

THE KOMUZ OF 3 M: MANAS, MEN AND MANAGEMENT

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Komuz is traditional Kyrgyz instrument with three strings. Three strings are played in unison to produce music. This paper attempts to synchronize the M of Manas with two other Ms of modern theory of man management.

The phenomenon of civilization, as a heavily organized public body, springs from different sources and this process is deeply rooted in its stratum of space and time.¹ Over a period of time the relationship between civilization, its sources, and its practice develop a cyclical relationship – the civilization and culture impact all aspects of the society including business and administration. For example introduction of faster modes of communication (information technology) has had its deep impact on society and cultures which in-turn has affected the way business and administration is organized – organizations have become lean with fewer layers of management.

This process of interlinking between business management and civilization can be studied further through the study of classics. *Manas* is studied in this paper to study its linkages with organization and modern concepts of management.

Manas : According to Mukhtar Auezov, Kyrgyz national identity owes a great deal to the Kyrgyz hero Manas who, after defeating the Uighurs, united forty Kyrgyz tribes and led them to the Altai and, eventually to the Alai regions.² The epic *Manas* is a trilogy - a biographical cycle of three generations of heroes, i.e., *Manas*, his son Semetei and grandson Seitek. The plot of the *Manas* trilogy consists of the following main episodes:

I. In Manas

- Birth of Manas and his childhood;
- His first heroic deeds;
- His marriage to Kanikei;
- His military campaign against Beijing;
- Death of Manas, destruction of his achievements.

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¹ Moldobayev Karybek, *Journal of Turkic Civilization Studies*, No. 1 (2004), Bishkek, Kyrgyz-Turkish Manas University, p-33.

² Bashiri Iraj, *Manas: The Kyrgyz Epic*, www.angelfire.com/rnb/bashiri/Manas/manas.html

II. In Semetei

- Kanikei takes Semetei and flees to Bukhara;
- Semetei's childhood and his heroic deeds;
- Semetei's return to Talas;
- Semetei's marriage to Aichürök;
- Semetei's battle against Kongurbai;
- Semetei's death or mysterious disappearance;

III. In Seitek

- Destruction of Semetei's family; Capture of Aichürök and Külchoro;
- Seitek's growing up in Kiiiaz's palace;
- Fighting against the internal enemies;
- Seitek's marriage;
- His defeat of the external enemies and death.

The grand epic of *Manas* depicts the culture, bravery, and pride and dignity of Kyrgyz people. Traditionally, *Manaschis* have sung the epic songs to generations as reminders of their great past.

The story line of *Manas* is quite simple. At the age of fifteen, when nomad boys used to choose a profession of a shepherd to the khan for his cattle, Manas formed a band of warriors and taught its members the ways of war. To keep his supporters united and happy, he arranged feasts and organized games for their entertainment. His band of faithful fought with him the many battles that ultimately led to Kyrgyz triumph over Kalmyks and Chinese. After Manas, his son Semetei and grandson Seitek continued the battles, which established the Kyrgyz nation.

This paper attempts reidentification of modern management theory in the backdrop of traditional wisdom as passed from generations to generations through *Manas*.

While reidentification as a technique is used in modern day psychology, even this has a mention in *Manas*. It is mentioned when the hero Manas was born and his name was suggested by a Darvesh.

"If you'll allow me to make so free,
I shall utter a God-given name!"
Thus did the Dervish to them exclaim.
All the people began to shout:
"Give us the name then, spit it out!"
"At its beginning stands letter "M",
As in Muhammad's most blessed name!
In the middle stands letter "N",
That means "Nabi"--prophetic men.
Then at its end stands the letter "S",
That is the tail of a lion, no less!

These passages suggest the importance of linking issues and identification of

new with the help of old. The connectivity of letters M and N in Manas with revered personalities and that of S with a symbol of bravery and unchallenged rule is an example in reidentification.

We will now look at some of the modern management concepts and study these concepts in the backdrop of passages from Manas.

