

SAIGINE CULTURAL RESEARCH CENTER

**SACRED SITES OF YSYK-KÖL:  
SPIRITUAL POWER, PILGRIMAGE,  
AND ART**

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## NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

The articles presented in this book were written based on field notes and interviews. All the materials, apart from the academic papers in Part II, were taken from interviews, that were first recorded, then transcribed and edited by members of Aigine Cultural Research Center. The abridged articles were then consulted with the speaker their contents commented upon and accepted by the interviewed person. After this confirmation the interview was included into the book.

In the majority of cases we have tried to give out faithfully the Kyrgyz pronunciation of words in the English transliterations. We have used the transliteration below.

The text contains many Kyrgyz words such as *ata*, *apa*, *elechek*, *tamga*, that have been transcribed into the Latin alphabet but not translated, this has been done to keep the personal titles and the nature of the text Kyrgyz. The words are highlighted in italics the first time they are used in the book and they are explained in a footnote.

Some Kyrgyz words, highlighted in italics are not explained in a footnote but can be found in the glossary at the end of the book (e.g. *ak*, *Kydyr*, *synchy*). The glossary also includes words and concepts not mentioned in the articles but important for the understanding of Kyrgyz spiritual culture. Some of these concepts have been described in the English version and they have been named in the glossary.

All verse texts in the book are translated word-for-word.

In the first part of the book most of the explanations and translations have been added by the editors and send the reader to the footnotes or to the glossary. The second part is composed of a variety of academic articles with references and bibliographies.

### Transliteration

Kyrgyz Alphabet	Transliteration	Pronunciation Notes
<i>A</i>	<i>a</i>	(as in <i>father</i> ) [back vowel]
<i>B</i>	<i>b</i>	
<i>B</i>	<i>v</i>	
<i>Г</i>	<i>g</i>	[with front vowels as g or back vowels as gh]
<i>Д</i>	<i>d</i>	
<i>E</i>	<i>e</i>	(slightly palatalized: ye) [front vowel]

<i>Ë</i>	<i>yo</i>	(as in <i>yoke</i> ) [more like <i>yaw</i> ]
<i>Ж</i>	<i>j</i>	
<i>З</i>	<i>z</i>	
<i>И</i>	<i>i</i>	(as in <i>inch</i> )
<i>Й</i>	<i>iy</i>	(semivowel, as in <i>yes</i> )
<i>К</i>	<i>k</i>	(soft or hard k) [with front vowels as k or back vowels as q]
<i>Л</i>	<i>l</i>	
<i>М</i>	<i>m</i>	
<i>Н</i>	<i>n</i>	
<i>Ъ</i>	<i>ng</i>	(nasal n, as in the English <i>thing</i> )
<i>О</i>	<i>o</i>	[back vowel]
<i>Ѡ</i>	<i>ö</i>	(as in German <i>schön</i> ) [front vowel]
<i>П</i>	<i>p</i>	
<i>Р</i>	<i>r</i>	
<i>С</i>	<i>s</i>	
<i>Т</i>	<i>t</i>	
<i>У</i>	<i>u</i>	[back vowel]
<i>У</i>	<i>ü</i>	(as in German <i>für</i> ) [front vowel]
<i>Ф</i>	<i>f</i>	

<i>X</i>	<i>h</i>	
<i>Ц</i>	<i>ts</i>	
<i>Ч</i>	<i>ch</i>	
<i>Ш</i>	<i>sh</i>	
<i>Ы</i>	<i>y</i>	
<i>Ь</i>	<i>'</i>	
<i>Ъ</i>		
<i>Э</i>	<i>e</i>	(unpalatalized short e in foreign words)
<i>Ю</i>	<i>yu</i>	
<i>Я</i>	<i>ya</i>	

Note: As a sample for transliteration for Kyrgyz alphabet we have used transliteration from book of Bruce G. Privratsky called “Muslim Turkistan: Kazak Religion and Collective Memory.” However we made major changes in adapting transliteration for research data in Kyrgyz that Aigine has for publication.

## FOREWORD

In 2007 the Aigine Cultural Research Center started a series of publications focusing on sacred places and traditional knowledge of Kyrgyzstan. The first book was dedicated to the sacred places of Talas, to rituals related to pilgrimage to sacred places, and to the people whose lives are closely connected with these sacred places “*Kyrgyzstandagy Mazar Basuu: Talas Tajryibasynyn Negizinde*”<sup>1</sup>, translated into English as “*Mazar Worship in Kyrgyzstan: Rituals and Practitioners in Talas*”.

This second book is based upon field research which Aigine conducted in the years of 2006-2008 in Ysyk-Köl province. The present book is founded upon the same principle of composition as that of the first book: presented in two parts are two domains of knowledge that could be described as “folk” and “scientific”.

“Folk” knowledge about sacred places, the earth, water, animals, plants, ritual practices and healing practices that refer to these natural phenomena is preserved among the people and passed from one generation to the next. This folk knowledge is mainly preserved in oral tradition and is generally passed on in the following ways: 1) through everyday life communication; 2) through traditional “master-apprentice” relationships; 3) through direct communication and teaching by “other-than-human beings”<sup>2</sup>.

One of the tasks that the Aigine CRC set for itself while publishing these kind of books is to preserve and to pass on folk knowledge in written form, which is more widely used in our century. In this way Aigine contributes to preserving and developing the oral tradition of local culture.

The first section of the book consists of eight chapters and represents the “folk” part because this section presents topics that are discussed by ordinary people, so the authorship of this knowledge belongs precisely to these people. For example, the healing practices and knowledge which are widely known among the people under the general name as *kyrgyzchylyk* are presented in Chapter 6 “*Kyrgyzchylyk* has existed for centuries”. Such practices and the layers of knowledge behind them have not been yet the subject of any trustworthy academic research in Kyrgyzstan. Academic science has just started to investigate the healing uses of the oral epic “Manas” and the mechanisms for transferring this oral gift. But this knowledge is maintained and constantly renewed in the collective memory of the nation. In the first chapter

<sup>1</sup> The Kyrgyz title of the book is: Мазар басуу тажрыйбасы: Талас жергесинин негизинде.

<sup>2</sup> Harvey, Graham. *Animism. Respecting the Living World*. Columbia University Press, New York, 2006, pg. xi.

six *manaschy*<sup>3</sup> who were born on the shores of Ysyk-Köl narrate their spiritual experience of introduction and their entry into the world of the epic.

*Kyrgyzchylyk* and *manaschylyk*, as one of its expressions, are characteristic only of the Kyrgyz ethnic group. Yet every Central Asian ethnic group has its own “*chylyk*” – *kazakhchylyk*, *uzbekchylyk*, *turkmenchylyk* and Tajiki<sup>4</sup>. Like *kyrgyzchylyk*, these other traditions of traditional wisdom, represent the collective knowledge that is expressed in traditions, rituals and other everyday practices.

The wisdom and practices of any human group are interrelated with the surrounding environment and have local variations. For example, Ysyk-Köl Lake is a unique natural phenomenon that has an enormous effect on people. In the third chapter “People and Earth are kin” representatives of different nationalities living in Kyrgyzstan share their spiritual experiences that are in some way connected to the lake.

The authors of the articles come from different ages, genders, ethnic and educational backgrounds and social statuses. There are dramatic differences as we move from a famous surgeon known all over the country, who is a doctor of medical science and the founder of the biggest surgical center in the country, to a man with no education, jobless and with no residence permit. What unites such contrasting authors? It is their personal spiritual experiences which on the one hand go deep into traditional knowledge, while at the same time depend upon individual spiritual capacity to expand and enrich this knowledge. The surgeon in our book appears not in the role of a well-known leader but of a man who describes *bata* [q.v.] and the unseen protective spirits, both of which played an enormous role in his day-to-day and professional success.

On its field trips in the remote places of the country the Aigine team observed that sometimes people who have no relations to science or even with no secondary school degree possess qualities like those of academic researchers and can be characterized as “village intellectuals”<sup>5</sup>. Our work experience in Talas and later at Ysyk-Köl shows that these so called “village intellectuals” in anthropology often carry knowledge that was not gained at school or college.

From the year it was founded (2005), the Aigine Cultural Research Center has followed the principle of uniting people according to their spiritual experience and knowledge, rather than according to their exterior accomplishments. This principle has helped to create new types of social networks and cooperation. The goal of creating new nets and links helps to promote the search for ways to improve life, and for sources of spiritual, economical and social development.

Improving life for the majority of people in an economically underdeveloped country such as Kyrgyzstan, means improving basic conditions: availability of drinking water and water for irrigation, electricity for daily life and cooking, and security about basic living expenses, etc. However, traditional wisdom proclaims: “*Peiyil ongolmoyuncha, ish ongolboiyt*” which means “matters will not improve until the consciousness improves”. In other words, traditional wisdom points out that to change the material side of life it is necessary to change the way of thinking, the way we relate to the world around and our own place in this world.

Aigine does not idealize nor romanticize traditional knowledge but searches within it for potentials that can be used to improve life today. Aigine suggests that it is in the interrelation and interdependence of traditional and nontraditional, of material and spiritual, of science and religion, of East and West, that the enormous potential for improving life will be found. For this reason the mission of our organization is to seek points of rapprochement and interconnection among traditional knowledge and science, nature and culture, West and East, and other experiences often felt to be in opposition.

The second part of the book consists of scholarly publications based on field research concerning sacred places, ritual practices and spiritual heritage. Several articles were written by the Aigine fellows and represent analysis of the

research projects that were carried out for several years with the support of the Christensen Fund. The articles on “Manas”, which is an enormous source of traditional knowledge, and also on the archeology of ancient sacred places in Ysyk-Köl are written by scholars who participated in our summer schools and conferences or took part in field trips with us. All of the articles are being published for the first time and bring scientific analysis to new topics into local academic area. In this regard Aigine functions as a research center and promotes the study of the natural and cultural diversity of Kyrgyzstan.

Manas is the central figure of the epic and according to the tale he was born in the Altai mountains. Already from this traditional point of view this fact itself makes Altai an exceptionally important region for the Kyrgyz. For the last two years Aigine has been partnering with Altaian organizations that focus on sacred places and traditional knowledge. We are particularly interested in the experience of researchers who use the language of facts, experiments and theories for the interpretation of ancient cultural phenomena. There are two articles included in the academic section of the book that reflect the work experience of these Altaian researchers.

Preparation for the printing and publication of this book focusing on sacred places and traditional knowledge has received financial support from the Christensen Fund (California, USA). It is important to mention two circumstances here, under which this book is being published. The first of this is the global economic crisis that started in the West and has slowly spread to the rest of the world. The second is the modern socio-political situation in Kyrgyzstan which is characterized by great politicization of all spheres of life and has resulted in fragmented moral norms.

In the context of the crisis it can be clearly seen that The Christensen Fund’s mission to support local traditions in the spheres of culture, education, agriculture, farming, climate change etc., is timely and important. Empowering local associations and awakening their own potential for contributing to stable development are effective measures against the crisis of the global economic system.

The Christensen Fund, as a Western organization, knows the value of such notions as intellectual property rights, copyright, trade mark and patent. Support of local research and publication offers the opportunity to protect the intellectual property rights of local bearers of traditional knowledge and practices.

However, in the atmosphere of politicization of both religious and research activities and the suspicions produced by such politicization, our work as a non-governmental research center focused on supporting and preserving sacred places and traditional knowledge under the sponsorship of a Western funding organization leads to conflicting responses: from unselfish cooperation to suspicions about “selling sacredness” to the West. While accomplishing its mission the cultural research center Aigine believes that certain phenomena cannot be sold because of their intrinsic nature. Only when an external reality (such as a spring) and inner relationships to it (faith, worship) are united, can a sense of sacredness be born. Sacredness is not a geo-physical or material category. It does not lie, like gold, somewhere deep in the mountains – it lives in the souls of people. Sacredness is a category of communicative consciousness, it cannot be separated from a particular place and time, nor from a particular person and a community.

Aigine conceives of the East and West as two parts of the globe, academic science and traditional knowledge represent two approaches to epistemology and cognition, and the opportunities and resources of both should be united to promote the improvement of life for all people.

