

3

Kirgiz

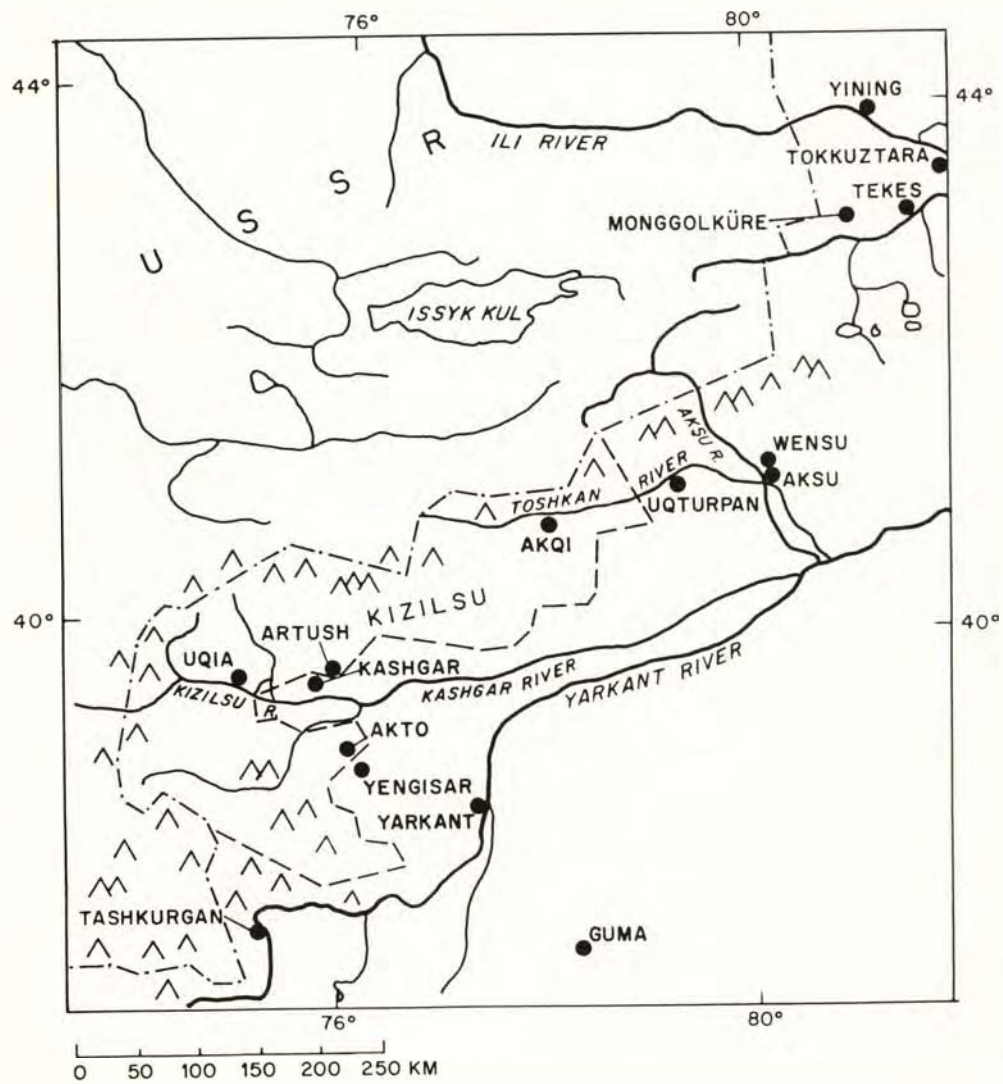
Size and Location

In 1982 there were 113,999 Kirgiz 柯尔克孜 in China,¹ compared to 66,000 twenty years earlier.² Eighty percent of them live in the Kizilsu 克孜勒苏 Kirgiz autonomous prefecture in southwestern Xinjiang. Others live in Uqturpan (Wushi), Aksu, Yarkant (Shache), Tashkurgan and Guma (Pishan) in southern Xinjiang and in Tekes, Monggolküre (Zhaosu), Dörböljin (Emin), Bortala (Bole), Jinghe and Tokkuztara (Gongliu) in the southern part of the province (see Map 3).³ In addition, more than 600 Kirgiz live in Fuyu 富裕 county of Heilongjiang in China's Northeast. The greatest concentration of the Northeast Kirgiz is found in Wujiazi 五家子 village of Youyi 友谊 township which in 1979 comprised 219 Kirgiz, 327 Han, eighty-four Mongols, twenty-one Daur, and two Manchus.⁴

History⁵

The earliest traces of the Kirgiz's ancestors are found on the upper Yenisei, who were recorded in the Shiji and Han Shu as Likun 鬲昆 and Jiankun 坚昆 and said to be subjects of the Xiongnu. The Jiankun were rather strong in the third century when they were neighbors of the Wusun 乌孙, Dingling 丁零, and Tangju 唐居 and were called in Chinese sources Chigu 敕骨 or Qigu 契骨. When the Turks rose to preeminence, the Chigu were part of the Tiele 铁勒 federation and might have had close relations with the Rouran 柔然.