Manas and Change Management:

Recent past has witnessed a lot of literature on the concept of Change Management. It ranges from the theory of Fifth Discipline³, to the bestseller Who Moved My Cheese⁴. Modern management gurus emphasize the need to manage change to organization's advantage. There are ample examples of organizations closing their operations when they refused to change with the changing times. For example Remington used to be a leading brand of typewrites till personal computers took over. IBM recognized that change and entered the arena of computers: in the process it remains a successful company.

Modern theory of change management postulates that in order to be ready to accept change and manage it to one's advantage both people as well as organizations should be willing to challenge their own assumptions, understand the mismatch between their assumptions and new paradigm, rework on their assumptions and principles, and then move forward. For these theorists change management is an ongoing process.

Manas , has a mention of inevitable change process in one of its passages as depicted below.

*The mountains fell apart, turning into ravines,
Ravines shook, turning into mountains.
Many seas became extinct
Leaving only their names behind.
Every fifty years, people were new,
Every hundred years the earth was renewed*

It clearly indicates how changes of environment as well as change of people are correlated. When seen in the context of business management it is the external as well as internal conditions of the organization, which keep changing and require people to become 'new'. This newness of people can be attained either through fresh induction or through training and retraining. The concept of preparation (training in modern management) comes alive in the section on 'Jakip and Akbaltay prepare to move to Ala-too. Joloy launches a great attack on them'

³ Senge M Peter (1999), *The Fifth Discipline – The Art & Practice of The Learning Organisation*, London, Random House Business Books.

⁴ Dr. Spencer Johnson (2000), *Who Moved my Cheese*, New York, G.P.Putnam's Sons.

through following passages :

For a whole six years,
 These wise men had prepared for the move
 By gelding their stallions,
 Preparing all the mares,
 Castrating their rams

Fattening their sheep,
 And gelding all the oxen,
 They silently dismantled the yurt frames,
 Crossed the river without splashing,
 Prepared all the stallions
 And drove in one herd
 The livestock they had raised,
 "Baabeding, grant us a safe journey!" they prayed
 And slaughtered a gray mare.
 They put together a strong army

It is indicative of how training has to take care of the smallest of detail : from gelding of stallions to castration of rams...each has its purpose. The preparations were going on for six years. It indicates how preparation (training) is a long drawn process with a specific purpose. Typically for any mass movement, a community would require means of travel, food, shelter, and safety. The passages reproduced above reflect the efforts being made for each of these needs – stallions and mares for riding, mares, rams and sheep for food, yurts for shelter, crossing rivers without splash for safe, unnoticed passage, putting together a strong army for safety.

Manas and the Concept of Comprehensive Action:

Maulana Jalauddin Rumi, the famous Sufi saint has propounded the concept of Comprehensive Action v/s Individual Action⁵. For example if we find one man cutting the cloth, another hammering nails in the ground, yet another sewing the cloth, and yet another preparing some ropes...we see individual actions. The comprehensive action is : they are laying a tent. The interconnectedness of individual action is often submerged and not seen till the final picture is presented to us.

This concept of comprehensive action is clear in the preparations described in the passages reproduced above. Gelding of stallions, preparation of mares, castration of rams, fattening of sheep, etc. are individual actions aimed at the

⁵ Idries Shah (1971), *The Sufis*, USA, First Anchor Books, p-139

comprehensive action of readiness. Crossing of river without splash so that the army goes unnoticed, and driving in a herd so as to rely on mutual support are other indicators of comprehensive action.

Passages from the chapter 'Jakip gives Manas to shepherd Oshpur' reproduced below also indicate the need to look at the comprehensive action rather than only a part of the picture.

Oh, dear world!
 You consider Altay as your homeland,
 And the Kalmyks as your own people.
 This Altay isn't our homeland,
 The Kalmyks can't be our people.
 They will add poison in your food,
 Putting the blame on your son,
 These Kalmyks will tear you out by the roots!
 Leave all your countless livestock behind,
 With Manas as your hope,
 Flee this Altay!