The Aigine Cultural Research Center expresses deep appreciation to The Christensen Fund, to Talas and Ysyk-Köl students, and to all the authors without whose contributions this book could not exist.

Special gratitude goes to fellow workers of the center – Aida Egemberdieva for her preparation for the print of the Kyrgyz version; Aida Alymbaeva for preparation of the Russian version; Izabella Mier-Jędrzejowicz - for English version; Guljan Kudabaeva for the original design of the book; and to the team of translators and editors who helped with the Russian and English versions of the book.

*Dr. Gulnara Aitpaeva*

*Director of Aigine Cultural Research Center*

<sup>3</sup> *Manaschy* [Kyrgyz] - a person who recites the epic Manas.

<sup>4</sup> Tajik language, in contrast to other Central Asian languages does not belong to the Turkic language group but to the Iranian group of languages, and hence does not use the ending *-chylyk* for describing the phenomenon of Tajik knowledge.

<sup>5</sup> The term is used in anthropology to characterize people who don’t have any academic qualifications but possess other strong qualities for description and analysis of their own experience: Magnus Marsden. Muslim Village Intellectuals. The Life of the Mind in Northern Pakistan. *Anthropology Today*, Vol 21/1, February 2005, pg.10.

## PART I SACRED SITES OF YSYK-KÖL

### INTRODUCTION

In the first chapter of this book the reader will find information about the sacred sites of the Ysyk-Köl region of Kyrgyzstan. Here we have kept the same principles and approach used by the researchers of Aigine Cultural Research Center in our previous book on sacred sites published in 2007: “*Mazar Worship in Kyrgyzstan: Rituals and Practitioners in Talas*”. From information gathered by Aigine members during field research, we have again compiled a list of sacred sites, which includes their description and oral history. The main and only sources of information for this part of the book are people who concern themselves with sacred sites – bearers of traditional knowledge, healers, dervishes and the guardians of the sacred sites.

Often, when discussing sacred sites, the question of their classification is raised. There is a Kyrgyz saying: “When asking for a child – go to Manjyly- Ata, when asking for wealth – go to Cholpon-Ata”<sup>6</sup>. This gives us an example of how people classify sacred sites. This is a functional classification, where the basis is the primary function of a sacred site. According to the saying, every sacred site has its own specific function, that is, a pilgrim’s requests should be focused on the *mazar*’s abilities. However, contrary to this classification, our research in Talas and Ysyk-Köl has shown that the majority of sacred sites have not one but many abilities. Therefore the success of the pilgrimage depends more on a person’s intentions and on their ability to establish contact with a certain place. After establishing such a connection, between the pilgrim and a sacred place, its influence can be very wide and not limited to the designated function of the place. One may ask for many things, be it family prosperity, blessings, health, spiritual inspiration or many others.

Another method of classification could be their formation. This divides sacred sites into two categories: natural *mazars* and manmade sites<sup>7</sup>. However a large amount of sacred sites in Kyrgyzstan are a synthesis of the manmade and the natural. Manjyly-Ata – a large *mazar* complex situated on the South shore of Ysyk-Köl is a very good example of this, here the objects of worship are both springs and trees, and also old mausoleums.

Like the manmade sacred sites we researched in Talas, those in the Ysyk-Köl region also include mausoleums of revered people, ancient buildings or the graves of the innocent. However, it was noted that contrary to the sites in Talas, many of which were built long ago, the mausoleums in Ysyk-Köl have been recently built, in our lifetime. They are a sign of the search for historical justice, because most of these mausoleums have been erected to rehabilitate and honour the names of people condemned during Soviet times, whose names it was forbidden to mention. In particular, since the coming of independence, much is being done to redeem the memory of the traditional title of *ake* [q.v.] specific of the Kyrgyz people living around the Ysyk-Köl lake. This title is given only to seven great men from the region. Now these seven *ake* of the Ysyk-Köl tribes, have become the objects of academic research, the protagonists of articles, conferences and discussions of different academic profiles. The places of burial of the *akeler*<sup>8</sup> have been discovered by the help of local wise men and village elders, and so these places have been identified by their own people, who have taken it upon themselves to build their mausoleums.

It is also important to note that *ake* is a title that was given by all the people, it is not a title of only family members or of the tribe. Only a person with great wisdom, knowledge and perspicacity, only a person concerning himself with the fortunes of all the Kyrgyz people and not limiting himself to his community and tribe, only a person with the ability to instill peace between the tribes, could be deemed worthy of this national title *ake*. The *akeler* held the right to take important decisions in the name of the community in times of historical unrest.

Yet another means of classification is the time that a sacred site came to appear, or the time that it came to be identified as a sacred place. Due to the fact that there are very few written sources to be found on the history of sacred

sites in Kyrgyzstan, this classifier is based on information preserved in the oral tradition. Based on this orally transmitted information of their history, we have segregated the sacred sites of Kyrgyzstan according to their appearance in certain intervals of time. We have identified three time blocks, these are mythological and prehistoric, historical and then modern times. We shall once again use the example of Manjly-Ata, about which we have not yet found any written sources. However, according to legend, many thousands of years ago, there lived a man called Manjly. In the absence of any reliable written sources, we based our classification on oral history and as Manjly-Ata is considered by tradition to be very ancient, the appearance of this site can be attributed to mythological and pre-historical times. Accordingly, places like Ak-Baka, Ak-Tailak, Kochkor-Ata, Bugu-Ene are considered to belong to the mythological time frame.

Sacred sites named in honour of a historical figure who appears in written sources of any kind (be they books, letters, photos or genealogies), can be designated as historical. The mausoleums of the *akeler* are considered manmade, historical places of worship. The mausoleums of Kalygul, Arstanbek, Balbaiy and Manake are included in this category. There is a slightly different situation with the mausoleums of Cholpon Ata and Er Tabyldy, although these have also been erected since independence, they are named in honour of legendary heroes, spoken of in tales, epics and legends, of whose life there is no real historical proof.

The newly built mausoleum of Cholpon-Ata stands in the center of the town Cholpon Ata and is an example of the previously mentioned need to rehabilitate national history. However in this case it may be interesting to note that traditional history marks the burial place of Cholpon-Ata in the valley lying south-east of the town of Cholpon-Ata. The new memorial of the legendary hero stands in a very exposed place, at the head of of the town's main road. This shows that the memorial has not only been erected in honour of its legendary patron but as a means of preserving for generations to come the name of the statue's donor.

Sacred sites that have been recently discovered or that appeared in the course of our lifetimes, and thus in times that have not yet passed into history can be called modern sites. Again, when considering this classification it is necessary to say that the borders of these time frames are negotiable and defining them precisely may limit our understanding of the processes that are now taking place in our society. As mentioned above some of the mausoleums of *akeler* can be classified as historical, however it is only since the 1990 that people have had the possibility to start considering these places sacred and in fact to create them, and this belief is one that is now spreading. That is why by some these sacred sites will be classified as modern sites rather than historical.

Another classification worth mentioning is the ownership of the land on which a sacred site is located. Fortunately, for the time being, most sacred sites stand on state property, but this is just considered land that belongs to the state and can be sold, more and more of the sites are being passed into the hands of private or corporate owners.

In the field of our research it is oral history that preserves more than any written sources. The locations and descriptions of sacred sites found in this chapter have been taken from many sources: people's memories. With some exceptions, most people did not publish their information, they did not propagate it in the press or television or save it on cassettes or disks, but they passed it on by word of mouth from generation to generation.

Ysyk-Köl region was the first to be incorporated into the Russian Empire and has therefore long been home to representatives of many religious and spiritual practices. The peoples and cultures of this region have had the chance to observe and influence each other. The Kyrgyz-Russian tradition is subject to this common history. Of course the closeness and influence of the cultures has had both negative and positive consequences. People recount stories of Russian people who mourned the death of one of the Kyrgyz *ake*: Kadyr *Ake*. But there is also the story of one Russian family, who tore down the bricks of the Manake mausoleum in order to build a hen coop, and it is said that this brought Gods' punishment upon them.

One of our informants mentioned, that all the information and knowledge that they have about sacred sites, they once heard from their parents, relatives or from the elders of their village. Other informants described their spiritual journey and told us of their pilgrimage. During our research, people of different nationalities, with different spiritual and religious experiences, including people with anti-religious views shared their stories with us and helped to locate and describe the sacred sites of the region.

<sup>6</sup> [Kyrgyz] *Bala surasang – Manjly-Ataga bar, baiylyk surasang – Cholpon -Ataga bar.*

<sup>7</sup> *Mazar Worship in Kyrgyzstan: Rituals and Practitioners in Talas*, Bishkek, 2007, pg. 16.

## DESCRIPTIONS OF THE SACRED SITES OF THE YSYK-KÖL OBLAST

### AK-SUU RAIYON

#### 1. Akbash-Ata [Father Akbash]

Börü-Bash village

No guardian

A tomb and three young trees make up the *mazar*. The sacred site is located on the site of the village's old cemetery. There are no tombstones left, however grave mounds remain in the old cemetery. There are three trees behind one of the mounds. In the middle of the cemetery there is a poplar. According to local people, Akbash Ata was buried beneath that poplar. Akbash Ata was the eldest of seven brothers, as was Cholpon Ata, Manjyly Ata, Ysyk Ata and Karakol Ata. He was a wise man of his people. After his body was buried in this place, the trees grew over his grave.

Not only Kyrgyz but also Kalmak people visit this sacred site and conduct rituals to pray for good weather. According to people, in ancient times Apendi was the guardian of this site.

#### 2. Ak-Baka [White Frog]

Kerege-Tash village

No guardian

Seven blue poplars and a spring are considered sacred. There is a cemetery on the east site of the road from Kerege-Tash village to Sary-Kamysh village. Near the cemetery there is a path which leads into the mountains and ends at the Ak-Baka sacred site.

The poplars are tall and blue, their trunks are thick, some poplars have fallen down but still continue to grow. The trees look very beautiful.

Pilgrims directed the course of the spring by making a channel out of red stones. The spring water starts flowing from the month of May.

#### 3. Alma [Apple]

Ichke-Jergez village

No guardian

Two apple trees. The small tree is called child sacred site, and the bigger one is called father sacred site. From the village of Ichke-Jergez you go 3-3,5km to the east and pass the first barn, behind that barn there is an old mine. There is a first barn which is situated on the 3-3,5km to the east of the village Ichke-Jergez. There is an old mine behind the mountain. The sacred site is situated 150-200m further from the mine.

According to the pilgrims, in 1949 the Russians who worked in the mine cut down the apple trees and not long after they died. This sacred site is thought to be very old.

#### 4. Altyn-Bulak [Golden Spring]

Enchilesh village

No guardian

A pine tree and a warm spring. The site is situated in the Altyn-Bulak resort which is 6km to the east of the Enchilesh village.

#### 5. Aziz [Snake]

Tegizchil village

No guardian

The sacred site is a mountain ash tree and a spring. The sacred site is located approximately 3km to the east of the Tegizchil village, near the Jyrgalan River. Votive rags are tied to the branches and the spring flows out from under the tree.

#### **6. Bakaluu-Köl** [Frog Lake]

Ak-Bulung village

No guardian

A frog shaped big stone and a pond. The Turgon forestry unit Turgon is located 6km from the village of Ak-Bulung in the direction of the Sary-Jaz valley. The lake is about 4,5km from the forestry unit.

According to legend, the sacred site was once a big lake, not a small *pond*. Sacred white frogs lived in the big lake. This is why the lake is called Frog Lake.

#### **7. Bala** [Child or Baby]

Karakyz village

No guardian

A lone willow tree. There is a mill 800m - 1km east of the village Karakyz. On the left side of the mill there stands a black willow. This tree is considered sacred and is called Bala.

#### **8. Balyk-Suu** [Fish water or Fish lake]

Ak-Bulung village

No guardian

Two yellow willow trees and a small pool are the sacred site. The willows stand on the east side of the pool. There are small fish in the pool and a lot of votive rags tied to the branches of the willow trees.