Chapter 3



Map 3. Kirgiz

Kirgiz

In the mid-sixth century records speak of Xiajias 黠戛斯, the presumed forerunners of the Kirgiz, under the control of the Turk khanate but also as part of the Biyanto 薛延陀 khanate. When in the seventh century the Western Turkish khanate was torn by internal conflict, the Xiajias broke away, and in 648 the Tang dynasty established a dudufu 都督府 (a military post) in their area.

The Xiajias had consistently hostile relations with the Ugurs. When the latter established their state on the Mongolian plains in 744, the Xiajias fought them. They did not succeed in preventing the Ugurs from holding sway over Mongolia for about a century, but in 840 while much of the Uigur army was occupying northern China, the Xiajias attacked them again. This time they managed to drive the Ugurs off the Mongolian plateau and to establish their own khanate.

Between the seventh and tenth centuries the Xiajias traded with Tang China, Tibet, the Caliphate empire 大食, and the Karluks 葛逻禄. They still used the Yenisei script and the animal cycle. Their musical instruments were the drum, reed pipe, bili 箎 (a kind of bamboo pipe), and panling 盘铃 (a bell?).

At the end of the twelfth century when Temujin was consolidating his power in Eastern Mongolia, most Kirgiz, now referred to as Jilijis 吉利吉思, were still in the area of the upper Yenisei and the Altai mountain range. During the Ming period the Jilijis fought with the Oirats. When the latter were defeated by the Eastern Mongols, most Jilijis tribes moved to the Tianshan range where they still live today.

A few Kirgiz remained in their homeland on the upper Yenisei. Their descendants are today called Khakass by Soviet ethnographers. Just south of there, in the Altai mountain range, other Kirgiz lived as late as the eighteenth century. When the Qing dynasty defeated the Jungars in the 1750s, they removed these Kirgiz to China's Northeast. The first group moved in 1758 from the Kobdo region and a second group followed them in 1761 from the Altai and Kang'ai mountain ranges. These two groups formed the core of today's Kirgiz in Heilongjiang.⁶

Language and Literature⁷

The term Kirgiz is what the people call themselves but they are not agreed on its meaning. Some say it means forty households while others aver its real meaning is mountain girls, or forty girls, the latter relating to a Kirgiz fable which traces the origin of the Kirgiz to forty girls. A few Kirgiz adhere to yet another theory, namely that their name means prairie people. The most likely meaning is something like powerful, magnificent, or wise.⁸

Kirgiz belongs to the Turkic group of the Altaic family of languages. The Kirgiz had their own script as early as the eighth century, called the Yenisei

script, but it was later lost. After conversion to Islam, the Kirgiz adopted a script based on the Arabo-Persian alphabet. In 1954 a new script was worked out which was based on this alphabet and several publications were issued in that language. Later the central government of China adopted a script based on the Latin alphabet but, like a similar script decreed for the Uigurs, it never found much favor with the people. Consequently, in 1982 this script was abandoned in favor of the Arabic script (see Table 5), and later that year the first textbooks written in the Arabic script were distributed in schools of the Kizilsu prefecture.⁹

Kirgiz living in some districts of northern Xinjiang also use the Uigur and Kazak scripts, while those in Heilongjiang use either Chinese or Mongolian.

The Kirgiz language has eight short and six long vowels, as follows:

<u>a</u> as in <u>ata</u> 'father'	<u>y</u> as in <u>kyl-</u> 'to laugh'
<u>ε</u> as in <u>εjq</u> 'sacred'	<u>aa</u> as in <u>taar</u> 'pocket'
<u>e</u> as in <u>el</u> 'people'	<u>ee</u> as in <u>eer</u> 'saddle'
<u>i</u> as in <u>til</u> 'language'	<u>oo</u> as in <u>too</u> 'mountain'
<u>o</u> as in <u>qol</u> 'hand'	<u>uu</u> as in <u>tuu-</u> 'to bear, to raise'
<u>u</u> as in <u>uj</u> 'ox'	<u>oo</u> as in <u>too</u> 'camel'
<u>ó</u> as in <u>kól</u> 'lake'	<u>yy</u> as in <u>sytyy</u> 'multi-breasted'