In these passages Chiyirdi advises Jakip to understand the long-term effect of their continuing to live in Altay.

Manas and Competency Modeling:

The passages from the chapter 'Jakip and Akbaltay prepare to move to Alatau. Joloy launches a great attack on them' reproduced below indicate a process for selection of people based on their abilities.

As his support,
 The panther Manas, your hero, took
 All the strong and brave men,
 Courageous spearmen,
 And strong axemen.
 Jakip bay led the migration,
 Akbaltay rode behind,
 They left everything they had
 And relied on their faith [in God],
 They dispersed their countless livestock,

Modern day managers are talking of 'competency modelling' ...listing of competencies required to carry out a job and selection of people as per those competencies. The selections of strong and brave men to fight the enemy, spearmen and axemen to fit into the required skill set for those days' warfare are typical

examples of competency modeling in Manas.

Need for selection of warriors and their training in a systematic manner is reiterated in the chapter 'Manas kills 200 men of Esenkhan and plunders their camels and goods' through following passages.

Let's frighten the six sarts,
The children of Muslims,
Leading the camel caravan,
Into becoming our companions."
Akbalatay was indeed wise:
"Let's put together an army
From the Kyrgyz people of forty families
And train all the brave men.
By raising crescent-shaped banners,
And shouting the word 'Aziret,'

The advice to raise an army includes some very important messages :

- a. Select known people (from the forty Kyrgyz families).*
- b. Train them as per the requirements of assigned job.*
- c. Organize them with a banner and specific war cry so as to develop a commonality of vision among the team.*

Manas and Learning Cycle:

Kurt Lewin⁶ in his famous model of learning has talked of three stages : unfreezing, move, and refreezing. It suggests that to achieve a change in behaviour one has to first unlearn (unfreeze) so that one becomes receptive to change. Next comes the stage of moving in the desired direction of learning, and finally freezing of that state for future benefits.

The foregoing lines quoted from the chapter 'Jakip and Akbalatay prepare to move to Ala-too. Joloy launches a great attack on them' suggest the concept of migration. "They left everything they had" ...is a clear testimony to the idea of 'unfreezing'

Having faith in their Prophet and religion,
They left Altay behind,
The forty families moved away from Altay. . .

It also suggests of strategizing. Losing the battles to win the wars. That for a

⁶ French Wendell L. & Bell Cecil H. Jr. (2000), *Organisation Development*, India, Prentice-Hall of India, p-81-82

larger interest you may have to let smaller assets go away.

These concepts are repeated through passages in the chapter 'Manas kills 200 men of Esenkhan and plunders their camels and goods' :

We should leave the numerous livestock
 And flee from Altay!
 Let's use the "dog-fight" tactic with them.
 Anyway, we are mortals,
 Therefore, without lamenting, Bay Jakip
 We must keep the brave Manas, the sultan
 As our strong backing.
 We don't need to have
 These countless worthless livestock
 Which are impermanent.

Leaving behind the impermanent cattle, though numerous, is indicative of leaving behind the old assumptions which may no longer be relevant. This is 'unfreezing'. The use of 'dog-fight' technique is all about moving towards a new learning.

Following passages from the same chapter mention the timing for which new learning have to be frozen (we must stand our ground for six months) before the next move of unfreezing (then we should leave everything we have gathered)

Let's fight with them vigorously,
 Those who survive the Kitay
 Must reach our Muslims people!
 Until the reed ripens
 And the miyzam flower sheds its petals,
 We must stand our ground for six months.
 Then we should leave everything we have gathered
 And flee this Altay!
 In the midst of the battle,
 We should flee to the beautiful Ala-Too
 And to our Kyrgyz people."

Manas and Team Building:

In the context of team building, modern management theorists have always talked of inclusion and exclusion. It suggests that good teams are built through a mutual feeling of 'inclusion' whereby everybody feels a part of the team. Whenever exclusion takes place it results into teams becoming defunct, getting stuck, or even falling apart.

