

УРАЛ БАТЫР



URAL BATYR







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Башкорт халык эпосы
Bashkir Folk Epic



Ufa – 2013 – Өфө



ENGLISH TRANSLATION EDITOR'S NOTES

The translation of the epic «Ural Batyr» requires some explanation concerning the peculiarities of the form and contents of the original Bashkir text.

When reading the translation of the poetic epic one should bear in mind that this translation renders the message and spirit of the original text rather adequately (as far as possible) and on the whole its form is kept close to the original epic. The Bashkir meter in this epic consists of a line seven syllables long with some deviations (six or eight syllables). Rhyme is used inconsistently, and rhymed passages are followed by lines without rhymes to be changed again to rhymed verses. Although the English text closely follows the Bashkir original, approaching «word-for-word translation» the translator tried to render this peculiarity of the epic poem in some parts of the translated text, especially in the opening passages 'to add some flavour' of the original to the text.

Bashkir proper names, words and terms peculiar to the Bashkir culture are rendered in the Latin transliteration of Bashkir words, proposed by the translation editor. The growing number of texts translated for the past decade from Bashkir into other languages of the world, first of all into English, requires the adequate transliteration of Bashkir words by using Latin letters, because the usual Russianized Latin transliteration distorts in most cases the phonetic nature of Bashkir words (e. g. Burzyan instead of Boerjan, Kudey instead of Koedhaej etc.). Below is proposed the principle of transliteration of Bashkir Cyrillic by using Latin letters without any diacritic marks instead of which digraphs are used. The given system is basically within the tradition of using the Latin alphabet both in main Western languages and when transliterating characters of a number of Middle East and Oriental languages, e. g. Arabic. The most characteristic feature of the proposed system is the use of digraphs, e.g. *ae*, *oe*, *ue* for vowels *ə*, *ø*, *ɣ*, respectively (cf. in Old English, and *oe*, *ue* as typewriting variants of *и* in German).

The following is a guide to the transliteration characters used in the translation and the specific sounds they represent. The Bashkir letters based on the Cyrillic alphabet are given in brackets.

- a [a] either as *a* in *father* or a cross between *a* (*bar*) and *o* (*pot*)
- ae [ə] like *a* in *can*
- e [e] as in *egg*

i [ɪ] as in *pit*
oe [ə] like German
ue [ʏ] like German
u [y] like *boot*
o [o] like *pot*
y [ɨ] as in *ill* but pronounced between *i* and *u*
j [j] like *y* in *yes* or *y* in *may*
gh [ɣ] a cross between a soft version of **ch** (Scottish *loch*) and French pronunciation of **r** («rue»)
th [ç] like *th* in *thin*
dh [ʒ] like *th* in *then*
q [k] a guttural *k*, pronounced deep in the throat
ng [ŋ] like *ng* in *ring*
h like *h* in *hear*
kh [x] like *ch* in Scottish *loch*
w as in *war*
The digraphs **sh** [ʃ] and **ch** [tʃ] as in *she* and *chip* respectively



COMMENTARIES AND NOTES

¹ The names Jaenbirdhe, Jaenbikae are composed of the words **jaen** (soul), **birdhe** (gave), **bikae** (mistress). They go back to ancient times. They testify to the fact that those people were originators of a tribe.

² **ploughing life** — living.

³ Death was believed to be a wicked creature who came, invisible to the eye, and took away a living being's life.

⁴ **falcon** — a gyrfalcon.

⁵ According to an ancient custom to quench thirst with a drink made from blood, to eat an animal's head and heart was allowed only to the person who killed that animal. Children were not allowed to do it.

⁶ **apple of my eye** — (*lit.*) the black of my eye.

⁷ **mace** — a club with a ball-shaped end.

⁸ **white** — pure.

⁹ Bowls for keeping drinks made from tortoise shell.

¹⁰ **jeget** — a young man, a brave boy, a horseman.

¹¹ **ajmaq** — a place, locality.

¹² **div** (Bashkir: **dejew**) — an evil mythic creature of Persian and Oriental folklore. Etymologically related to Vedic **devi** (God) Latin **deus** (**God**), divine, Slavic **div** (**monster**), **divo** (**miracle**).

¹³ **pair** — here: human beings, people.

¹⁴ **batsha** — a ruler, the title of a monarch.

¹⁵ **noegaer** — khan's bodyguard, a warrior, here: a species.

¹⁶ **shun** — (*lit.*) turn my head away from.

¹⁷ **eye fat** — fat around the eyeball.

¹⁸ **My child is my liver** — my own flesh and blood.

