-EMPH golden princess
74. and marry her, then that very same golden princess
boktu-kiriş-tî olûm -çidim-den=daa kamgala-ar,
B.-K-ACC death -demise-ADJ=EMPH protect-PF
75. would protect Boktu-Kiriş, even from death.
öli=p=daa ka-ar-ga dirgîz-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,
mindîg kondzûg ertem -sîbî-lij dangina=dir dep
thus such knowledge -magic-ADJ princess=DEIC QUOT
77. because the princess possessed such strong magic.
şol -tölge körgüs-ken=dir.
divining -bones show-PST=DEIC
78. So the divining bones showed.
kaţûr bora-seelei kîs dûma-zi,
poor B-Š girl younger.sibling-3
79. Now poor Bora-Seelei his younger sister
xuul upt-ar kişî čûş bo-or,
change.shape-PERF-PF PN DISC PROB-PF
80. was a shape-changer.
boktu-kiriş aki-zî kil-d-îr 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-Kiriş by changing herself into him.
xuul-up xuul-up al-gaş,
change.into-CV change.into-CV SBEN-SS
82. After changing and changing,
körîndzûk-ke kör-dî-n-gen körîndzûk-ke körînd-er-ge
mirror-DAT look.at-Cause-PASS-PST mirror-DAT look.at-PF-DAT
83. she looked at herself in the mirror. When she looked at herself in the mirror,
kirbej kara sal-dîg, čoon kara keţege-lij,
short/thin black beard-ADJ thick black braid-ADJ
84. she had a thin black beard and a thick black braid of hair,
kadar xavak-tîq, kalçan bas-tîq, ajak=deg ala karak-tîq,
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.
altîs šulus aks=i=deg aazok ulug aas-tîq,
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-lig
strong-RED muscle-PL-ADJ
88. and she had strong, strong muscles,
möge širak, ulug čaagaj-i deerge
wrestler powerful big full.grown-3 POST
89. full-grown and big like a wrestler’s.
ana bir adig -mažalaj=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 kiți-ning 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 boža-ur,
also offspring-offspring-ACC be.fated-CV give.birth.to-PF
93. And she had something created to give birth to children,
ači-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=tor eves=be
95. she still had her woman’s genitals, the same as before, so it seemed.
am kandžal-zi-m-za ekki=l? dep
own do.thusly-COND-lSG-COND goOd=DEIC QUOT
96. “Even though I’ve changed, what good is it?”
ajan-kula ād-in-dan ajit-gan=dir.
A-K horse-3-ABL ask-PST=DEIC
97. she asked her horse Ajan-Kula.
ajan-kula ād-i mindza de-en=dir.
A-K horse-3 thus say-PST=DEIC
98. Her horse Ajan-Kula said:
sen ol iji emi-ing-ni=daa, kis xindi-ing-ni=daa
99. “Those two breasts of yours and your girl’s genitals,
kandža-ar=daa ösker-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 janzi=burū arga-lar-ni ažig-la-p tur-gaš-ting
101. However, by using various methods,
iji emi-in-ni=daa, kis xindi-in-ni=daa
two breasts-2-ACC=EMPH girl genitals-2-ACC=EMPH
even your two breasts and your woman’s genitals
kim-ga=daa köröüs-pe-jn.,
who-DAT=EMPH show-NEG-1:MOD
I will not let anyone see.
boktu-kiriš aki-ŋ bo-op, er kiži bo-op
B-K elder.brother-2 PROB-CV male person PROB-CV
As your elder brother Boktu-Kiriš, as a man,
bügü-le mööörej-ler-ni až-ip ün-geš-tiŋ,
all-EMPH competition-PL-ACC go.over-CV go.out-SS-GEN
overcoming and winning all the competitions,
čiğe sonqu čük-tü ežel-ej töre-en
straight north direction-ACC rule/occupy-CV be.born-PST
born to rule in the lands directly to the north,
šañ xaan-niŋ aldin čaraš kiž-i
š. X.-GEN golden beautiful girl-3
(taking) Šang Khan’s beautiful, golden daughter,
angır-čečen aldin dañgina-ni
A-Č golden princess-ACC
Angyr-Chechen, the golden princess,
kadaq kil-di-r kudala-p ekle-geš-tiŋ,
wife do-CAUS-PF wed-CV bring-SS-GEN
and bringing her as his wife to wed,
oł-gen aki-ŋ-ni dirgis-tir-ip a-pť-ar arga-ŋ bar kiži=dir sen.
brother-2-ACC enliven-CAUS-CV SBN-PERF-PF method-2 COP person=DEIC you
you are the person who’s able to bring your dead brother back to life.
dürgen-ne aki-ŋ-niŋ idik -xev-i-n kettin-iwšit,
quickly-EMPH elder.brother-3-ACC shoe -clothes-3-ACC put.on.clothing-PERFIMP
Hurry up now, put on the shoes and the clothes of your elder brother,
čora-pt-aali,
GO-PERF-DUALIMP
and let’s go, the two of us.
oon baška inda ada-an mööörej egele-er dep bar-dâ.
or else there call-PST competition begin-PF quot cop-rec.pst
For the announced competition is just about to begin.
xaqik kúdeer-ler, deërge,
all suitor-PL POST
As for all the suitors,
čiğ-ip kel-gen, marqš-ž-ip tur-lar, dep
gather-PASS-CV come-PST compete-RCP-CV AUX-PL QUOT
they have already gathered to compete,”
at mindžan-gan-dir.
horse do.thusly-PST=DEIC
said the horse.
indša de-er orta, bora-šeelej kis diŋma-zi čiिह bo-ar.
Thus say-PF as soon as B-Š girl younger.sibling-3 what PROB-CV
As soon as the horse said so, what could younger sister Bora-Šeelei do?
oł-gen aki-zi-n iri-ves, čiिह-vas
die-PST elder.brother-3-ACC rot-NEG-F stink-NEG-F
So that her dead elder brother would not rot and stink,