The twenty-two consonants are:

<u>b</u> as in <u>biz</u> 'we'	<u>ɳ</u> as in <u>eɳ</u> 'most'
<u>w</u> as in <u>wagon</u> 'car'	<u>j</u> as in <u>aj</u> 'moon, month'
<u>g</u> as in <u>segiz</u> 'eight'	<u>p</u> as in <u>kóp</u> 'many'
<u>ε</u> as in <u>buεu</u> 'deer'	<u>t</u> as in <u>ter</u> 'sweat'
<u>l</u> as in <u>al</u> 'he'	<u>s</u> as in <u>sen</u> 'you'
<u>n</u> as in <u>nan</u> (a staple food)	<u>ɭ</u> as in <u>aɭ</u> 'food'
<u>m</u> as in <u>qum</u> 'sand'	<u>k</u> as in <u>kel-</u> 'to come'
<u>dʒ</u> as in <u>dʒaj</u> 'summer'	<u>q</u> as in <u>qar</u> 'snow'
<u>d</u> as in <u>dooɭ</u> 'sound'	<u>tʃ</u> as in <u>tʃop</u> 'grass'
<u>r</u> as in <u>kir-</u> 'to enter'	<u>x</u> as in <u>tarɛx</u> 'history'
<u>z</u> as in <u>az</u> 'few'	<u>f</u> as in <u>fabrika</u> 'factory'

Stress is generally on the last syllable, as in dʒetí, 'seven'. Vowel harmony comes in pairs, as follows: and a, ε and i, ó and u, in the sense that when any one vowel of a pair appears in the first syllable, subsequent syllables can have either the same or the other vowel of the pair. The exceptions are o which is followed by o or u, and u which is followed by a or u. The same rules apply for stem and suffix as well as for vowel prefixes for foreign loan words, like orus < rus, 'Russian' and εstantseja < stantsija, 'station'. The rules for vowel harmony do not apply to words with a double vowel in the second syllable.

Table 5
KIRGIZ SCRIPT¹⁰

E	D	C	B	A		E	D	C	B	A	
ɖʒ	җ	җ	җ	җ	16	ɑ	а		а	а	1
d	д		д	д	17	ɛ	е		е	е	2
r	р		р	р	18	e	е	д	р	е	3
z	з		з	з	19	i	и	д	з	и	4
ŋ	ң	ң	ң	ң	20	o	о		о	о	5
ʒ	й	й	й	й	21	u	у		у	у	6
p	п	п	п	п	22	ø	о		о	о	7
t	т	т	т	т	23	ɣ	у		у	у	8
s	с	с	с	с	24	b	б	б	б	б	9
ʃ	ш	ш	ш	ш	25	w	у		у	у	10
k	к	к	к	к	26	g	г	г	г	г	11
q	ч	ч	ч	ч	27	ɬ	е	е	е	е	12
tʃ	ч	ч	ч	ч	28	ɬ	л	л	л	л	13
ɣ	х	х	х	х	29	n	н	н	н	н	14
f	ф	ф	ф	ф	30	m	м	м	м	м	15

A = Isolated form B = Initial position C = Medial position
D = Final position E = IPA transcription

The Kirgiz language contains loan words from several other languages. Some examples are Chinese gangbi, 'pen', Arabic quran, 'Koran', Mongolian burqan, 'god', Russian zawot, 'factory', and Persian tjarba, 'livestock'.

The Kirgiz language spoken in Xinjiang is divided into a northern and southern dialect, each containing a number of local dialects. The northern dialect, spoken by more than 55,000 persons, is found in the following areas north of the Kizilsu river: Heiziwei, Ulukqiat, and Toyun in Uqia county, Kalajun and Tugaimait in Akqi county, Jiamansu in Uqturpan county, Baozitong in Wensu county, Kuoketielik in Tekes county, and Shato in Monggolküre county. The southern dialect, spoken by more than 47,000 persons living south of the Kizilsu river, is found in the following areas: Posdantielik of Uqia county, Kalakqik, Zhulukbash, Subash, Bulongkol, Kiziltao and Qiarleng of Akto county, and in Yengishar and Guma counties.