#### **9. Kaiynar-Bulak** [Boiling Spring]

Uch-Kaiynar village

No guardian

A spring. The spring flows out from the bottom of a depression, which is 100m from the sheep yard that is located on the north-west side of the village Uch-Kainar.

According to legend Manas spent a night beside the spring when on his campaign against the Kara-Kitays, then his son, Semeteiy and Aiychürök (Semeteiy's wife) also stayed one night at the spring.

#### **10. Kaiyrma-Aryk** [Bent Branch Ditch]

Kaiyrma-Aryk village

Guardian: Kanimetov Japar

Two young willow trees. They stand in the garden of Kanimetov JAapar. According to Amanbaeva Duishokan who told us the story of the sacred site "In 1916 during the national uprising *Ürkün*, Russian soldiers shoot a local villager. Willows began to grow over the place where he was buried and these are considered sacred."

#### **11. Kamanduu-Köl** [Wild Boar Lake]

Sary-Kamysh village

No guardian

A grove with many different kinds of trees and bushes, springs come out from under the roots of some of the trees. There is a road between the villages Ak-Suu and Sary-Chelek that goes in the south-western direction. This road leads to a sheep enclosure, which is located at the edge of a field besides a plain. A river flows across this plain. The grove can be seen along the river to the north-east side.

#### **12. Han-Tengir**<sup>9</sup>

Peak of the Han-Tengir mountain range

The sacred site is a mountain. Peak Han-Tengir is located 12km from the national border with China. It is the tallest peak in Ysyk-Köl region. It reaches a height of 6995m above sea level, has a pyramidal shape and consists mainly of limestone and marble rock, covered with ice.

Another name of the peak is – Han-Too which means the King’s Mountain and this indicates the people’s attitudes towards the mountain.

**13. Kanaiy-Bulak** [Kanaiy’s Spring]

Toktogul village

No guardian

A mountain ash tree and a spring are considered sacred. The site is located 3km from Toktogul village to the east, on the Echki-Tal plain.

**14. Kara-Jal** [Black Mane]

Kara-Jal village

No guardian

A mountain ash tree. Next to the mountain ash there are sea-buckthorn bushes. This site is located towards the end of a hill which is 500m away from a barn that stands on the shore of the Jyrgalan river on the east side of the village Kara-Jal.

**15. Karakol-Ata** [Father Karakol<sup>10</sup>]

Karakol town

Guardian: Churukov Tahirjan

The sacred site is a complex of sacred sites, these are Karakol’s tomb, three yellow willow trees, a poplar tree and a spring. This complex is located in a Muslim cemetery which is on the right side of the road at the entrance to the town from the northern gate. The tomb is built of clay. The tomb is 2.5 – 3m high, 3.5m wide. The three yellow willows and the poplar stand close to the tomb and the spring flows between them. There are sea-buckthorn bushes on the east side of the tomb. There is a small river not far from the bushes.

According to legend, one of the seven *ake* of the Ysyk-Köl was buried here. He was nicknamed Karakol because one of his hands was black.

**16. Kanysh** [Kanysh]

Kaiyrma-Aryk village

No guardian

A weeping willow. It can be seen right after entering the village of Kaiyrma-Aryk from the east site, the tree stands next to an old *korgon*<sup>11</sup>.

**17. Köiykap** [*figurative*: The end of the earth]

Köiykap pasture

No guardian

The pasture is considered sacred. Köiykap is the the biggest pasture in the Ak-Suu region. Kyrgyz people say that *kaiyps*, that is the people who have left this world but did not die, inhabit Köiykap.

**18. Kök-Terek** [Blue poplar]

Enchilesh village

No guardian

A single, tall blue poplar. It is located near the village Enchilesh in the direction of Altyn-Bulak resort. According to the stories the villagers, a man called Aaly, planted the tree. He was killed in the Soviet repressions in 1930.

**19. Kydyr-Ake** [Kydyr Ake]

Ak-Suu village (Teplokluchenka)

No guardian

Juniper bushes and a hot spring. These stand approx. 15-16km from the village Ak-suu along the road that leads to the Altyn-Arashan pastures. The juniper bushes grow on a rock. The hot spring comes out from under the rock. This site is also called the spring of Kydyr Ake.

## **20. Kyzyl-Jar [Red Cliff]**

Kyzyl-Jar village

No guardian

A mountain ash tree and a birch tree. These stand on the right side of the road which goes from the village Kyzyl-Jar to the village Toktogul, approximately 5-6km from the first village. There are votive rags tied to the branches of the mountain ash.

According to popular belief, in 1890, a five year old girl died there when her family was moving from one pasture to another. The father of the girl buried his daughter there and continued the move. From that time on the place is known as the burial place of a *sheyit*, an innocently died person.

<sup>9</sup> *Han* [turkic] lit. tr. - ruler; *Tengir* is the god of the sky of the Turkic and Mongolian peoples [ed.].

<sup>10</sup> *Karakol* [Kyrgyz] here - a man's name; lit. tr.: *Kara* - black, *kol* - hand [ed.].

<sup>11</sup> *Korgon* [Turkic] - burial mound [ed.].

## **21. Maiy-Bulak [Oil spring]**

Tash-Kyya village

No guardian

A hawthorn and mountain ash trees, a big stone and a spring. Standing in the middle of the road on Sultanalieva street in the southern part of the village Tash-Kyya, at the foot of a 500m high mountain, there is a hawthorn tree. Under the hawthorn there is a big white stone that is tinted with red. The spring flows out from under the stone. The hawthorn is surrounded with bushes of mountain ash. Every now and again on the surface of the water coming from the spring a thin layer of oil appears. If the Qur'an is read to the spring water the flow will increase.

According to the president of the Sartkalmak<sup>12</sup> organization, researcher of Sartkalmak history, Bektur Mansurov, local people think that the proprietor of Earth Mother lives there.

## **22. Manake-Oluya [Manake Oluya]**

Cholpon village

No guardian

The sacred site is Manake's mausoleum which stands on the south-east edge of the village Cholpon, approx. 900-1000m from the road, in the third farm of Karakol village administration unit. There are two graves of villagers near the mausoleum. The mausoleum is surrounded by a metallic fence.

According to local people the mausoleum was built in 1913. Its main construction material is clay, it is about 3m high. Currently the mausoleum is in critical condition and is losing its form. According to the people, Manake lived in the years 1811-1907, he was an astronomist, astrologist and fortuneteller.

## **23. Nurgaiy-Ata [Nurgaiy Father]**

Karakol village

No guardian

Two poplars, sea-buckthorn bushes and a spring. The sacred site is situated five metres from the road which connects Karakol village with Karakol town, on the south side of the Jyrgalang river, approximately 1-1.5km from Karakol village. Votive rags are tied to the branches of the sea-buckthorn bushes. The spring comes out from under the bushes.

Nurgai lived in the village Karakol. According to the local people, he was a healer.

## **24. Nurmoldo-Ata [Nurmoldo Father]**

Cherik village

No guardian

The sacred site has a spring and two yellow willows. It is situated on the south-west side of the village Cherik. The spring, which comes out from under the willows flows into a small river which falls into a swamp.

According to Ainagul Mamedieva a local villager, a man called Nurmoldo was killed in a very cruel way by order of the local biy and was buried here.

**25. Tal [Willow]**

Boz-Bulung village

No guardian

Two wrinkled willows. These stand 20-30m from the main road of the village. In late 1990s a woman with supernatural abilities said that the place where the willows grow has a special aura. After that the local people of Boz-Bulung village began to consider this place sacred, pray there and conduct ritual sacrifice.

**26. Tal [Willow]**

Enchilesh village

No guardian

The sacred site is a black willow. The tree stands in the north-east side of the village Enchilesh, 2,5-3km from the center.

**27. Tulpar-Tash [Stallion Stone]**

Summer pasture Bel-Kara-Suu

No guardian

The sacred site is a very big stone. It is 8 metres high and 6 metres wide. The top of the stone looks like saddle, there are holes on the sides of the stone which look like horse hoofs. The color of the stone is grey-blue.

According to legend, when Manas was moving from Altai with his people, he stamped a hoofprint of his horse Akkula as a sacred sign for future generations. People also call this stone “Akkula’s stone” and “Manas’ stamp”.

**28. Tuz [Salt]**

Shahta-Jyrgalang PGT<sup>13</sup>

No guardian

The sacred site is a hole with a layer of salt around its edges. It is located 1-1,5km west side of the mine.

During the Civil war (1918-1920) this place was witness to many cruel events and many people died here. According to pilgrims you can still hear the cries of those who suffered and were tortured.

<sup>12</sup> “Sartkalmak” is an organization in Karakol town working for the safeguarding and upkeep of Sartkalmaks' identity and unity [ed.].

<sup>13</sup> PGT means *Poselok Gorodskovo Tipa* (lit. tr. Town-like village), this is an administrative unit considered something between a town and a village.

**29. Shapak-Ata [Shapak Father]**

Shapak village

No guardian

The sacred site is the mausoleum of Shapak, which is situated on the hill near the village. People consider this mausoleum sacred even though Aldash uulu Shapak was buried in Jeti-Ögüz village near to Tilekmat village. The mausoleum was built out of clay which was brought from the village Tilekmat.

Aldash uulu Shapak who lived in the years 1740-1813 was a representative of the people, he was a diplomat and worked to defend his people from their enemies.

**JETI-ÖGÜZ RAIYON**

**30. Ak-Bulak [White Spring]**

Bogatyrovka village

No guardian

A willow and a spring. These are situated in the southern part of Bogatirovka village near to the stream. There is a Russian Orthodox Christian graveyard in the southern side at a distance of about 3 to 4km from the Bogatyrovka village. The sacred site is located in front of the grave.

**31. Ak-Terek** [White Poplar]

Tamga village

No guardian

Three white poplars. At the edge of Tamga village the “Jemchujina” recreation center stands. The sacred site is situated by the edge of the stream, which flows about 5-6km from the road that passes in front of the “Jemchujina”.

**32. Archa** [Juniper]

Ak-Döbö village

No guardian

A tall and straight juniper bush standing alone. The bush grows on the road near to Orgochor, at a distance of 2,5-3km from Ak-Döbö village and on the road to Boz-Beshik village. Along the road there is an unfinished house made of mud. This house marks the beginning of a hollow, the sacred site is about 800-1000m from this hollow and 250-300m higher up the path.

**33. Archa** [Juniper]

Boz-Beshik village

No guardian

A round-shaped juniper bush. After going 3,300m from Boz-Beshik village to Ak-Döbö village there is a turn-off that leads towards the lake. The sacred site is situated 900m after the turn.

**34. Bazarbaiy-Bulak** [Bazarbay's Spring]

Tosor village

No guardian

The sacred site is made up of several trees and one spring. 400m up the road from Tosor village to Tamga village there is a turn to the east. After turning to the east and passing 1-1,5 km there is a sheep enclosure. After 5-6km there is another sheep enclosure. Behind the sheep enclosure there are streams, which must be passed on the way to towards the mountain. The sacred site is located at the foot of the mountain at a height of 200m.

**35. Bugu-Ene** [Mother Deer]

Jeti-Ögüz village, Jeti-Ögüz health resort

No guardian

The sacred site is a fir tree with branches resembling two antlers. The sacred site is situated by the shore of the lake, it is close to the Jarylgan-Jürök sacred site about 100-200m before the Jarylgan-Jürök mountain and on the road to Jeti-Ögüz health resort.

**36. Bulak** [Spring]

Jeti-Ögüz village, Jeti-Ögüz health resort

No guardian

Two fir trees, a spring and two statues representing tigers. The sacred site is situated in the eastern side of the road to the post office, at a distance of 150m from the entrance of Jeti-Ögüz health resort.

**37. Chong-Kyzyl-Suu** [Big Red Water]

Chong-Kyzyl-Suu village

No guardian

A dog rose bush. Rags are tied onto the branches of the bush. The sacred site is situated on the right side of the bridge after entering Jyluu Suu health resort. The bridge is 20km from Chong-Kyzyl-Suu village on the road to Jyluu-Suu health resort.