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don ̀er=deg  kîl-di-r  don-ur  tarbîda-p-kâş-tîng,
frozen meat=like  do-CAUS-PF  freeze-PF  do.magically-PERF-ss-GEN

119. She magically turned him into frozen meat.
dedîr  aas-tîg  kara  kuj-ga  suk-kâş-tîng,
back  mouth-ADJ  black  cave-DAT  put.in-ss-GEN

120. She put him into the mouth of a black cave,
ask-i-n  bûdûn  turug  xaja  kîl-d-ir  duj  tarbîda-p-kâş-tîng,
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-ci-nûn  bûrûn  idîk  -xev-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,
čə  -sogun-u-n  čûkte-eš-tîng,  ajan-kula  â-t-ti  mun-gaš-tîng,
bow  -arrow-3-ACC  take.on-ss-GEN  A-K  horse-ACC  mount/ride-SS-GEN

123. Took up his bow and arrows, mounted the horse Ajan-Kula,
čège  songu  čûk-če  uţa-du-p  čoru-p-kan.
straight  north  direction-ALL  fly.away-CAUs-cv  go-PERF.PST

124. And made the horse fly away directly to the north.
čège  songu  čûk-te  šaj  xaan-nîn  aal-in-ga  ke-er-ge,
straight  north(ern)  direction-LOC  S.  X.-gen  campsite-3-DAT  come-PF-DAT

125. When she came in a straight northerly direction and arrived at Šang Khan’s campsite,
ät  baţ-i  orgu-p,  kîlî  baţ-i  kizîr.
horse  head-3  spread.out-cv  person  head-3  multiply\SYM

126. There were horses and people spread out as far as the eye could see.
čon=hîle  čuagaala-ţ-ip  kî-ôr-ge,
people=INS  talk-RCP-cv  aux-pf-dat

127. After having talked to people,
am  daarta  ada-an  möörej  egele-er.
now  tomorrow  call-PST  competition  begin-PF

128. (She found out) the announced competition would begin tomorrow.
šaj  xaan  ūş  möörej  čarla-an.
š.  X.  three  competition  announce-PST

129. Šang Khan had announced three events:
bir-le  dugaar-in-da  eres  adigî-zi-n  kî-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;
küde-ler-nîn  čas-pas  ad-ar-i-n  kî-ôr  ča  -sogun=bîle.
suitor-PL-GEN  miss-NEG\AF  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.
ijî  dugaar-in-da  mîçe  -şîra-a-n  kî-ôr,  xüre-š-tir-er.
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.
ūş  dugaar-in-da  eres  -kaşpuqaj-i-n  kî-ôr,  čarîş-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.
šak  ol  ūş  möörej-ge  aţ-ip  ūn-gen  eý  eres  küde-ge
that.very  this  three  competition-DAT  win-cv  go.out-PST  most  brave  suitor-DAT