After selecting his team cautiously Manas engages them in games, feasts, and

even distribution of booty. Passages from the chapter 'Manas kills 200 men of Esenkhan and plunders their camels and goods' are reproduced below which indicate towards these methods of motivation, and 'inclusion' very effectively.

Otherwise, the great Manas
 Played ordo by himself.
 He has having a good time
 In playing games throughout the night,
 He was shooting knucklebones
 In an ordo with a diameter of forty paces.
 He gave as a prize for a horse race,
 Forty two-year-old mares for each winner,

And a mare to the north,
 They had been devouring the kazı
 And gulping black arak in the Kalmyk way,
 They had been playing chatırash and making too much noise,
 They were absorbed in their fun,
 Playing ordo and other games

He had been enjoying the ordo,
 The forty boys who were with him
 Were the companions of lion Manas.
 There was the happy boy Chalıbay -
 He had selected all the boys
 From the forty families -
 In playing the game

Let's unload the booty,
 The gold from the forty camels
 And we will see tomorrow
 What is the will of God.
 Let's divide the booty
 Which we got today

Compare the team built by Manas which had spearmen, axemen with the team that Doodur had brought! Following lines indicate that Doodur's group comprised of nobles, elite, and leaders.

Let's leave them aside for now
 And talk about the numerous army
 Which Döödür giant had brought.

The giant Döödür escaped and
 Came to the pavilion with golden poles,
 That Döödür had come
 To see Döngö and Joloy.

A lantern was lit inside the tent.
 Seeing the brave Döödür,
 Many noble men came en masse,
 The Türgoots all gathered,
 Bells rang loudly,
 The army milled around,
 Among the teeming noble men
 Of the bejeweled Kıtay,
 Only the elite gathered,
 Only the leaders gathered.

This is an example of inclusion in one case and exclusion in the other. The outcome of the epic battles defines which team won, and why. Obviously the team which had been formed through a process of mutual respect, had played games together, had feasted together, had divided the booty equally had a better cohesion among them. Members of this team had developed a common vision of developing a Kyrgyz nation for their coming generations, which was beyond their individual interests. On the contrary the army of Doodur had the sole aim of capturing Manas and plundering the Kyrgyz people. It is a contrast between the creative vision in one case and a reactive vision in the other.

Conclusion:

This paper presents some correlations between Manas and few concepts in modern management. Since most of the theories / management models described above were developed / researched in the western world in early 20th century it follows that the great epic Manas has taught these very concepts much earlier - about 700 years before these were propounded by modern day management scientists. It is only a small attempt to find few examples. A detailed and more comprehensive research is required to develop a 'Theory of Modern Management by Manas'.

However, these correlations need to be used only as help for studying the concepts with a more familiar idiom of Manas. It shall not be converted into an attempt to make retrograde steps towards past. As mentioned earlier it shall only be used to reidentify the new concepts and theories using Manas as a means for arriving a better understanding of concepts because of people's familiarity with Manas.

Use of modern tools with classical wisdom would take young scholars forward

in a lesser time. In the words of Yusuf Balasagun :

With knowledge, experience, one then must rule,
 And act like a wise man, and not like a fool.
 With knowledge his people a good Bey must nurse.
 If they remain stupid, their fate is a curse.
 And if a Bey's errs, and the wise people know,
 His rule will be worse. He must cure himself so.⁷

All translations of Manas taken from the works of
Elmira Köçümkulizi Ph.D. Candidate in Near and Middle Eastern Studies,
 University of Washington (Seattle)
 Iraj Bashiri, Manas: The Kyrgyz Epic, available at the internet site:-
www.angelfire.com/rnb/bashiri/Manas/manas.html

⁷ Balasagun Yusuf (1998), *Beneficent Knowledge*, translated in English by Walter May, Moscow & Bishkek