**38. Chong-Jargylchak** [Big Stone Mill]

Chong-Jargylchak village

No guardian

A poplar. The poplar tree stands 3-3,5km to the east from Chong-Jargylchak village.

**39. Chong-Öston** [Big Irrigation Channel]

Ak-Döbö village

No guardian

A large willow tree. The sacred willow stands 150-200m westward from the cemetery of Ak-Döbö village. Near the willow is an irrigation channel. The tree can be seen from the cemetery.

**40. Enesaiy-Ata** [Father Enesaiy]

Ak-Terek village

No guardian

A round-shaped juniper bush. It stands by the shore of the Ysyk-Köl lake, 2,5-3km from Ak-Terek in the direction of Jengish village. It can be seen from the road. The juniper bush is surrounded by small stones.

**41. Enesaiy-Ene** [Mother Enesaiy]

Ak-Terek village

No guardian

A round-shaped juniper bush. It is smaller than the Enesaiy-Ata bush. It stands about 250-300m from Enesai-Ata. The sacred site is surrounded by stones.

**42. Er-Tabyldy-Tash** [Stone of Er Tabyldy]

Barskoon village

No guardian

A large black stone. It stands 11-14km down the road from Barskoon village to “Kümtör” gold mine. The sacred site was visited by Yuriy Gagarin, the first cosmonaut and since this visit has been known as Gagarin’s stone.

**43. Ichke-Bulung** [Narrow Pass]

Ichke-Bulung village

No guardian

Two willows. The trees stand 100m up, on the left side of the road that goes from the right side of the post office of Ichke-Bulung village to the field.

**44. Jalgyz-Terek** [Lonely Poplar]

Ak-Terek village

No guardian

A tall poplar tree. The sacred site is situated in the eastern side of Ak-Terek village, 1 kilometre from the village’s stronghold. There is one poplar near the stronghold. It is the only poplar near the stronghold.

**45. Jangak or Talip-Akun-Ata** [Walnut tree or Father Talip-Akun]

Chiyrak village

No guardian

A large walnut tree and a big willow tree. A post office stands before the school of Chiyrak village, on the right side of the post office one can see the foundations of the old school. The sacred trees grow near these foundations.

Taliyp Akun was a wise man and a very skilful person, he built the old school on his own. The sacred place was near to this school and it was named after the founder.

**46. Jarkynbaiy-Ata** [Jarkynbaiy Father]

Jenish (Chichkan) village

No guardian.

A juniper bush, growing spread out on the ground. Entering Jenish village on the road from Ak-Terek village on the eastern side of the road there are two high buildings made from red brick. The sacred site is situated at a distance of 100m from these buildings.

**47. Jarylgan-Jürök** [Broken Heart]

Jeti-Oguz village, Jeti-Ögüz health resort

No guardian

A willow tree. The sacred site is situated by the shore of the Jeti-Ögüz river, 100-200m before reaching the Jarylgan-Jürök mountain and along the road to the Jeti- Ögüz health resort.

**48. Jetigen** [The Plough]

Kichi-Jargylchak village

Guardian: Ismailov Myktybek

A big faded willow and two springs. It is situated on the lake's shore in Kichi-Jargylchak village. The water of the lake reaches the willow and washes its roots. Two springs flow beside the willow.

**49. Jyluu-Suu** [Warm Water]

Saruu village

No guardian

A willow tree. It stands at the entrance of the Jyluu-Suu health resort, which is located 20 kilometers from Saruu village. There are votive rags tied to the branches of the willow.

**50. Kaiyrymduuluk** [Charity]

Jeti-Ögüz village, Jeti-Ögüz health resort

No guardian

A tall fir tree. It stands on the top of a hill, 50-70m high in the eastern part of the entrance to Jeti-Ögüz canyon going from Jeti-Ögüz health resort.

**51. Kara-Döbö** [Black Hill]

Darhan village

No guardian

A small hill. It is located near the lake, at a distance of 5km from the northern part of Darhan village.

**52. Kindik-Döbö** [Belly-button Hill]

Kichi-Jargylchak village

No guardian

The sacred site is a hill, the shape of which resembles the umbilical cord. It is part of the mountain, which is 25km from Kara-Jygach village.

**53. Köl-Bulak** [Spring Lake]

Chong-Jargylchak village

No guardian

A spring. It flows into the lake. The spring flows 15m from the bus station of Chong-Jargylchak village which stands on the Bishkek-Karakol main road.

#### **54. K k-Terek** [Blue poplar]

Jeti- g z village, Jeti- g z health resort

No guardian

A small white poplar. The sacred site is situated in the mountain range that stretches 1-1,5km from Jeti- g z mountain gorge to the Jeti- g z health resort. The Jeti- g z river flows here. After following the stream for 50-70m there are two bridges. After passing these two bridges there is a monument of Uzun Moldo, the mountain gorge begins another 100m along the road. The sacred site is located where the K k-Terek mountain gorge begins.

#### **55. Kulagan-Tash** [Fallen Stone]

Svetlaya Polyana village

No guardian

A stone and willow tree with two branches growing out similar to an animals horns. The stone is approximately 10m<sup>2</sup> in size. Svetlaya Polyana village used to be two villages, one of them was called Suttuu-Bulak and it was incorporated into Svetlaya-Polyana. The sacred site is situated on the side of the stream that belongs to S tt  -Bulak hollow about 3 kilometres from Svetlaya-Polyana.

#### **56. K mb z of Chong Hazret** [Mausoleum of Great Hazret]

Yrdyk village

No guardian

The mausoleum of Chong-Hazret is located in the middle of the village of Yrdyk, in front of the mosque. It is surrounded by walls and it can be entered via the mosque. Inside there is a big fir tree and two or three apricot trees. The mausoleum looks like a small house it is 2m high and 3m wide.

Inside the mausoleum the silhouette of a man's body is embedded in a clay mound. This silhouette is covered by a white sheet.

Hazret was the leader of the Dungan diaspora. The Dungan people first came to the Ysyk-K l oblast from China in the second half of the XIXth century. Hazret took land from the Kyrgyz rich people and gave it to the Dungans.

#### **57. Kush** [Birds of Prey]

Jeti- g z village, Jeti- g z health resort

No guardian

A fir tree with a broken branch, a spring and a willow tree. The sacred site is located in the Jeti- g z health resort complex, eastwards along the road of the post office and about 80-100m past the second building on the right side of the foot of the mountain.

#### **58. Mausoleum of Karga Ake**

Darhan village

No guardian

The burial place of Karga Ake is considered sacred. A mausoleum has been built on the burial place. It is situated at a distance of 2km from the Bishkek-Karakol main road heading towards the lake. It is on the western side of Darhan village.

#### **59. Mazar on Kulbura hollow**

Yrdyk village

No guardian

Seven poplars. Heading in the northeastern direction along the stream from Yrdyk village, about 5-6km up there are three hollows. The third hollow is called Kulbura hollow. The poplars stand about 80-100m from the entrance to the hollow. These poplars are considered sacred.

#### **60. Tal** [Willow]

Saruu village

No guardian

Two big poplars. The sacred trees grow 1-1,5km along the road that goes from Saruu village to Jiluu-Suu health resort on the southeastern side of the road, 1km from the road. They can be seen from the road.

**61. Oluya Zaur Ata** [*Oluya* father Zaur]

Jeti-Ögüz village, Jeti-Ögüz health resort

No guardian

A big fir tree with three intertwined trunks. It stands on the road to the Jeti-Ögüz health resort, 500-700m before the Jarylgan-Jürök mountain, and on the other side of the Jeti-Ögüz river.

**62. Öruk** [Apricot tree]

Jalgyz-Öruk village

No guardian

A big, old apricot tree. It stands alone on a hill, northeast of the village Jalgyz-Öruk village about 1-1,5km from the village. There is no other vegetation on the hill. Nearby there is a sheep yard.

**63. Öruk** [Apricot Tree]

An-Oston village

No guardian

Type of sacred site – an apricot tree. It stands 7-8km to the west from Ang-Östön village. The sacred site is the nature reserve of the Ysyk-Köl's shoreline. In this protected area there is a lake called Kara-Köl, that can be reached by two roads. The apricot tree is reached by the western road, it grows on the hill which is located at the entrance to the forest.

**64. Shapak-Ata** [Shapak Father]

Tilekmat village

No guardian

The mausoleum of Shapak-Ata and one large faded willow. The sacred site is situated 1,5km down the road from Tilekmat village to Karakol town and 100m northwest off the road. The mazar can be seen from the road. The mausoleum is made of white marble and it has a quadrangular shape. It is about 2m high.

**65. Sokur-Kuduk** [Blind Hole]

Kabak village

No guardian

Several willow trees are considered sacred. The sacred site is located 5-6km down the road leading to the lake from Kabak village, there are several willows and rushes surround the trees. On the right side of the road there is a small water reservoir and a field around it.

**66. Tabyldynyn-Taly** [Willow of Tabyldy]

Barskoon village

No guardian

Bushy poplars. 11-13km down the road leading from Barskoon village to the "Kumtor" gold mine, there is a bridge. Past the bridge there is a path leading to the right. The sacred poplars stand approximately 100-150m down this path. The sacred site is surrounded by sea-buckthorn and small stones. There is a place for a bonfire and two chairs.

**67. Tamga-Tash** [Branded Stone]

Tamga village

No guardian

The sacred site is a bleached stone, which is broken into two parts. In the middle of the stone there are hieroglyphic letters, which have been recognised as Tibetan script. The stone stands 7km from “Jemchujina” boarding house on the eastern side of the road. The road starts in front of “Jemchjina”.

**68. Toguz-Bulak** [Nine Springs]

Ak-Terek village

Guardian: Melis Usönbaev

Poplars and seven springs. It is situated beside the Ak-Terek stream, which 5km up into the mountains from Ak-Terek village.

**69. Töö-Tash** [Camel Stone]

Kichi-Jargylchak village

No guardian

A stone that resembles a sitting camel. It stands on a mountain 25km from the Kichi-Jargylchak village.

**70. Zeleniy-Gaiy**<sup>14</sup>

Zeleniy Gaiy village

No guardian

The sacred site is a faded willow. It is situated on the eastern side of the road 500-700m before Lipenka village. The road passes by Koy-Sary factory past two sheep enclosures, where there is a right turn. After turning right the road reaches another sheep yard. In the eastern side of this sheep yard there is big faded willow. This willow is considered sacred.

<sup>14</sup> *Zeleniy Gay* [Russian] - Green glade.

## TÜP RAIYON

**71. Ak-Tash** [White Stone]

Sary-Tologoy village

No guardian

Several trees and a spring. The sacred site is located 4 kilometres to the east of the village Sary-Tologoiy. The sacred site is in the canyon of the river Tüp. There are willows growing by the river. The area around the sacred site is arable land.

**72. Alma** [Apple]

Ysyk-Köl village

No guardian

An apple tree. The tree stands by the village of Ysyk-Köl, 5-6 kilometers west along Gagarin street. The road reaches the forest, before the forest on the right stands and apple tree surrounded by sea-buckthorn.

**73. Bugu-Ene** [Mother Deer]

Aral village

No guardian

The sacred site is a small square-shaped patch of earth enclosed by wooden sticks. On the right side of the road that turns into Aral village there is a barn, behind the barn the Ak-Marcha nature reserve begins. The sacred site is located 100-150m from the entrance to the nature reserve.

**74. Bugu-Ene** [Mother Deer]

Toktoyan village

No guardian

The sacred site is made up of several willow trees. The trees stand on the edge of Jal irrigation ditch on the southeast side of Toktoyan village, the sacred site is 700-800m from the village. There are other willows growing not far from the sacred site but no other vegetation near.

**75. Bulak** [Spring]

Sary-Köl (Mihaiylovka) village

No guardian

A spring, a willow tree and a sea-buckthorn shrub. The sacred site is situated 700-800m along the road from Sary-Köl village to the holiday house and camping village. It is at the foot of the mountains at the bottom of the Sary-Köl village hill and on the eastern side of the second bridge.