134. To the winner of those three competitions, to the bravest suitor,
uru-un-nu  kadaj  kîl-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 möngün-ü=bile, mal -magan-i=bile,
all gold silver-3=INS, cattle -livestock-ACC=INS
136. together with all her gold and silver, and with all her livestock,

ara -albät-z-i=bile, dep
slave -servant-3=INS QUOT
137. and with her slaves,"

šan xaan mindig čarlık ün-dür-gen=dir.
Š. X. such announcement go.out-CAUS-PST=DEIC
138. Šang Khan announced.

cčaa, küžür er-le=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 xün-de xamik er čiiü bo-or,
tomorrow day-LOC all male DEIC PROB-CV
140. And the next day what did all the men do?

başkı tanđı-niŋ eden-de
B. T.-GEN mountain.foot-LOC
141. At the foot of Bashky-Tangdy mountain,

cča -sogun-u-n keze-geš tur-up-kan.
arow -bow-3-ACC prepare-ss AUX-PST
142. they began to prepare their bows and arrows.

songu tanđi-niŋ eden-de
S. T.-GEN mountain.foot-LOC
143. At the foot of Songu-Tangdy mountain,

üüz araattan an-nar-ni ilcirbe-le-p ka-an.
three wild animal-PL-ACC chain-vsF-cv aux-pst
144. there were three wild animals already chained up.

ol araattan an-nar deerge karţi xaĵrakan,
those wild animal-PL disc cruel bear,
145. These wild, predatory animals were a cruel bear,

ajiiil-dig arzilaŋ, xan-ga pōk-pes kōk bürũ, danger-ADJ lion blood-DAT gray/blue wolf
146. a dangerous lion,11 and a bloodthirsty gray wolf.

ol xaan kärüne-niŋ mal -magan-in-ga 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 -albatı kiž̃-ler-in-ge deerge ajiiil-dig boj̃al-d̃i 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,

kalčaara-p tur-gan araattan-nar.
get.aggressive-cv AUX-PST wild.animal-PL
149. and becoming more aggressive.

xaan-niŋ kadığ xoojlu-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 šiit-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 - seri-i algi - kiški=bile bar-gaš-tiq,
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-ash-tiq am ilčirbe-le-p ka-an.
live-DAT catch.with.barking.dogs-GEN now chain-VSF-CV AUX-PST

153. caught them alive, accompanied with a great barking of dogs, and chained them up.
onu xōi er ča - sogun=bile båški 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=PL QUES
down to the foot of the Songu mountain to shoot (them), don’t you say?
čaa! mūörej=daa egele-en
okay competition=EMPH begin-PST

156. Okay, the competition has begun!

xamik eriŋ=daa ad-ip kir-ip(‘e’)-t-ken.
all male=EMPH shoot-CV INCH-PERF-EMPH-CAUS-PST

157. All the men began to make the arrows shoot.
dāš-ke čed-ir at-kan xōi eriŋ deerge,
noon-DAT reach-PF shoot-PST many male POST

158. The many men shot until noon,
čangis=taa kūši-niŋ sogun-u čet-pes.
single=EMPH person-GEN arrow-3 reach-NEG

159. but not a single man’s arrow reached the targets.
boktu-kiriš dep at-tig, kirbej kara sal-dig 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-VSF-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

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?
čuğe at-pa-jin tur sen? dep oör-ą mindzan-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 mūörej-ge kir-ț-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 řeej men,
fear-CV AUX DISC I

167. so I am afraid,
korg-up, čäre-em čagdat-pajn tur, dep mindig.
168. I’m afraid and my heart will not let me do it,” he answered.

fear-CV heart-I come.up-NEG AUX QUOT thus

169. “Oh! You’re just a little woman,

excl you=EMPH just woman-DIM

170. you aren’t a woman, are you, friend?” asked the other men.

aal sen-daa anaa espi-dej,

woman NEG you QUES QUOT friend-3 thus

171. “Well, I can be a woman, I can be whatever,

am kandža-ar, aki-lar-im.

now do-PST PF elder.brother-PL-1

172. but what can I do, my elder brothers?

cérle šaaam mindig kiži dir men, dep

always fig like person =DEIC I QUOT

173. That is just the way I am,” he said,

šak mindža-p tur-up-la kal-gan-na, mindig.

exactly do-PST CV stand-CV-EMPH stay-PST-EMPH thus

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

er<ler>in kežee-ge čed-ir at-kan,

male<PL> evening-DAT reach-PF shoot-PST

175. All the men kept shooting until evening,

čangi-ži-nig=daa sogun-u čet-pe-en.