¹⁹ **jaer** — a beloved one, sweetheart, one of a pair of lovers.

²⁰ **Aj, Qojash** — The Moon, the Sun. In Bashkir myths the Moon and the Sun were represented as a man or a woman. The Moon was thought to be a young man who pitied an orphaned young girl going to fetch water and attracted her to himself. (BHI: Riwaetaer, Legendalar № 7) In the epic «Ural Batyr» the Moon and the Sun are pictured as Samraw Batsha's wives.

²¹ **Samraw** (Saemreghosh, Simurgh) – the name of birds' king. The image of this kind mythic bird is common for the folklore of Turkic peoples and some other peoples of the East.

²² **Homaj** – the image of that mythic bird is widely spread in the folklore of the peoples of Central Asia, the Central Altai and the Middle East. She is often called the bird of luck, happiness. According to an old popular belief, the person who saw Homaj flying across the sky in the form of fire, would be happy.

²³ A pious white-bearded old man is a character frequently occurring in folklore. In Turkmen and Azeri folklore the sage who averts danger from lonely wayfarers is Korkut, in Bashkir, Kazakh and Karakalpak folklore it is Toeklath, in Islamic religion these are seers, prophets and Hyzyr Ilyas.

²⁴ The peaceful life of all living beings is a deeply rooted people's dream. Harmony among them is a motif widely spread in the world folklore and some religions. It is the life-asserting message of «Ural Batyr».

²⁵ **Qatil** (*Arab.*) – a murderer.

²⁶ **aqhaqal** – (*lit.*) a white beard, an elder of a tribe, a person who has influence and authority. Here: a batsha's dignitary.

²⁷ **shybagha** – a piece of rope or a stick used for casting lots.

²⁸ **hyr** – erysipelas.

²⁹ **growth** – here: a healed cut on a tree, scar.

³⁰ **hyrt (shyrt)** – supposedly an item of ethnic clothing like a kerchief or shawl.

³¹ **Taengra** – God, a supreme being, the Heaven.

³² **life** – (*lit.*) world.

³³ **majdhan** – 1. a field, square 2. a great number of people gathered in a square or a field (cf. Anglo-Indian: maidan)

³⁴ Bashkir tribes had their signs of distinction: a call, a tree and a bird. The raven could also be a totem bird. The episode in the epic describes the ritual of worshipping a totem bird and offering sacrifices to it.

³⁵ Tossing or giving an apple as a token of love is a well-known motif (The Greek epic «Iliad» and others). One can come across a similar ritual in the epic «Aqbudhat» and in the fairy-tales about batyrs.

³⁶ **batyr** – 1. courageous, brave 2. a hero.

³⁷ **qymydh** – koumiss, a drink made from fermented mare's milk.

³⁸ **Aezhael** – death.

³⁹ The gaps in a cow's jaw, where some teeth seem to be missing, were considered by ancient people to be the place where the bull had had fangs. Having lost them, he became a domestic animal, he would never turn into a dangerous wild beast again.

⁴⁰ The last three lines are missing in the original text.

⁴¹ **secret** – here: what had happened. **Qatil did not give away his secret** – did not reveal his fear, real feelings and thoughts.

⁴² **alyp, alp** – a legendary hero, a giant. Epic batyrs exchange the word of alyps before fighting or wrestling.

⁴³ **to put our spines to the ground** – to throw, to wrestle to the ground.

⁴⁴ **jjyn** – an assembly of tribal representatives.

⁴⁵ **Qaehqaehae** (*Arab*) — one who guffaws, here: the name of a mythic creature.

⁴⁶ The name **Zaerqum** could be derived from two Arabic words, one of them meaning 'cunning, duplicity', the other 'a poisonous tree', 'a lethal drink'.

⁴⁷ According to mythological notions, the serpent who had lived a hundred years became an azhdaha (dragon), the serpent aged one thousand turned into a jukha, an extremely cunning creature capable of disguising himself as a girl, a jeget, etc.

⁴⁸ **Azhdaha** — a dragon.

⁴⁹ **salaam** (*Arab.*) — A [respectful ceremonial] greeting performed especially in Islamic countries.

⁵⁰ **naezhaeghaej** — flashes of light caused by pieces of rock coming from space and burning in the atmosphere of the Earth.

⁵¹ **vizier** — a high officer in a Moslem government.

⁵² **Got a pledge from his hand** — got a promise from Zaerqum.

⁵³ **head** — *here*: life.

⁵⁴ **Aezraeqae** (*Arab*) — to turn blue, here, the name of a wicked mythic creature.