**76. Chong-Araldyk** [lit.tr. from the Large Island]

Kööchü village

No guardian

A hawthorn tree and a spring. The site is located 500-800m south from the village Kööchü. It is in a hollow and a wooden shed stands near the site. Around the hollows there are arable fields. The hawthorn tree is 3m tall. The spring flows 50m southeast of the tree. The spring is 2m wide and rushes and grass on its sides.

**77. Chong-Tash** [Big Stone]

Chong-Tash village

No guardian

A big stone and an apricot tree. The site is at the foot of the mountain, 300m northwest from the village Chong-Tash. The big grey stone is considered sacred, it is 10m high and 9m wide. The south edge of the stone is smoother. Near the stone there is an apricot tree, which is 2,5m high.

**78. Chungkur-Bulak** [Spring in a Hole]

Oiy-Bulak village

No guardian

Poplars, two salt-water springs and brushwood shrub. The sacred place is located in a hollow, 1-1,5km west from the village of Oiy-Bulak. Four sacred sites make up the sacred place: 1. *Ata-Mazar* [Father's site] – a big poplar and a salt-water spring, 2. *Ene-Mazar* [Mather's] – three white willows and salt-water spring, 3. *Kelin-Mazar* [Daughter's-in-law] – three willows 4. *Bala Mazar* [Child's] – several brush wood shrubs.

**79. Dolono bir** [First Hawthorn]

Dolon village

No guardian

Eight hawthorn trees. The trees stand in the nature reserve located between Dolon village and Cholpon village. They stand 300 -350m to the east and in the direction of the mountains from where the road divides.

**80. Dolono eki** [Second Hawthorn]

Dolon village

No guardian

Several hawthorn trees. Before entering the village of Dolon a road turns to the east through a field and continues for 3km, behind the field there is a nature reserve. The sacred site is located on the left side of the entrance to the nature reserve near the mountains at a height of 500m.

**81. Dolono** [Hawthorn Tree]

Tasma village

No guardian

A hawthorn tree. The tree is very leafy and stands at the bottom of a hill 4km to the northwest of the Tasma village. There is no vegetation around and the area is hilly.

**82. Duldul** [A fast-footed and lively horse]

Kichi-Öröktü village

No guardian

A group of bushes. The sacred site is at an altitude of 2500 metres above sea level, and 3 kilometres northwest from the center of Kichi-Öröktü village.

**83. Jyluu-Bulak** [Warm Spring]

Jyluu-Bulak village

No guardian

A stone and a spring. The sacred site is at the foot of mountain, at the edge of Jyluu-Bulak village, 500m from the village road. The stone is 3m high, 4m wide and 5m long. There are many smaller stones nearby and thornbushes grow around it.

**84. Kaiynar-Bulak** [Spring]

Korumdu village

No guardian

A spring. The sacred site is situated 500m southeast of the village Korumdu. To the south of the spring there is arable land.

**85. Karandyz** [Elecampane Grass]

Kuturgu village

No guardian

A poplar, hawthorn, fir and apple tree. The trees stand 3-3,5km north-east of the village Kuturgu. The road from the village passes by several barns and livestock pens before reaching the site. The site is called Karandyz because a medical herb called Karandyz (elecampane grass) used to grow there.

**86. Kök-Bulak** [Blue Spring]

Taldy-Suu village

No guardian

An apricot tree and a spring. The sacred site is situated at the foot of mountain around 3-4 km northwest of the Taldy-Suu village, the place is called Kök-Bulak.

**87. Muzdak-Bulak** [Cold Spring]

Kosh-Döbö village

No guardian

Four poplar trees and a spring. The site lies 1-1,5km east down the road that goes straight from Kosh-Döbö village to the village of Aral. The spring water flows out through a pipe that is held by the roots of the poplar. Above the pipe there is an inscription that reads "Water is the source of life, we must drink it to survive, keep it clean".

**88. Öruk** [Abricot Tree]

Taldy-Suu village

No guardian

The sacred site is an apricot tree and a big stone. It is situated 1km northwest of Taldy-Suu village.

**89. Öruk** [Abricot Tree]

Balbaiy village

No guardian

Alone apricot tree. The tree stands on a rocky cliff, 4-5 kilometres northeast from the village Balbaiy.

**90. Örük** [Apricot Tree]

Shaty village

No guardian

An apricot tree, a spring and a stone. The place where the sacred site is located is called Kyzyl-Tumshuk and is 1 km east from the village Shaty. The spring is 20m from where the apricot tree stands and flows antaginally to the road. There is a big red stone near the spring. The stone is 4m high, 3m wide and 7m long.

**91. Örük** [Apricot Tree]

Shaty village

No guardian

An apricot tree, a spring and a stone. The site is located 2km to the east from the village Shaty. The spring flows 20m from the apricot tree and the stone stands by the spring. The stone is 5m high.

**92. Örük** [Apricot tree]

Shaty village

No guardian

An apricot tree and a spring. The site is situated 100m from the second Örük sacred site in Kara-Batkak.

**93. Sary-Bulung** [Yellow Spring]

Sary-Bulung village

No guardian

A rowan tree and a spring. 700-900m before Sary-Bulung village on the right side of the road from Toguz-Bulak village there is a field of arable land. 100m down the field there is path leading down a slope. The sacred tree stands beside the slope. A spring flows 10m away from the sacred tree. In front of the spring there is a house.

**94. Yshyn-Ata** [Yshyn Father]

Frunze village

No guardian

A tree and a spring. It is situated 5km northeast from the village Frunze. 10 hectares of fir tree forest have been planted close to the sacred site. Close to the sacred site there are 10 hectares of young fir tree forest.

**YSYK-KÖL RAIYON**

**95. Baiyboto** [Baiyboto]

Chong-Sary-Oiy village

No guardian

The sacred site is a spring. The spring flows in the southeastern side of the village, near the sheep pens.

**96. Bak** [Tree]

Örnök village

No guardian

A tree. It is situated in Jar-Bulak, 7km south of the village Örnök. There is a sheep pen next to it.

**97. Cholpon-Ata** [Cholpon Father]

Cholpon-Ata town

No guardian

Poplars and a spring. It is located on the edge of the cliff on the road which leads to the summer pastures from Cholpon-Ata town. The spring is near to the poplars.

**98. Cholpon-Ata** [Cholpon Father]

Cholpon-Ata town

No guardian

The mausoleum of Cholpon-Ata is the sacred site. It is situated south of the Bishkek-Karakol road, 300m to the east after entering Cholpon-Ata town. The height of the mausoleum is approximately 6m. The mausoleum is made of white marble. The mausoleum was built by Rysbek Akmatbaev, a local politician to honour the memory of Cholpon Ata, who is considered one of the fathers of the Kyrgyz people and a very wise man.

**99. Eki-Tal** [Two Willows]

Orto-Örүktu village

No guardian

The sacred site has two willows. It is situated on the shore of Ysyk-Köl lake, 1 kilometre south-west from the village Orto-Örүktu.

**100. Imindin mazary** [*Imin's* sacred site]

Baetovka village

No guardian

A poplar, several brushwood shrubs and a spring. There is a waterfall in the northern part of the village Baetovka. The waterfall is approximately 10m high. At the top stands a poplar and beside the tree the brushwood shrubs. The sacred place is located a valley between two mountains.

**101. Imindin mazary** [*Imin's* sacred site]

Sary-Oiy village

No guardian

A poplar, a spring and brushwood shrubs. The spring flows in the northern part of the Baetovka and Sari-Oiy villages, alongside the mountain. The shrubs stand in the water of the spring.

**102. Kaiynar-Bulak** [spring]

Kök-Döbö village

No guardian

A poplar and a spring. The sacred site is situated 4,5km to the east of the main road in the village of Jarkynbaev.

**103. Kalygul-Oluya** [Wise Kalygul]

Kara-Oiy village

No guardian

The sacred site is a mausoleum. It stands in the center of the village Kara-Oiy to the south of the Bishkek-Karakol road. Kalygul's mausoleum was built out of brick clay 134 years ago. The original foundations stand to this day. Kalygul's grandson Turdakun Usubaliev build a new mausoleum on the old one in 1998. The new mausoleum is rectangular and it doesn't have an entrance. On the east side of the mausoleum there are marble stones and in them Kalygul's words are engraved:

...There is no place more interesting,

Can a better place be found?

How can one leave this land?

Do not abandon Ysyk-Köl<sup>15</sup>

**104. Kasabolot** [*Kasabolot* (the name of a person)]

Chong-Sary-Oiy village

No guardian

A spring and a poplar. It is located on the north-east site of the village Chong-Sary-Oiy. There are barns near the sacred site.

**105. Kessengir** [High Mountain Side covered by Grass]

Bulan-Sögötu village

No guardian

The side of a cliff, a sea-buckthorn bush and a small spring are considered sacred. These are situated 1-1,5km north from the lake Ysyk-Köl in the canyon Kes-Senir. The territory of the sacred site belongs to the village Bulan-Sogotu. The sea-buckthorn bush stands on the spring and votive rags are tied to the branches.

**106. Kurmanbek** [*Kurmanbek* (name of a legendary hero)]

Sary-Kamysh village

No guardian

The sacred site has a poplar tree, an apricot tree and sea-buckthorn bushes. It is situated approx. 800-900m south from the village on the road Bishkek-Karakol. The poplar tree is approx. 10-12m tall.

**107. Kyzyl-Kindik** [Red Bellybutton]

Toru-Aiygyr village

No guardian

The sacred site is a spring. It is situated 3km before the village Toru-Aiygyr on the mountain Kyzyl-Kindik.

**108. Ortok** [Common]

Kara-Oiy village

No guardian

The sacred site is a spring and bended black willows. It is situated on the foot of Kungöiy-Ala-Too mountain range 5-6km north-east of the village Kara-Oiy. Local people call this point the beginning of the summer pasture Ortok.

**109. Öruk** [apricot tree]

Anan'evo village

No guardian

The apricot tree is considered sacred. It stands on the north side of Ananev village and east of the Chet-Baisoorun village. It stands beside another sacred site called "Younger sister of Apricot Tree". The site is under protection.

**110. Terek** [Poplar]

Jarkynbaev village

No guardian

The sacred site is three poplars. They are situated on the east of the village Jarkynbaeva, 200m from the Bishkek-Karakol road. Earlier there were four poplars. On the roots of the first poplar an apricot tree is growing. The poplar is 10m tall and 7m in diameter. The second poplar is 5m tall, 4m in diameter. The third poplar is 5m tall and 4m in diameter.

**111. Tösh** [Descent]

Karool-Döbö village

No guardian

The sacred site consists of a lone willow. It is situated on the edge of the mountain on the shore of the river which flows on the north-east side of Karool-Döbö village.

**112. Üch-Bulak** [Three Springs]

Tamchy village

No guardian

The sacred site has a spring and a willow. It is located in the winter pasture Üch-Bulak of the village Tamchy.

<sup>15</sup> All the poems and citations in the book have been translated word for word by the translators.

## TONG RAIYON

### 113. Ak-Terek [White Poplar]

Bökönbaev village

No guardian

The sacred site consists of six poplars and a spring. It is situated on the edge of the mountain in a hollow dell, 5km to the east of Bökönbaev village. The poplars have grown bending into each other and they look like a yurt. The spring starts a little higher than the trees and flows to them. Pilgrims have put a trail of red stones from the spring to the poplars.

### 114. Akun-Bulak [Akun's Spring]

Ala-Bash village

No guardian

The sacred site consists of a single black willow and seven springs. It is situated on the fifth kilometre to the east from the village Ala-Bash. North of the sacred site there is a mountain ridge, to the south a pasture and a wide road stretches from east to the west.

### 115. Er-Tabyldy [Hero Tabyldy]

Kyzyl-Tuu village

No guardian

The sacred site consists of several willows. It is located north-east of the village Kyzyl-Tuu, 1.5km from Er Tabyldy's mausoleum in the direction of the Ysyk-Köl lake. The mausoleum was built by Rysbek Akmatbaev.

According to legend, when Er Tabyldy was badly wounded by his enemies, he rested here and was healed.