single-3 GEN=EMPH arrow-3 reach-NEG-PST

176. but not a single one of their arrows reached the target.

adak sōölìn-de boktu-kiriš dep at-tig,

very end-LOC B-K QUOT name-ADJ

177. At the very end only the man by the name of Boktu-Kiriš,

kirbej kara sal-dig anjak er art-ip kal-gan.

short black beard-ADJ young male remain-CV AUX-PST

178. with a short black beard, remained.

cē sen čaaskaan art-ì-n, er, at! dep

okay you alone remain-REC.PST-2 male shootViMP QUOT

179. “You are the only man left, shoot!”

er<ler>in mindžan-gan.

male<PL> do-PST

180. the other men said.

indža-ar-ga=daa kuluguruŋ kezen-ip kir-ip<le>-t-ken.

do-PST PF-DAT=EMPH hero prepare.to shoot-CV INCH-PERF(EMPH)-CAUS-PST

181. Only after that the hero began to prepare himself for shooting.

küžür erin=daa čiũu boor, deerzìn, küžür boktu-kiriš,

poor male=EMPH what PROB DISC poor B-K

182. What could the poor guy do, poor Boktu-Kiriš?

bir dugaar sogun-u-n čaja-ap

one number arrow-3 ACC move.up/down-CV

183. He moved his bow up and down to aim the first arrow,


pull-CV pull-CV pull-CV put-PST-EMPH

184. then pulled, pulled, pulled it back and shot.
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karže xajirakan-niŋ xava-a-niŋ sōōg-ū-n dež-e at-kaš, cruel bear-GEN forehead-3-GEN bone-3-ACC hit-through-cv shoot-ss
185. His arrow broke right through the forehead bone of the cruel bear.

calbak ěčarin-in ėttür at-kaš, flat shoulder-blade-3-ACC crosswise shoot-ss
186. And having shot through the flat shoulder blade of it,

kara baar-i-n uš-ta ad-ip ün-dür-üp-ken
black liver-3-ACC out-LOC shoot-cv go.out-CAUS-cv-PST
187. put out its black liver

bir dugaar oog-u=bile.
one ORD shot-3=INS
188. with the very first shot.

iji dugaar oog-u-n kuluguruŋ, deerge, sogun-u-n
two ORD shot-3-ACC hero POST arrow-3-ACC
189. The hero (readied) his second shot,

pull-cv pull-cv pull-cv put-PST-EMPH
190. pulled, pulled, pulled back and let fly,

ajil-dig arzial-niŋ aks-i-diž-i-n uuj at-kaš,
danger-ADJ mythical.lion-gen mouth-3-teeth-3-ACC out shoot-ss
191. and shot out the teeth of the dangerous lion,

twisted-ADJ six neck-3-ACC separate-cv shoot-cv go-CAUS-PERF-PST-EMPH
192. then shot apart its six twisted necks.

uš dugaar sogun-u-n kuluguruŋ
three ORD arrow-3-ACC hero
193. Then the hero, taking the third arrow,

pull-cv pull-cv pull-cv pull-cv put-PST-EMPH
194. pulled, pulled, pulled, pulled back and let fly.

xan-ga pök-pes kōk bōrii-niŋ mōon-ū-n bōdūrede at-kaš,
blood-DAT quench-NEG blue wolf-gen guts-3-ACC SYMB shoot-ss
195. And having shot out the guts of the bloodthirsty gray wolf,

börbek baž-i-n už-e ad-ip čoru-du-p-kan.
roundSYMB head-3-ACC separate-cv shoot-cv go-CAUS-PERF-PST
196. he shot its round head right off.

bir dugaar mōrej-ni murnuu čuk-ten kel-gen anjak er,
one ORD competition-ACC southern direction-ABL come-PST young male
197. “The first competition was won by the young man who’s come from the south

boktu-kiriš dep čaul-ap al-dì! dep xaan čarla-an=dir.
B-K QUOT win-cv SBEN-REC-PST QUOT khan announce-PST=DEIC
198. and goes by the name of Boktu-Kiriš!” announced the Khan.

xaan-niŋ būdāu bil-ir šiviškin-i
khan-GEN secretly know-PF spy-3
199. Then the Khan’s spy, who secretly knew all,

xaan-ga sīr-man=bile kel-geš-tiŋ, kula-an-ga simiran-gan čuve dir.
khan-DAT SYMB-running=INS come-SS-GEN ear-3-DAT whisper-PST PN DEIC
200. ran quickly to him and whispered in his ear:

12. Sound symbolic for clattering or intensity.
“Look, Khan, that very man, the one whom they call Boktu-Kiris,

is not a man at all, but a woman.