⁵⁵ **not to sew more than enough pockets** — not to claim excessive wealth.

⁵⁶ **pearls** — treasures, riches.

⁵⁷ The comparison of water-lilies to the blossoms of a teak tree must testify to the links of ancient Bashkirs with the countries of the East or their literature.

⁵⁸ **jaltush** — (*dial.*) bream, Abranis Ballerus.

⁵⁹ **maethkaew** — a snare, a loop for catching fish.

⁶⁰ **tolpar** — a mythic winged steed.

⁶¹ **hynsy** — sagacious, far-sighted.

⁶² **djinni** or **jinni** or **jinnee** pl. **djinn**, also **jinn**. In Moslem legend, a spirit capable of assuming human or animal form and exercising supernatural influence over people. [Arabic jinn]

⁶³ **Aqbudh**, **Aqbudhat**, **Budhat**, **Budh** — ashy-grey, greyish-white horse, the name of a mythic winged horse which symbolises a blue star.

⁶⁴ In the legends reflecting cosmogonic views of ancient Bashkirs and in some epic poems the Lesser Bear is depicted as seven divs who had been sent to the sky to kidnap Aqbudhat. As they were fearful to return to the earth after they had failed to capture the horse they remained in the sky as a constellation. In the myths the Lesser Bear is considered to be composed of six stars which symbolise six bears chasing Harat and Budhat (Aqbudhat), the seventh star being an iron stake (the Polar star) to which the horses were tethered.

⁶⁵ **Jetegaen** — Dipper (The Big Dipper or The Little Dipper)

⁶⁶ **Harat** (Hary at, Hary tolpar, Harysaj) — yellow horse, the name of a cream-coloured winged horse which symbolises a yellow star.

⁶⁷ **gift** — the steed to be given to Ajhylyw's bridegroom as her present.

⁶⁸ **bulat** — damask steel, here: a sword made from damask steel.

⁶⁹ **bej** (**bey**) — 1. a chief, leader 2. a distinguished representative of a tribe.

⁷⁰ **tiphaen meadow** — a meadow with a light covering of snow fit for grazing horses in winter.

⁷¹ **Ajhylyw** — Moon-Beauty.

⁷² **Mount Qot** — a mythic mountain where gatherings, counselling and worshipping took place.

⁷³ He pulled the sinew of Shuelgaen's arm — goaded, enticed Shuelgaen.

⁷⁴ **tuer** — the best part of a room or table meant for respected people or guests.

⁷⁵ **It has reached many heads** — It has taken many lives.

⁷⁶ **Let your heart's fat thaw** — let your heart soften.

⁷⁷ **kaejtaen** — narrow braid which forms a snaking or zigzagging line.

⁷⁸ **Having gone through from right to left** — having gone through fire and water.

⁷⁹ **reward** — (*lit.*) gift.

⁸⁰ **ir-jeget** — a strong mature man.

⁸¹ **juermae** — here: curls, plaits. An allusion is made to the national dish which is cooked by boiling thin strips of sheep fat plaited together with intestines.

⁸² **upon the face of the sky** — in the sky.

⁸³ **From the root of his tongue** — from a hint or a sign, which could reveal his real feelings and thoughts.

⁸⁴ **haj** — is used to express delight, admiration, approval.

⁸⁵ **story** — (*lit.*) secret, mystery.

⁸⁶ **your heart was in your mouth** — (*lit.*) your soul came to your throat.

⁸⁷ **We** — Ural and Shuelgaen.

⁸⁸ — see Note 19.

⁸⁹ **Upon the face of this bright world** — on the earth.

⁹⁰ **Deeds in this world are rewarded while in this world** — Homaj said that for his cruelty Shuelgaen was punished in this life.

⁹¹ **I am a great batyr in my land, my spirit is hardy** — (*lit.*) We are a great batyr in our land, our spirit is hardy.

⁹² **without putting one language upon another** — to say directly, without turning to allegories.

⁹³ **jaer** — see Note 19.

⁹⁴ This extract beginning with words «**A saddle was laid on his back**» up to the line «**The grey steed, a stranger to the eye**» which contains the depiction of Aqbudhat similar to the corresponding part of the epic poem «Aqbudhat» is missing in the original version of «Ural Batyr».

⁹⁵ **diamond** — as hard as diamond.

⁹⁶ **bashkuenaek** — a bag made from the skin taken from the horse's head.

⁹⁷ **qolas** — a unit of measurement, equal to the distance between a man's hands when his arms are stretched out to the sides.