### 116. Jetti-Chöiychök [Seven Cups]

Kajy-Saiy village

No guardian

The sacred site is located on the north side of Kajy-Saiy village in the area of the old holiday resort. There is a road which goes to the mountains alongside the resort, the road leads to the river Kajy-Saiy and continues to a bridge. After passing the bridge there are hills. The sacred site which consists of seven cup shaped springs is located here. The taste of the water in each cup is very different and each spring had different healing abilities. Among them there is a Love Spring. According to popular belief, these springs do not let all people pass and do not let everyone drink from them. Near the site there is a small hut where an "elder" lives. He is a guide for the visitors and explains the difficulties they might face in the attempt to go to all the springs. According to the healer, Natalia Nestereva, the amount of springs a person is admitted to depends on the level of their spirituality. She has visited all of seven of the cups, but she thinks that there may be more than 12 springs.

### 117. Koshoiy Atanyn söögü jatkan jer [The place where father Koshoiy was buried]

Ak-Korum village

No guardian

The sacred site is a juniper bush which grows at the grave. There are no other juniper trees here except this one. Nobody knows how and why the juniper appeared here. According to the local people Koshoi was buried here. He a hero of the "Manas" epic, one of Manas' advisors' a wise man, a sage and an elder of *the* tribe.

### 118. Kulguna<sup>16</sup>

Tuura-Suu village

No guardian

A spring, a bush, two poplars and a black willow. It is situated in a hollow on the north side of the Kerege-Jar mountain, 2km from the village Tuura-Suu.

### **119. Manjyly-Ata** [Manjyly father]

Tong village

Guardian: Jakypov Kadyrbek

The sacred site is a complex of seven sacred springs. It is situated 5km to the south-east from the village Tong, on the south side of the road Bishkek-Karakol, it close to the shore of the Ysyk-Köl lake about 1km inland. On the west of the sacred site there is a hollow with the same name. The springs are situated not far from each other between the hills. According to Kadyrbek Jakypov, each spring has name and special features:

1. **Manjyly-Ata.** This spring is surrounded by ten black willows. It is considered the main spring of the complex.
2. **Maiytyk-Dubana** [Dervish Maiytyk] is two springs and three willows. The water of the first spring helps cure goiter and of the second spring is good for healing kidney diseases.
3. **Ilim** [Knowledge and Science] consists of a spring and a tree. The spring water has the power to heal all the internal organs of human.
4. **Bala** [Baby] consists of a spring and a tree.
5. **Bugu-Ene** [Mother Deer] consists of two springs and big bent tree. The water of the first spring is good for healing liver and stomach problems, the second one is good for the eyes.
6. **Aziz** [Snake] a spring and a large bent tree, supposedly if one presses their ear to the trunk of the tree one can hear the sound of running water.
7. **Üi-Bülölük** [Family's] a tree and a spring.

### **120. Tuzduu-Suu** [Salt Water]

Kyzyl-Tuu village

No guardian

A small salty lake is considered the sacred site. It is located 14km north from the village Kyzyl-Tuu. The mountain range Kesken-Bel sprawls to the south of the lake.

<sup>16</sup> *Kulguna* [Kyrgyz] - a disease that infects the sexual organs [ed.].

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **SECRETS OF YSYK-KÖL AND MANASCHYLYK**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Over the centuries the epic tale of “Manas” has kept its listeners enthralled. It has not only preserved its uniqueness but has also been enriched and modernized by every new teller. In 2003, the United Nations (UNESCO) recognized oral recitation and in this *manaschylyk* – recitation of the epos “Manas” as belonging to the “Intangible Heritage of Humanity” and declared them an “Example of the Oral and Spiritual Legacy of Humanity”

The ancient legacy of this tradition and its strong revival in the times of independent Kyrgyzstan give rise to the question „How has the epos and its telling changed over time?” Since it was first told the epos has been passed down from generation to generation by word of mouth and has been changed, influenced and developed by different times and tellers. The true form of this epos is in oral recitation, but as proof of its ability to adjust to contemporary times, since the XIX century a new type of artist has appeared: the *jargych manaschy* or “manaschy writers”<sup>17</sup> The first recitor to write down his version of the tale was Togolok Moldo (1860-1942). Jusup Mamaiy (born in 1918), a Kyrgyz refugee living in the Kyzyl-Suu autonomic republic living in the Chinese People’s Republic and the well known folklorist Ybraiyym Abdrahmanov left their versions of the story in writing as well<sup>18</sup>.

Traditionally epos recitation was a man’s prerogative, however today women have also taken up the art. For example Bübü Maryam Musa kyzy (born in 1950) has published her own eight volumed version of “Manas” entitled

*Aiyköl Manas* “Manas the Great of spirit”. According to Bübü Maryam the renewal and reconstruction of the epos is being continued by today’s *manaschys*. Bübü Maryam’s narrative of the epos was deemed especially “interesting and original” and the story of how she receives inspiration is also curious. It lets us see that the differences between “manaschy writers” and their oral contemporaries may not be so great.

These written versions of the “Manas” demand further interest. The “mystical” inspiration for Bübü Maryam’s written version is considered very interesting and has been subject to much discussion. Her version is said to have come into being under the influence of the legendary *manaschy* Jaysan, who dictated his version to the female *manaschy*. Communication comes through series of coded numbers which Bübü Maryam decodes and transforms into epic verse. This is how her version of “Manas” came into being.

The examples of „*manaschy* writers” of the past two centuries seem to be proof of the epos’ ability to exist in new forms and to readjust itself to modern times. Notwithstanding these changes, the oral tradition of “Manas” recitation is still strong and with it the belief that this talent of improvisation is a gift given from above. The *manaschy* are called to their profession in vocation dreams and throughout their career this inspiration continues. Artists who start to perform after receiving a calling are known as *chynygy manaschy* “real *manaschys*”. This vocation legend came into being centuries ago and is still strong today.

Legend has it that the sign of a “true *manaschy*” is being called to this „reciting mission” by higher powers. The tellers begin to recite only after receiving *ayan* [q.v.], signs in a dream or a supernatural vision. According to *aksakal*<sup>19</sup>, many future *manaschy*, although talented improvisers, did not dare to recite “Manas” until they received a vocation from the heavens and the blessing of the spirits. Those who dared risked the wrath of not only their audience but also of the spirits of “Manas”, as reciting the epos is not only considered a special skill but also brings with it the power to heal listeners as the words evoke the spirits of the ancestors to help their descendents. Such a gift cannot be treated lightly and should be handled only by the chosen few.

It is interesting to note that most of the true *manaschys* were born or lived in the Ysyk-Köl valley. We can name some of its most famous sons: Nazar Bolot uulu, Tynybek Japyiy uulu, Chongbash, Choyuke Ömur uulu, Aziz Ömur uulu, Toiychubek Orus uulu, Dyykandaiy Toiychubek uulu, Almabek Toiychubek uulu, Kaiyduu, Kasymaaly Almabek uulu, Akylbek, Dengizbaiy (known as Donguzbaiy among the people), Mambetaaly Ashymbaiy uulu (known as Kökcheke), Sagymbaiy Orozbak uulu, Jakshylyk (known as Kara yrchy or Ukuruk moyun), Sayakbaiy Karalaev, Mambet Chokmorov, Shaabaiy Azizov, Kaaba Atabekov, Saparbek Kasmambetov, Urkash Mambetaliev. These great *manaschys* belong to the old generation. Without doubt many more talented *manaschy* performed for the people of the Ysyk-Köl region but have not been noted by history.

Kubanychbek Almabekov, Talantaaly Bakchiev, Tilek Asanov, Döölöt Sydykov, Ulan Ismailov are representatives of the middle and younger generation of Ysyk-Köl *manaschys*.

Why is it that the land around the Ysyk-Köl is home to so many famous *manaschy*? The great *manaschy* Sayakbaiy Karalaev had an answer to this question: “Manas set out from Altai to visit his brother Koshoiy. He passed the Karkyra pasture, where in ancient times Kökötoi’y’s funeral was held and reached mount Kyzyl-Kyya. From this peak he saw magical Ysyk-Köl and fell in love with the indescribable beauty and grandeur of the lake. Manas rode down to the lake, washed his face in its waters and then asked God for blessings for his people. And the Ysyk-Köl lake took into itself the strength and power of the Great Heroes prayers”<sup>20</sup>.

*Manaschy* Shaabaiy Azizov recounts a different story: “When our Great Ancestor Manas was coming from Altai to see the spiritual leader of the Kyrgyz people, old man Koshoiy saw the shores of the Ysyk-Köl in the distance. He found the lake enchanting and decided to leave a sign of his impression on a great stone. He left an imprint of Akkula’s, his horses hoof on a great stone. This stone was later called Tulpar-Tash, which means “Stallion stone”<sup>21</sup>.

These are the stories told by people living around the lake. They believe that the “Ysyk-Köl is in itself a sacred place, that is why our ancestors worshipped its waters and washed their faces to receive its blessing. It is thanks to the inspirational powers and sacred energy preserved in the lake that so many people become “Manas” reciters.

Nature and its great powers draw *manaschy* to the lake. Maybe this is because the spirits of our ancestors have themselves become a part of nature. In times of distress or when seeking inspiration the *manaschy* will drop their everyday duties and go out into nature. The places where they go to seek peace may not be known to all people, but these are never random places. A reciter seeks a place where he can meet his teachers and receive spiritual guidance.

*Manaschy* also visit sacred sites well known among the people, and here they receive inspiration. They rarely share these secrets of the “Manas” that they obtain from a sacred place as these should be handled with care.

At least twice a year, the great *manaschy* Sayakbaiy would visit his place of inspiration, Archaluu which is located 20 kilometres away from his village Ak-Oleng. He would also visit a sacred spring called Aiychurek near the Jyrgalang river on the northern side of the lake. They say that this spring used to be visited by Choyuke *manaschy*, Ukuruk Moyoun, Mamabetaaly *manaschy*, Nazar *manaschy*, Chongbash *manaschy* and Shaabaiy *manaschy*, who passed away recently. Some *manaschys* of the north Ysyk-Köl like Dengizbaiy, Mambet and Kaaba, would visit and pray at Manjyly-Ata *mazar*. Dyiikanbaiy *manaschy* used to go to the “the Stone of Akkula” in Karkyra *jaiyloo*<sup>22</sup>. Another great *manaschy*, who lived in Tekes in China, Satybaldy Aaly uulu used to visit all the *mazars* of Tekes linked to the story of Manas<sup>23</sup>. Mamabet Chokmorov worked as the guardian at Manjyly-Ata *mazar* all his life and would sometimes heal the pilgrims.

Most *manaschy* pay a visit to the Manas mausoleum in Talas at least once in their lives, where they bow to the spirit of their great Kyrgyz ancestor. They try to visit all places connected with the story of Manas. This is because visiting these places helps the *manaschy* master this skill and it influences their recitations. These pilgrimages are proof that *manaschy* believe their powers come from nature and gave them their talent.

When talking of the inspiration of true *manaschy* the following question remains to be answered: how does the new generation of *manaschys* learn to recite *Manas*? When the great *manaschy* Sayakbaiy Karalaev died, Chyngyz Aitmatov said “We are saying our farewells to the last *manaschy*”. Although there is no doubt that Sayakbaiy was one of the greatest *manaschy* of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the skill of artistic recitation, passed down from generation to generation did not die with him. There is a saying “if a camel dies, its young will carry the pack; if a father passes away, his son will continue his work”. It may be hard to compare anybody to Sayakbaiy, however there are many young reciters who are willing to take up his mantle and serve the great epos of “Manas”.

In previous eras there was a master-apprentice system among the *manaschy*. However during Soviet times as the traditional life of the Kyrgyz people was being destroyed and changed, so the traditions of passing down the epos were influenced and damaged. But as grass manages to grow through asphalt, so the ancient traditions of the Kyrgyz people adjusted to the hardness of modernity. Nowadays the young generation of apprentices turns not to living masters, who are few and far between, but to the ghosts and spirits of the great *manaschy* who have passed away. This you will read about in the stories of *manaschy* Ulan Ismailov and Döölöt Sydykov.