Check it tomorrow during the wrestling," he asked the Khan.

"And how are we supposed to check it?" asked the Khan.

"Then the breasts of the woman will be revealed!"

So, the Khan put out an announcement:

“Everybody will wrestle shirtless and naked tomorrow!”

Having heard this, she who had changed into her elder brother Boktu-Kiris,

"What can I do now, my good horse?"

It turns out that everybody will have to wrestle shirtless and naked tomorrow.

13. Added palatalization on final consonants (e.g., [t] instead of expected [t]) marks a special ameliorative or pejorative register, considered vulgar and colloquial vis-à-vis standard Tuvan.

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.

15. The traditional dress of the Tuvan wrestler includes high boots (idik), tight shorts (šodak), and a jacket (šolan) 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.
What shall I do about my two breasts?” she asked, didn’t she?

And her horse Ajan-Kula said:

“I’m fine, just fine.

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

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

From that very same bear hide,

cut out a round piece that will fit your chest,

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

well that’s that.

Then you’ll be a hairy chested man!”

Having done just that,

and sat down among the many wrestlers.

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

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

Possibly *kandžaptan*, with ameliorative final-consonant palatalization.

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 şıırak möge eşekedi-p kel-ir orta
very middle strong wrestler strut-CV CLOC-PF while

245. When another very strong wrestler strutted up to her,

ezir kaş-tug erez-i=bile eezeug-den al-gaš-tiŋ
eagle bird-GEN courage-3=INS heel-ABL take-SS-GEN
she took his ankle with the courage of an eagle,

etk-i-n19 əžir şivada-p,
shoulder-3-ACC across throw.down-CV

246. flung him over her shoulder, and threw him down.

kajgamčik şıırak möge xal-ip ke-er orta,
amazing strong wrestler throw-CV CLOC-PF while

248. When an amazingly strong wrestler ran up to her,

xartiga-niŋ kašpiğa-i=bile kattaj kak-kaš-tiŋ
falcon-GEN agility-3=INS together start.running.towards-SS-GEN
she ran towards him simultaneously with the agility of a falcon

249. and made him fall down in a flash.

kondžug şıırak 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,

kojgun-nun kašpiğa-i-bile, xos öde xala-aš-tiŋ,
hare-GEN agility-3=INS empty.space through run-SS-GEN

252. she slipped between his legs with the agility of a hare,

kurug čer-ge kurgaldaj-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.

254. So, throwing one after the other,

šuptu möge-lér-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.

256. “In the second competition it is the young man who comes from the south

boktu-kiriš čala-p al-di, dep xaan čara-an.
B-K take.as.winner-CV SBEN-REC.PST QUOT khan announce-PST

257. named Boktu-Kiriš who has won,” the Khan announced.

258. But the Khan’s spy, who knew all the secrets, ran quickly to him

kura-an-ga simiran-ip=ı̇r. orta čoor be, küžür 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,

ol boktu-kiriš dep tur-ar kiž-ı̇r
that B-K QUOT AUX-PF PERSON-2PL

260. that man of yours whom they call Boktu-Kiriš

19. Possible metathesis; cf. same form line 7 with [kt] instead of [tk].
er eves kis kiži čüve dir, 
males NEG girls person PN DEIC

261. is not a man at all, it’s a woman. 

daarta čarši šije-zin-de xina-p kör-ünjer, 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. 

cě, 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. 

cě œe xaači-in-dan ert-ken čüve eves? 
okay khan announcement-3-ABL pass-by-PST PN NEG

264. “Well, who would disregard an announcement by the Khan? 

daarta šuptu-zu-n šaldaŋ čarši-tir-ivit. 
tomorrow everybody-3-ACC naked ride.horse-CAUS-PERF IMP

265. Make everybody race naked tomorrow. 

a šak indžan kis kiži-niŋ kis xindi-i kōs-tü-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 čarlık-ti ünder-gen-ne: 
khan=EMPH announcement-ACC go.out-CAUS-EMPH

267. So the Khan made an announcement: 

daarta šuptu šaldaŋ čarši-ir! 
tomorrow everybody naked ride.horse-PF

268. “Tomorrow everybody will race on horseback naked!” 