⁹⁸ **Mount Qaf** — the name of a mythic mountain. There is a real mountain bearing the same name (Qaf, Qufi) in Iraq.

⁹⁹ **batman** — 1. A container about one metre high, made from a hollowed out tree trunk for keeping honey, butter, etc. 2. An old unit of measurement equal to the weight of something a batman can hold.

¹⁰⁰ **The Qojash in the sky was caught** — The Qojash in the sky was obscured (the Sun went into eclipse).

¹⁰¹ — see Note 41.

¹⁰² The legend of the Flood inundating the earth is widely spread in the folklore and religions of many peoples. In the Bible it is related how Noah saved all the creatures by taking a pair of each kind in his ark.

¹⁰³ **Jamantaw** – (*lit.*) bad mountain. It is the name of a mountain in the South Urals (1638 m).

¹⁰⁴ **inherited** – (*lit.*) collected.

¹⁰⁵ **twin -hearted** – lion-hearted, fearless.

¹⁰⁶ **Shuelgaen's enchanted sea** – the sea created by the magic rod.

¹⁰⁷ **white word** – a noble, holy word.

¹⁰⁸ **If you don't take all the people's tears upon yourself** – if you don't admit that you caused the people grief and tears.

¹⁰⁹ **let me kiss your path** – let me take up your road.

¹¹⁰ **Lights flashed in his eyes** – he saw stars.

¹¹¹ **destroys** – (*lit.*) counts.

¹¹² **of the spiteful one and the pure girl** – of Shuelgaen and Ajhylyw.

¹¹³ **hornaj** – a wind musical instrument.

¹¹⁴ **ah-wah** – alas, woe to me.

¹¹⁵ **If I failed** – (*lit.*) if it failed to come from my hand.

¹¹⁶ **warm-hearted** – (*lit.*) with a heart that feeds, nourishes.

¹¹⁷ **whiten** – to make pure, clean.

¹¹⁸ **enjoying** – (*lit.*) sipping.

¹¹⁹ **name** – the word 'at' can be also translated as 'horse'.

¹²⁰ According to the beliefs of ancient Bashkirs a dead person was considered to be happy if his grave was not dark but light, luminous.

¹²¹ In the epic the swan is depicted as Ural's posterity too, not only Homaj's.

¹²² The ancestors of Bashkirs used a calendar with a twelve-year animal cycle (the mouse, the pig, the dog, the hen, the monkey, the sheep, the horse, the snake, the dragon, the hare, the snow leopard, the cow) (BHI Vol. 1. Jola Folklore pp. 17–18).

¹²³ **Iraemael** – a mountain in the South Urals (1584 m).

¹²⁴ **Qyrqty** – a mountain in the South Urals (1114 m).

¹²⁵ **Idhel** – river, here: the River White (Aq Idhel, Aghidel) the largest river in Bashkortostan (1430 km), a tributary of the Kama.

¹²⁶ **Idhelkaej** – the suffix **kaej** expresses tenderness, affection.

¹²⁷ The song «The Lovely Aghidel Riverside» was included in the epic though it was composed in a later period.

¹²⁸ **The Jajyq** – a river in the South Urals, flows into the Caspian Sea, serves as a natural borderline between Europe and Asia. In 1775 was renamed the River Ural by Tsarina Yekaterina II.

The **Noegoesh** – a river in the South Urals, flows into the Aghidhel.

The **Haqmar** – a river in the South Urals, flows into the River Ural.

The legends about the origin of the four rivers were related by Ismaghil Rakhmatullin, recorded by A. Kharisov (BHI Vol. 2. Oefoe, 1959, pp. 13–19).



ЙӨКМӘТКЕҢЕ

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«Урал батыр» эпосы — Европа менән Азияны тоташтырып яткан Урал армыйттарында иң боронғо дәүерҙәрҙән ғүмер кисергән башкорт халкының мифологик караштары нигеҙендә ижад ителгән кабатланмаҫ комарткы ул. Әсәрҙә донъя мәҙәниәтенә мәғлүм архаик эпостарға окшаш дөйөм типологик һыҙаттар һәм шулай ук уның үзенә генә хас этник үзенсәлектәр күҙаллана.

Ural-batyr, the Bashkir folk epic, is a unique literary monument created on the basis of the mythological views of the Bashkir (Bashqort) people that inhabits from time immemorial the spurs of the Ural mountains connecting Europe and Asia.

This epic presents many typological features common to archaic epics of the world culture, as well as a number of ethnic features peculiar only to the Bashkir people.

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Bashkir Folk Epic
(*in the Bashkir and English languages*)

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