Although both dialects use the same vocabulary, there are some differences, e.g. North et and South gól, 'meat', North bidzik and South egiz, 'high'; North dzumurtqa and South tuqum, 'chicken egg'. The main phonological differences are as follows:

1. Most Northern vernaculars do not have the Southern ϵ ($\epsilon\epsilon$) sound: North faar, South f $\epsilon\epsilon$ er ~ f ϵ her, 'city'; North mu ϵ alim, South meelim, 'instructor'.
2. Words which have long vowels in the Northern dialect have intervocalic ϵ (g) in the South, e.g. North taar, South ta ϵ ar, 'pocket'; North eer, South eger, 'saddle'.
3. The Northern dialect lacks h and w: North ar, South he ϵ r, 'each'; North too, South tow, 'mountain'.
4. In certain words, the Northern median dz is pronounced g in the South: North dz ϵ j ϵ rma, South dzigirme, 'twenty'.
5. The initial letters k and q are read g and g in North: South kelin, North g ϵ lin, 'daughter-in-law'; South qoj, North g ϵ oj, 'sheep'.
6. The Southern dialect retains the double l of loan words, like mollo, North moldo, 'mullah'.
7. The Northern dialect adheres more strictly to vowel harmony, as in: North kiep, South kitap, 'book'; North alar, South olar, 'they'.

The language of the Kirgiz in Heilongjiang differs considerably from that spoken in Xinjiang.¹¹ In phonetics, it has the additional long vowel ii. It also has the consonant z, as in dzazen - 'to store'. The initials k and q are read g and g, as in Xinjiang kim but Northeast gem, 'who' and Xinjiang qoj but Northeast g ϵ oj 'sheep'. The initial dz is read n, as in Xinjiang dzam ϵ er but Northeast namer 'rain' and Xinjiang dzaaq but Northeast naax 'cheek'. The consonant j, when starting a second syllable, is read z, as in Xinjiang ajaq, but Northeast azaq

Kirgiz

'foot'. The final z becomes s, as in Xinjiang kez but Northeast es 'unmarried girl'. The initial t changes to d, as in Xinjiang til but Northeast del 'tongue, language' and Xinjiang ti but Northeast di 'tooth'. In addition, vowel harmony is not as strict as in Xinjiang. Among numerous differences in grammar, Northeast Kirgiz has seven instead of six cases, fewer suffixes, and quite different tense endings. Its lexicon differs markedly from Xinjiang Kirgiz but is extremely close to that of the Khakass in the Soviet Altai.

Until well into the present century Kirgiz literature was entirely oral. The most popular form is the heroic epic of which the most famous by far is "Manas." It may be said that Manas plays a more dominant role in Kirgiz literature than similar epics do in their respective literatures, such as "Geser" in Tibetan and "Janggar" in Oirat Mongolian. It is a cycle of songs and prose about the hero Manas, his son Semetei, and his grandson Seitek. A dominant theme is the struggle against the Western Mongols and the Chinese, including the Kirgiz conquest of Beijing. The manasqi, or Manas singers, accompany their renditions on the komuz (Illustration 6). As is the case with oral epics among other nationalities, over the generations many manasqi have added their own interpretations and embellishments.

According to one of the most popular manasqi, the 64-year old Jusup Mamayi of Akqi county, the entire epic has over 200,000 lines.¹² It has never been recorded in its entirety.¹³ It has several sections which can be treated independently from one another, and some of them have been recorded and translated.¹⁴

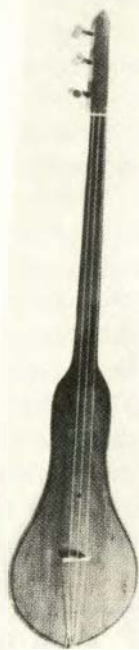
Other epics, sung by erqi, include "Kurman Bek," "Brave Toshtuk," "Kaojiao Jiash," "Brave Tarlan," "Sait Bek," and "Kartekaotek." In addition, Kirgiz literature has its share of fables, riddles, poems, and other forms.¹⁵

Society

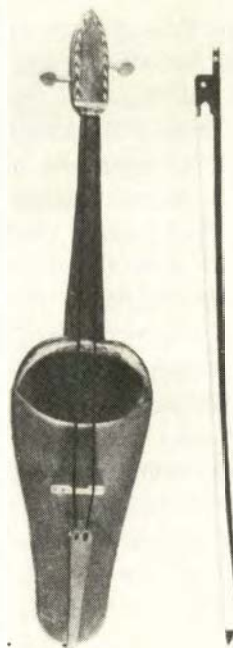
Kirgiz society maintained its tribal form much longer than other nomadic societies in Northern China, and to this day one can distinguish the following tribes. Those located south of the Kizilsu river include the Kipchak, Naiman, Taiyit, and Kaisaik. Northern tribes, including those living in Northern Xinjiang, are Chongbash, Qielik, Kuqu, Salu, Salbash, Mengduzi, Mengguldaur, Ketay, Buwu, and Sayak.¹⁶

Nomadic Kirgiz live in tent-like structures, called bozewu, which appear quite similar to those used by the Kazaks and Mongols. Supports are made of red willow, and the sides are first covered with splendid achnatherum (see chapter on the Kazaks) and then with felt. The top of the structure has a smoke hole one meter in diameter. During the summer seasons the Kirgiz live in temporary shelters on the upper reaches of streams and rivers. Settled Kirgiz live in flat-roofed adobe houses.