oun diŋna-p ka-aš-tiŋ boktu-kiriš aš-zi bo-op 
thatACC hear-CV AUX-SS-GEN B-K elder.brother-3 PROB-CV

269. Having heard this, being changed into her brother Boktu-Kiriš, 

xwal-up al-gan bora-seelej kis diŋna-zi Ajan-kula òd-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, čuğala-š-kan=dir. 
symb-run-3 come-SS talk-RECIP-PST=DEIC

271. running pell-mell, and had a talk. 

kandžaan!, čoon!, ekki òd-im? 
how AMEL what.do AMEL good horse-1

272. “What shall I do now, my good horse? 

daarta šuptu-zu šaldaŋ čarši-ir čüve=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-pt-ajin? 
girl genitals-1-ACC do how-PERF-1MOD

274. so what should I do about my woman’s genitals?” 

òt tur-gaš mindža de-en=dir. 
horse AUX-SS thusly say-PST=DEIC

275. Then her horse said: 

ol deerge kınıŋuş anaa čüve. 
that POST just okay PN

276. “As for that, it’s just fine. 

doo tur-gan arzafti de-er ala tajga-niŋ 
DIST AUX-PST A say-PF striped taiga-GEN

277. Way over there in a striped mountain forest called Arzaity,
278. on its northern side in a lake are swimming a lot of white geese.

ol ak kas-tar-ți arazın-da
this white geese-PL-GEN among-LOC

279. Among those white geese,
čuduruk=deg močak kizıl xaaj-lig askır ak kas bar=dir.
fist=like big red bill-ADJ male white goose cop=deic

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

šak ol askır ak kas-ti sok-kaș,
the.very that male white goose-ACC hit-ss

280. Having killed that white gander,
keži-n soj-up okta-p-kași-tiŋ, ak kas-tığı köske-e-n
skin-3-ACC peel-cv throw-PERF-SS-GEN white goose-GEN goose.part-3-ACC

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

281. and make from them a man’s testicles,
sak ol askır ak kas-tı sok-kas,
the.very that male white goose-ACC hit-ss

282. Having killed that white gander,

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

283. together with its neck, and make from them a man’s genitals,
kis xindi-ing-ni duj xirba-la-n-di-r tarbidi-ip aar-tn-qa
girl genital-2-ACC shut.tight glue-VSF-PASS-CAUS-PF do.magically-cv AUX-2SG-DAT

284. and when you’ve magically glued shut your woman’s genitals with them,
ol-la=dir!
DEIC-EMP=DEIC

285. that’s that!
sidi-ing kistig-a ber-ze,
piss-2 flow.out-cv INCH-COND

286. If you need to piss,
kas-tığ xaaj-i-n kōdîr-üp sikte-er-iğ-ge
white goose-GEN bill-3-ACC raise-cv piss-PF-2-DAT

287. then you’ll raise the beak of the goose to piss,
inamă šarınajn-ip-la ber-gej dep mindža-p=tîr eves be.
there run.out.noisily-cv-EMP INCH-CNCL QUOT do.thusly-cv=DEIC NEG QUES

288. and let the piss trickle out through it,” the horse said, didn’t he?
ol-la xeever kil-ip al-ğaș
that-EMP the.same do-cv SBEN-SS

289. Having done exactly so,
daarta=daa xōj er-niŋ ara-zin-ga
tomorrow=EMP many male-GEN space.between-3-DAT

290. the next day among the numerous men,
küzür boktu-kiriš aki-zi bo-op xuul-up al-gan
poor B-K elder.brother-3 PROB-cv change-cv SBEN-PST

291. being changed into her poor brother Boktu-Kiriş,
bora-Şeelej kis dûmna-zi kaldanın-ğaș olur-up-kan.
B-Ș girl younger.sibling-3 get-naked-ss sit.down-PERF-PST

292. younger sister Bora-Şeeleci sat there naked.
The eyes of all the men were on the man named Boktu-Kiriš.

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

And as for his genitals, his testicles are as heavy as a teapot,

there's no way a person could even lift them.

His genitals are like the beak of a bird,

like a horn, and to top it all, covered all over with teeth.

He's such a strange creature!"

While they were wondering and gaping,

the start-man began to count down.

whipped their horses with riding crops and charged off.

But the one who had changed into her brother Boktu-Kiriš,

because she could also change into a gray hare.

20. A Russian loanword komanda 'command', used here, forms an agentive noun and verb. In standard Tuvan, the man who starts a race is called idıkći or salıkći; as a verb it is idar, salir.