Ulan tells his story of meeting Manas and his forty five knights. This first vision was followed by many other visits from the great Sayakbaiy, who taught him the story of “Manas” and encouraged his attempts to recite. The great *manaschy* told Ulan to receive the blessing of Manas by visiting his mausoleum and recited for seven days. In order to fulfill his masters command Ulan visited Talas and spent seven days reciting in front of the mausoleum. This is how he received the blessing and title of a true *manaschy*<sup>24</sup>.

It is impossible to date precisely when the great epos came into existence. Its future is also unknown, we cannot predict how long this tradition will continue. When a person stares up into the sky, it seems to him there is no end of the universe in sight. Similarly, the words of the great epic spoken by the *manaschy* seem to be flow endlessly. In the following chapter the reader will discover the enchanted world of “Manas” as recounted by *manaschys* of various ages and times, who received inspiration and then followed the great path of *manaschylyk*.

<sup>17</sup> See the following books on *Manaschy*: S. Musaev “*Manaschys*” in: *History of Kyrgyz Culture*. Volume II. Bishkek: Sham, 2004, pgs. 131-161.

<sup>18</sup> The works of Ybraiyim Abdrahmanov have yet to be published. The manuscripts can now be found in Kyrgyz National Academy of Science. The author donated the manuscripts to the Academy in 1947-1953 (ИHB. 184-189, 190 А, Б, В. Г. В)

<sup>19</sup> *Aksakal* [Kyrgyz] - an elder men. Lit. tr. white beard. [ed.].

<sup>20</sup> From an interview with Sayakbaiy’s stepbrother, to whom his brother would often recount *manaschy* secrets in the Ak-Oleng tract.

<sup>21</sup> From an interview with Talantaaly Bakchiev, November 28, 2008.

<sup>22</sup> *Jaiyloo* [Kyrgyz] - high mountain pastures, where cattle is grazed in the summer months [ed.].

<sup>23</sup> From research conducted by Ysakbek Beyshenbek, a young scientist from Tekes. August 2008.

<sup>24</sup> Aitpaeva G. “The Phenomenon of Sacred Sites in Kyrgyzstan: Interweaving of Mythology and Reality” in: “*Conserving Cultural and Biological Diversity: The Role of Sacred Natural Sites and Cultural Landscapes*”. Eds. Nthomas Schaaf, Cathy Lee, Susan Curran. Materials of International Symposium, Tokyo, Japan, 30 May-2 June, 2005. Publ. of UNESCO, Paris, 2006. pg.122.

AS LONG AS YOU RESPECT THE EARTH AND WATER,  
THEY WILL GIVE YOU THEIR BLESSING

**Almabekov Kubanychbek**

*A semeteiychi, a teller of the second part of “Manas”. He was born in 1955 in Grigoryevka village of the Ysyk-Köl. He graduated from the Kyrgyz State Medical Institute with honours in 1978, majoring in General Therapy. Presently he is a specialist surgeon and the director of the Tüp regional hospital.*

My grandfather from my father’s line, Toychubekov Almabek (1888-1962) was a great *semeteiychi* [q.v.]. Although he was known as *semeteiychi*, he used to recite “Manas” as well as “Seiytek”. In 1930’s he worked as a “*manaschy*-soloist” at the Philharmonic Hall and his colleagues were people like Sayakbaiy, Osmonkul and Ybyraiy. Later in the 1940’s he returned to our village. He was not only a great *manaschy*, but also a very good story teller, he used to tell me a lot of fairy tales. He would also recite all the other shorter epics like “Er Töshtük”, “Kurmanbek” and “Er Tabyldy”. I was raised by my grandfather, until I was eight. He would always take me with him, wherever he went.

I had my first inspiration dream when I was 7 or 8 years old, I couldn’t tell you whether it was a dream or reality when Manas Ata and Bakaiy Ata came to me and they introduced me to all 40 of their knights saying “Remember our names and tell of us!”

My father Kasymaaly (1927-1973) also received his inspiration when he was 7 years old and started reciting. In 1946-1948 he worked two jobs, at the village Culture and Recreation Center where he recited “Manas” and as a livestock expert. Despite his other job, he never quit and kept reciting “Manas”. Just like my grandfather, he used to recite all the episodes of “Manas” as well as stories like “Er Töshtük”, “Kurmanbek” and “Er Tabyldy”. He was a very kind, cheerful and open person. But he died when he was 46, someone had cast the evil eye on him. My father wrote down my grandfather’s recitation of “Manas”, “Semeteiy”, and “Seiytek” and gave them to the Academy of Science Manuscripts Collection. They are in the archives. Some episodes from my grandfather’s version were published in the academic version of “Semeteiy” and “Seiytek” from 1959-1960.

When my grandfather died in 1962, my father took over my education and I used to go with him to various festivities, where I would watch the performances of the folk tales. In 1966, my father travelled to the capital, Frunze to give my grandfather’s stories to the Academy of Science and took me with him. We went to Sayakbaiy Ata’s house in Frunze. Despite the fact that Sayakbaiy was ill, he patted my back and gave me his blessing. It was the first time I saw the great *manaschy*. My grandmother belonged to Sarykalpak tribe of Aryk Myrza clan. Sayakbaiy Ata also belonged to the same tribe and clan, which is why he called my grandfather *jezde*<sup>25</sup>.

Later, when I was around 20 years old, Sayakbaiy Ata used to visit me and walk with me in my dreams. It was then that I started to recite in front of people and I have been able to ever since.

My great grandfather Toiychubek was also a great *semeteiychi*. He died at the age of 25 of small pox. His oldest son Dyyikanbaiy (1870-1923) was a well known *semeteiychi* among Kyrgyz, whose fame spread from Tekes in the east to Andijan and Oluya-Ata in the west. He travelled with Balykooz<sup>26</sup> to Andijan and recited “Manas”. He also recited “Manas” before Baiytik Baatyr<sup>27</sup> and Shabdan<sup>28</sup>. My father told me that Dyyikanbay received his inspiration and started to recite “Manas” when he was nine. My father’s younger brother Ashym Almabekov who was born in 1938 lives in Oiy-Bulak village. He also recites all three sections of “Manas” and he is always invited to recite at village festivities. He is a very kind and quiet man. Maybe that is the reason why he is not well-known in the whole country.

I think *manaschylyk* is one of those rare gifts that is passed down from generation to generation. As for me, people tell me I used to recite while playing as a small boy. My grandfather used to take me wherever he went, on foot or by horse. He would tell me magical fairy tales on the way. Not a single festival would pass without my grandfather performing. Even if we came during the day, we would always leave at night. I guess the people liked to listen to my grandfather.

One day, it must have been in 1962, while passing a small river at the end of my village I suddenly started to recite the “Manas” episode where Manas fights with Kongurbaiy. Then I lost consciousness. I can’t remember either how long I recited, or how long I was unconscious. My grandfather found me lying on the ground. He took me home, and told my grandmother I was ill and had been caught by a spirit. My grandmother was also a healer and both of them did some treatments.

Later, when I was eight, about one month after my grandfather’s death I had a dream. In my dream, he took me by the hand and took me to Bakaiy Ata. “Make your acquaintences, this is Semeteiy! Here is Manas! You must recite!” Bakaiy Ata told me. In the morning I woke up with a great desire to recite.

I also took lessons from Shaabaiy Azizov (1927-2004) we are distant relatives. He was my wife’s second cousin. But I always treated him with respect and addressed him as “Ata”. One day, Shaabaiy Ata looked at me and jokingly said, “Kuban, it seems a *shaiytan*<sup>29</sup> spat in your mouth, be careful with words.” I think he meant “don’t let yourself be biased and don’t take sides. Don’t speak of someone too well or very badly. Words are alive and words and looks can hurt like bullets.”

I studied at a Soviet high school where the lessons were taught in Russian and then later, I finished the Medical Institute also in Russian. After graduating, I took up my profession and worked as a doctor in several regional hospitals. Maybe that’s why I could not travel and I haven’t become such a well known *manaschy* like my fathers did. But I do recite at various events in my village, raiyon or oblast. Moreover, thank God, I can recite all the episodes of the great story of Manas and I know I will never abandon the sacred gift of my fathers.

I am grateful to God when I hear voices of young *manaschys* from Ysyk-Köl region. For example, I know Talantaaly<sup>30</sup> from his childhood. When he was young, we lived in the same village and we were neighbours. He was my patient for several years, when I was a doctor at the Karakol village hospital of Ak-Suu raiyon, he complained of pain in his kidneys but there were no signs of sickness. In the end, I discharged him from hospital because I think I understood the source of his illness. I had also suffered from this illness when I was young, as a person who inherited a great gift from my ancestors, I could tell that his illness was not a physical illness of his body, but early signs of *manaschylyk*. Now he has given in to his talent and recites “Manas” very well. This is good.

Another young *manaschy* Ulan<sup>31</sup> is also showing huge talent. And there will always be more of us because no one can stop the way of great art. This gift is given by God and man cannot take away what is given by God. God will help them and bless them! I think it is good when a *manaschy* chooses a profession close to his or her skill. They should work in literature or the languages perhaps. Although, it is hard to notice, your profession does influence *manaschylyk* skills very much. I know this from my life experience.

As for Ysyk-Köl, the lake has great power. I think about this a lot. I guess the secret is in the waters. There are numerous springs that flow into the lake, but none flow out. Many springs have *mazars* around. The Ysyk-Köl collects all this water, therefore the Ysyk-Köl is sacred and powerful. That is maybe the reason why most of the great *manaschys* come from the its’ shores.

Today, there are many young *manaschy* growing up. This is a very good development. But only a God given *manaschy*, who has received a vocation dream, who gives his or her life to Manas and travels among people, can be considered a true *manaschy*.

I think the greatest patriot of the Kyrgyz people, who loved his people and his land, was the great Manas. Unless you are as patriotic as him you cannot recite “Manas”. You must respect the land you walk on and the water you drink and you must know the natural treasure of the Kyrgyz well. Both the water and the land are living creatures, the more you honour and cherish them, the more you yourself will be respected.

My family and I visit Manjyly-Ata *mazar* from time to time and honour the spirits of our ancestors. This place is also mentioned in “Manas”. My grandfather Almabek used to tell me about Muiyt ake, who lived here and chose this place as his burial ground. Muiyt was the son of Aldayar from the Belek clan. I am from the Aldayar tribe. Therefore, if you follow my geneology, Muiyt ake is my one of my forefathers. On each visit to the *mazar*, I pilgrimage through the 40 springs and pray at Muiyt ake’s grave. We go there when my daughters come home from abroad; we go to Manjyly-Ata with them as well. My daughter Aida studies in Japan and my eldest daughter Aiyzada studies in Korea. As a child Aida would often say that she has an urge to recite “Manas”. I did not tell her directly but I told my wife to tell her that she must not do it. Although, I do not have anything against women *manaschy*, I was afraid she would not be able to bear the weight of being chosen by the spirits.

What else can I say about myself? I became a father on the 20th of June and on this day I also received my university diploma. My friends gathered at my small hut, while my wife was in the hospital. And suddenly, I started to recite “Manas” but I don’t remember doing so. My classmates told me about it later.

I love spring it inspires me and my chanting. I love nature, the mountains and the fresh air of the pastures. May is my favourite month; I met my wife, my life companion in this month. We have three children now. Apart from my two daughters we also have a son, he is the youngest, his name is Samat. I believe that the great skill passed on through the generations by our fathers Toiychubek, Dyyikanbaiy, Almabek, Kasymaaly and Ashym will always be with my family.

<sup>25</sup> *Jezde* [Kyrgyz] - kin term for the husband of an elder sister [ed.].

<sup>26</sup> *Balykooz* [Kyrgyz] - a nickname meaning 'fish mouth' [ed.].

<sup>27</sup> Baiytik Baatyr was one of the leaders of the Solto clan, who fought with the Kokand Khanate. He received the title Baatyr when he was still alive [ed.].