Chapter 3



Komuz



Kuyak



Illus. 6. Kirgiz Musical Instruments

Kirgiz



Illus. 7. Kirgiz Working Clothes

The Kirgiz diet consists mostly of animal products; the only vegetables used are round cabbage (yuan baicai), onions, and potatoes. The main drink is goat milk, both fresh and sour. Kirgiz also like to drink a kind of herb tea (Poria cocos, Chin. fuling 茯苓)¹⁷ to which they, in the manner of the Mongols, Kazaks, and Tibetans, add milk and salt. On special occasions one can also find beef, mutton, horse and camel meat, mixed with flour and rice batter. The batter is prepared with a leather-like piece of cloth which is used as a rolling pin. Butter is stored in sheep and cow stomachs.¹⁸

Religion

Kirgiz who still profess religious membership belong to the Ismail sect of the Shi'a group of Islam. Its roots are not as deep among the Kirgiz as they are among the neighboring nationalities because the Kirgiz are relative latecomers to Xinjiang (see section on history above).¹⁹ The Kirgiz in Heilongjiang never practiced Islam at all, but in the past adhered to shamanism and Lamaism. As late as the early fifties one could still find an occasional shaman whom the Kirgiz called gam.²⁰

Recent Developments²¹

The Kizilsu Kirgiz autonomous prefecture was established on July 14, 1954 and consists of the four counties of Uqia 乌恰, Akqi 阿合奇, Akto 阿克陶, and Atush 阿图什. Its government seat is at Atush, near Kashgar. Aside from Kirgiz, the prefecture also includes Uigurs, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Kazaks, Han, Hui, and a few Manchus, Sibe, Tatars, and Russians. There are said to be more than 2,000 Kirgiz cadres at various levels of government. While herding continues to be a principal occupation with the Kirgiz, some farming has been started in the lower elevations. Industry has been expanded since the early 1950s. Previously the prefecture only had an oil field in Uqia county and the Kangsu coal mine, both of which are still in operation. In addition, there are now also plants for the manufacture of cement, food products, wood and leather goods, electricity, iron, coke, and fireproof materials. There are many schools and health stations and some 6,000 kilometers of roads.

Notes

¹Minzu yanjiu 23 (1983), 80.

²Jiankuang, v. 4, 17.

³Hu 1982a, 59.

⁴Hu 1983, 65.

⁵Historical information is mainly derived from *Zhongguo*, 209-211.

⁶Hu 1983, 65.

⁷Unless otherwise noted, the section on the Kirgiz language is largely adopted from Hu 1982b, 59-72.

⁸See the article by Dong.

⁹Wilson Library of Western Washington University received copies of these textbooks.

¹⁰See note 7 in the Uigur chapter.

¹¹The following sentences on the Kirgiz language of the Northeast are based on Hu 1983, 66-69.

¹²Hu 1982b, 180. Another famous *manasqi* is the 83-year-old Temur of Uqia county.

¹³One can find an almost full account in the combined publications of Orozbekov Sagymbai and Karabaev Sayakbai who over a ten-year period, from about 1937 to 1947, published some twenty volumes of *Manas* text.

¹⁴See, *inter alia*, Hu 1982b, 180-184; the article "Kirgizzu yingxiong shishi 'Manas'"; a translation of section 4 of "Manas"; "Yingxiongde hunli"; and *Manas*:

Kirgiz

Kirgizskii narodnyi epos. For full citations, see the bibliography.

¹⁵The best collection of Kirgiz folktales at present is Kirgizzu minjian gushi. See also Hu 1961 and "Kirgizzu dongwu gushi sipian."

¹⁶Hu 1982a, 59.

¹⁷Detailed description of this herb can be found in Zhongyao da cidian (Shanghai, 1977), 1596-1599.

¹⁸Zhongguo, 214.

¹⁹Op. cit., 213.

²⁰Hu 1983, 65.

²¹Information on recent developments is based on Zhongguo, 217-219.