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am bora -toolaj bo-op xuul-up al-gaš-tiŋ
now gray hare PROB-CV change-CV SBEN-SS-GEN

310. But while she was changed into a gray hare,
kiži-ler=bile čaži-ir-ga taar-iš-pas bol-gan-da
people-PL=INS compete-PF-DAT suit-RCF NEG be-PST-LOC

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

inda-ar xuul-ba-ŋ,
dothus-PF change-NEG-PST

312. So, she didn’t actually change into one,
a bora -toolaj-niŋ man-i=n ke-ep ap-kaš-tiŋ,
but gray -hare-GEN run-3-ACC cloc-cv take-ss-GEN

313. but simply took on the running speed of a gray hare.
bora -toolaj marj-i=bile marjna-p irjaj-la bol-gan.
gray -hare run-3=iNS run-cv away.from-EMPH COP-PST

314. And with the running speed of a gray hare, she ran far away.
doo xal-č-ip bar-ip čit-kan er-ler-ni doraan ert-ken.
DIST run-RCF-CV go-CV aux-PST male-PL-ACC right.away pass-PST

315. She immediately passed the men who were running way over there.
čaal er-ler čer ortu-zu bezin čet-pe-en-de,
EXCL male-PL place middle-3 even reach-NEG-PST-LOC

316. Hah! before the guys had even reached the halfway point of the race-course,
xaan kadin bašta-ŋ an xamik čon-ga
king queen head.up-PST all people-DAT

317. (to reach the place) where all the people were headed up by the Khan and the queen,
čed-e mapna-p kel-gen boktu-kiriš, deerge, čiüü boor,
reach-cv run-cv cloc-PST B-K POST what PROB

318. Boktu-Kiriš came running up to that place, and what did she do next?
xoŋ čiš-gan čon-nu ʁus dolgan-di-r deerigle-eš-tiŋ,
many gathered-PST people-Acc three go.around-CAUS-PF run.around-SS-GEN

319. She ran three circles around the gathered crowd.
dedir xev-i-n ked-ip a-ar dees,
back clothes-3-ACC put.on-cv SBEN-PF POST

320. Then in order to put her clothes back on,
baški dag-niŋ čan-in-dže ḳi-e ber-gen,
B. mountain-GEN side-3-ALL go.out-cv INCH-PST

321. she ran off, back towards Bashky mountain.
čaal ʁuš dugaar mōorej-ni
DISC three ORD competition-ACC

322. “Well, in the third competition
murμuu čiš-ten kel-gen aniŋak er,
southern direction-ABL come-PST young male

323. the young man from the south,
boktu-kiriš čaal-ap al-di.
B-K take.as.winner-cv SBEN-REC.PST

324. Boktu-Kiriš, has won.
čaraš kiz-im-ni kadaj kil-di-r tur men,
beautiful girl-1-ACC wife do-CAUS give-cv AUX I

325. I’m giving him as a wife my beautiful daughter.
angır-čečen aldın dangina-n-m-ni
A-Č golden princess-1-ACC

326. My golden princess Angyr-Chechen
a küde-em-ge boktu-kiriš küde-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-Kiriš.

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 čartig ün-dür-gen. khan announcement go.out-CAUS-PST
330. the Khan announced.

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

xaan-niŋ xamik šaynal-i-n čettir-ip tur-ar-i ēeš-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,

sö kimič-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.

kūzūr boktu-kiriš čuū bo-or am. poor B-K what PROB-cv now
334. And what did poor Boktu-Kiriš do next?

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

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

köžūr-ip al-gaš, čurt-un-dže čān-ip čor-up or-gan. move/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-geš-tiŋ; 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 og oög-i-n až-ip čida-jin, de-eš-tiŋ, I yurt button-3-ACC open-cv AUX-1MOD say-SS-GEN
340. I’ll go to unbutton the door,” she said.

xal-ip čed-ip ke-er siler, de-eš-tiŋ, run-cv arrive-cv CLOC-PF 2PL AUX-SS-GEN
341. “You come running after me,” she said.

aal-in-ga xal-ip čed-e ber-geš-tiŋ, 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 thatDIST 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,
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344. and took him out.

345. Having brought him and placed him on the bed in the yurt,

346. and magically thawed him out,

347. she hid herself.

348. And Šang Khan’s beautiful daughter, the golden princess Angyr-Chechen,

349. when she arrived at the camp,

350. saw her husband, who had just made her run (to the yurt),

351. lying there dead on top of the bed.

352. And what could a princess with magic powers do then?

353. She took out her silver ring,

354. (and she said) “If it is truly my husband Boktu-Kiriš,

355. let his broken bones join together,

356. let his torn up guts recover,”

357. she said, and magically made it happen.

358. And then his broken backbone healed.

359. “Well, if this is truly my husband Boktu-Kiriš, he will stand up.

360. and surely come running (to me),” she said, working her magic.
361. After then he really did stand up and came running right to her.

ok ködek, erti-ir ud-up kal-gan men be?
oh, cunt overflow-PF sleep-CV AUX-PST I QUES

362. (And he said) "Oh, fuck! Did I oversleep?

bo diič-üm-de
this dream-1-LOC

363. In this dream of mine,

šan xaan-niŋ čaraš kiži, angir-čečen aldiŋ dangina-ni
Š. X.-GEN beautiful girl-3 A-C golden princess-ACC

364. Sang Khan’s beautiful daughter, golden princess Angyr-Chechen, and I

kudala-p tur-gan bol-da-m čıp!
marry-CV AUX-PST be-REC.PST-1 DISC

365. were going to marry, right?

duž-üm dep boda-an-im,
dream-1 COMP think-PST-1

366. I thought that it was just a dream,

šinap-la kudala-p ekkel-gen
truly-EMPH marry-CV bring-PST

367. but I really did marry,

al-gan kiži iskaž=ıįl men, de-eš-tiŋ
SBEN-PST PN as.İ=DEIC I AUX-SS-GEN

368. and bring her home, apparently," he said.

angir-čečen aldiŋ dangina-ni kulugurun, deerge,
A-C golden princess-ACC hero POST

369. And as for the golden princess Angyr-Chechen,

čiža-an, čiža-an, deerge, ana şuš kiži magada-ar.
kiss-PST lick-PST POST simply all person be.amazed-PF

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

dogda kō-ör-ge, doo bora-seelei kisi đign-ma-zı
over.there22 see-PF-DAT thatDIST B-Š girl younger.sibling-3

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

bodu-nuŋ daštu-u
self-GEN lover-3

372. together with her own lover,

karati xaan-niŋ kajgal ogl-u kara čüvelekti-ni
Karaty Khan-GEN brave son-3 Kara Čüvelekti-ACC

373. Kara-Chüvelekti, the brave son of Karaty Khan.

follow.with-CV SBEN-PST this laugh-RCP-CV walk-RCP-CV AUX-PST-PL

374. Here they came laughing and walking together.

שק oon sölül-in-de iji ališki, küdee-zi, čaava-zi,
just that after-3-LOC two sibling brother.in-law-3 elder.brother’s.wife-3

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

dörttele-en,
do by.fours-PST

376. the four of them together,

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tag</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| /
| Boundary between tags in portmanteau or zero morpheme |
| FIG | future tense 1SG |
| zero morpheme | future tense 1SG |
| - | formative element |
| = | formulaic speech |
| < | genitive case |
|`t | imperative |
| INCH | inchoative aspect |
| LOC | locative case |
| LEX | lexical item found only in compounds, has no meaning |
| ACC | accusative case |
| MOD | modal |
| ADJ | adjectival suffix |
| NEG | negation |
| ADL | adlative case |
| NOM | nominative case |
| ALL | allative case |
| ORD | ordinal number |
| AMEL | ameliorative |
| PASS | passive |
| AUX | auxiliary verb |
| PERF | perfective aspect |
| BEN | benefactive voice |
| PF | present / future tense |
| CAUS | causative |
| PL | plural |
| CLOC | cisolocative |
| PN | predicate noun |
| CNCL | conciliatory mood |
| POST | postposition |
| COMP | complementizer |
| PROB | probabilitive mood |
| COND | conditional mood |
| PST | past tense |
| COP | copula |
| QUAN | quantifier |
| CV | convert |
| QUES | question tag |
| DAT | dative case |
| QUOT | quotative |
| DEIC | deixis marker |
| RCP | reciprocal |
| DIM | diminutive |
| REC.PST | recent past tense |
| DISC | discourse |
| RED | redblupant |
| DIST | distal |
| SBEN | self-benefactive voice |
| DUAL | dual (1 & 2 SG) |
| SS | same subject |
| EMPH | emphatic |
| SYMB | sound symbolic element |
| EXCL | exclamation |
| TLOC | translocation |
| F | future tense |
| VSF | verb stem formant |
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