<sup>28</sup> Shabdan Jantay uulu was one of the leaders of the Sary-Bagysh clan, who fought against the Kokand Khanate and took part in negotiations with Imperial Russia [ed.].

<sup>29</sup> *Shaiytan* [Turkic] - the devil, an evil spirit [ed.].

<sup>30</sup> Talaantaly Bakchiev, see his article in Part II of this book [ed.].

<sup>31</sup> Ulan Ismailov, see his article further in this chapter [ed.].

## MANASCHYLYK HAS ITS OWN WORLD, SECRET AND UNIVERSE

### **Asanov Tilek**

*As a manaschy, whose inspiration comes from his native soil, Tilek lives and works in his village. From 1997-1999 he was a beneficiary of the “Meerim Foundation” scholarship programme. In 2001, he was invited to London to recite “Manas”. He takes part in various contests in the raiyon, oblast and national levels.*

I was born on the 1st of February, 1982 in the Sary-Kamysh village of the Ak-Suu raiyon. My grandfather Sooronbaiy was a prominent eagle trainer, an excellent horse rider who broke horses and taught them to jump, he was a traditional healer, a skilled carpenter, he played the komuz [q.v.] and ooz komuz [q.v. under *temir komuz*], he sang and he was a *jamakchy*<sup>32</sup>. Kydyr Ake<sup>33</sup>, one of our famous national poets would often invite him to accompany him to festivals. My father Asan was also very talented, he was a singer, *jamakchy*, and a *sanjyra* [q.v.] Sometimes, he would recite a piece from “Manas” for the children:

The samovar is expensive but the tea is cheap

There is no city like you Samarkand,

If you are heading out to war,

There is no comrade better than you – Han Syrgak...

When I was twelve, I started to recite “Manas” because I had a dream in which I was visited by spirits. In that dream Manas Ata and his forty men were riding through a deserted plain, when they saw me standing nearby they rode up and encircled me and I heard a deep voice coming from the crowd commanding “Recite Manas!” “But I don’t know it.” was my reply. “You know it, recite! If you start by knowing only some, you will learn the rest!” one of the men said angrily. I was frightened and agreed to recite. Then one of the men turned to someone behind him and said “Show him how it is done”. Sayakbaiy stepped out of the crowd and recited a piece from the “Manas” for me. Then he told me to continue from the place where he had broken off. I sat down and even though I don’t know how I did it, I continued his tale. Since then, I have been reciting well and before I start a piece from “Manas” and “Semeteiy” I always remember my dream and go over Sayakbaiy’s tale in my head.

I mainly recite the following parts from “Manas”: “The Tale of Almambet”, “A story of Almambet, Chubak, and Syrgak at Tal-Choku”, “How Kanykeiy Rode Taiytoru” and “How Almambet met with Karagul”. Later, I started to recite the full version of “Seiytek”. I participated in and won various contests at the raiyon, oblast and national levels. It is very important for a *manaschy* to participate in these contests, it was at these events that I met with and learned from well known *manaschys* like Shaabaiy Azizov, Kaaba Atabekov and Urkash Mambetaliev. They have given me their blessing. I consider Shaabaiy Azizov my main master and he has influenced me greatly. Even before my *manaschylyk*, I was very interested in poetry and other heroic stories of my people. I also wrote poems.

Later, I participated in international contests and travelled to London, England in order to recite the “Manas”. Today, I continue to participate in raiyon, oblast and national contests.

I visited a *mazar* for the first time when I was 15 and had just started to recite. We have a lake in our village called Kamanduu-Köl. I went there. Another *mazar* with a white camel foal haunted my dreams. I discovered it was a place called Ak-Baka in Kerege-Tash village, but I could not find the right time to go there. *Kydyr Ata* [q.v.] visited me two times in my dreams. Recently, Manas Ata himself took me to Karkyra on his horse. After that I was invited to an event called “Respecting Manas”, which was taking place in Karkyra. I took this to be a fulfillment of my dream and set out to the place. But we were not allowed to enter Karkyra and had to stop at one of the houses in Basharyn, where we made our sacrifice and returned.

Shaabaiy Ata used to tell me there was a *mazar* called “the spring of Kanykeiy” at the beginning of Ak-Suu river in Üch-Kaiynar. He invited me to go with him several times, but I could not find the time for that as well. And now Shaabaiy Ata has passed away.

I spent around 10 years with Shaabaiy *manaschy* from him I learned a lot about the path and mystery of “Manas”. I discovered that my understanding of *manaschys* had been very simplified and superficial. Shaabaiy Ata explained that “Manas” was a separate world, a mysterious universe. He taught me a lot of lessons about what a true *manaschy* is. Shaabaiy Ata, helped me to understand the world of *manaschys* and *manaschylyk*, without him I would not have been able to master the “true” art. He also taught me it is important to know the stories of other *manaschys*, he could always provide exact information about the birth dates and roots of *manaschys*, whose lives haven’t been well researched. Shaabaiy was also the descendent of a very talented *manaschy*, he was the grandson of the great Choyuke who in his time, gave his blessing to Sayakbaiy. Shaabaiy remembered Sayakbaiy’s visits to their house very well.

There have been a lot of *manaschys* from Ysyk-Köl and the reason why this valley is special is explained in the epic. When the great hero Manas was leading the Kyrgyz people from Altai to Talas, he crossed the Kyzyl-Kyya pass. As he reached the highest point of the pass, he caught the first glimpse of the blue lake in the distance and stopped there. Marveling at it’s beauty, he led his people to the lake. He washed his hands and face in the water and said the following words:

Oh, world!  
Ysyk-Köl is your heart,  
A man who settles here becomes a good man.  
There is not a single flaw,  
No hole dug by marmots,  
The trees have fine leaves,  
The black worms are as fat as a finger,

There is snow on the mountains,  
And trees in the forest,  
My dear, Ysyk-Köl,

This is a *mazar*,  
This is a kind place,  
This is a large place,  
If you look at the lake,  
You will see the ducks and geese,  
Bathing in the rays of God,

To a good man,  
It presents its gifts,  
But it has a lot of swamps,

Now is the time of opportunity,

The time to fight,  
Spearheads will meet,  
Human heads will fall,  
But this place,  
It is not suitable for war.  
And I must go to Talas,  
I will come often to the shores of the Ysyk-Köl.  
Riding on horses,  
Sending dogs and birds,  
It is a place to rest.

With these words he picked up a handful of sand from the lake and found a big chunk of gold glistening in his palm. This convinced him of the sacred nature of the lake. Before continuing his journey he threw the golden piece back into the depths of our Kyrgyz sea. This is why the spirit of Manas remains on the lake and it one of the reasons why so many true *manaschys* come from the lake region.

In the beginning when I had just started to recite “Manas” I had some mental health problems. I felt very strange as if possessed by some strange force and I felt like I wasn’t in control of my thoughts. These problems faded away when I got more skilful in my recitation and when I was able to recite “Manas” with more vigor.

When I was young I didn’t know the text of “Manas” very well, but I loved to listen to “Manas”. Listening was an experience in itself, when I listened to Sayakbaiy reciting on the radio, I couldn’t just sit calmly, my eyes would fill with tears and I would start suffocating and trembling. Nowadays I also experience the “Manas” emotionally but I have more reserve, I feel better when I recite, it relaxes me. I recite in front of an audience but also when I am alone on a walk or riding my horse. Sometimes I start reciting in one village and don’t even notice when I get to the next village. I think Ak-Suu is a wonderful place. When I am in my village poetry seems to flow out of my mouth and my hearts beats faster with the rhythm of inspiration.

I already mentioned that my father was a *manaschy* and singer. He was also a *sanjyra* [q.v.] a family historian and *synykchy*<sup>34</sup>. This fascinated me and I also learned *synykchy* skills. Toktogul Satylganov also visited me in a dream and gave me a komuz. Although I started to learn how to play the komuz, I decided not to mix it with “Manas”. I preferred to work on my *manaschylyk* skills and they require a lot of attention. Whenever I pick up a pencil to draw something, the pictures always show images of the Manas. I think, my interest in Manas started with my fascination with pictures of the hero.

“Manas” is an endless world, which cannot be described and understood through words. One day I was coming down from the mountains on a path in the forest. I stopped my horse, in a glade where the forest was crossed by a river, so that it would drink some water. Dusk was falling. Then I heard a clatter of hooves in the distance and listened carefully wondering who that might be. The horses seemed to pass somewhere nearby me and I did not pay much attention since it might have been shepherds going up and down the hill. Then I heard the sound of someone driving horses from the east. My horse raised its head and picked up its ears, also listening. As the sound approached, it got louder and the earth started to tremble. The sound was frightening and my heart stuck in my throat. I had never heard such a thunder of hooves. “Who could be making so much noise this late in the day” I thought “maybe daredevil boys from the village are playing around.” I didn’t want to encounter them on my path so I rode out of the glade and I thought out of trouble’s way. Out in the open space I was startled by the view. I saw before me huge men clad in armour riding sturdy horses, each of them had a weapon in his hand, they were carrying bludgeons, spears, axes, shields and some of them held banners. As they got closer they suddenly turned right and disappeared leaving behind them a strong wind that almost toppled me over. I was left almost deaf. My heart was beating fast and a cold sweat covered my body. I was scared and went straight home, where I told my parents everything. My mother performed some of her traditional *apapta* [q.v.] healing procedures that were to cure me from fright. The next day we visited a miller named Japar, who asked me to recite “Manas”. While reciting in the miller’s house, I noticed that I was reciting far better then before, my words were stronger, my intonation more melodic and my descriptions more exact, I assumed this new ability was related to what I had seen the day before. Occasionally, Manas, Bakaiy, Kanykeiy, Koshiy, Almambet, Chubak, Syrgak, Kutubiiy, Semeteiy, Kanchoro, Külchoro and visit me in my dreams. Most often, I see Sayakbaiy in my dreams, especially at before important events. Once, he even gave his blessing to me.

One day, Semeteiy, Kanchoro and Külchoro paid me a visit, but I could not recognize them. I heard a man's voice from behind: "You should know these men very well. This is Semeteiy!". Semeteiy was a strong red-faced giant. One of the two men behind him was Kanchoro, he was dark skinned and solidly built man and his horse was Kögala. Then the voice pointed out Külchoro. He was a brave knight and very energetic, playful like fire. Then I heard the voice say "How could you recite "Semeteiy" without seeing them. Now, you must recite of what you have seen. All of it! Let the people hear of their nations heroes".

There was a time in my life when I needed a break, I didn't recite for two years. My master Shaabaiy scolded me in my dreams for this. Then Sayakbaiy and Bakaiy came to me and stared at me for a long time, they told me "Go son and recite!". I stopped making excuses and started to recite "Manas" again. I recited before a crowd of people and re-entered the universe of "Manas".

One month later, Manas himself visited me. A giant of a man rode into my yard on his enormous steed. I was struck speechless when I saw this man, who was tall as the peaks of the Ala-Too mountains, but his thundering voice broke the silence: "Have you seen Karkyra yet?" he asked me. I hadn't and he reached out his hand to pull me onto the horse "Give me your hand! I will show you this famous *jaiyloo* in the mountains". He turned the horse to the east and we rode towards Kyzyl-Kyya, we were riding so fast that it felt like flying. We arrived at Karkyra in an instant. "Here the pasture begins", he said. "That foggy corner is the east side of Karkyra. Take a good look around. Now get off the horse". He set me down on a hill and rode away to the east, turning back he said: "Now you must recite "Manas"!". I was scared of the Great Man and I paid heed. I sat down and strings of words came out of my mouth, I did not want to stop them, I felt as if I was among the heroes in the tale, living their adventures. I recited as the red sun set behind the horizon and the clouds played with its light. Since that dream I haven't had any problems reciting.

<sup>32</sup> *Jamakchy* [Kyrgyz] - improviser of poetry etc. [ed.].

<sup>33</sup> Kyydyr Ake is one of the six *akes* of the Ysyk-Köl oblast [ed.].

<sup>34</sup> *Synykchy* [Kyrgyz] is a traditional healer who cures bone maladies [ed.].

#### AYAN FROM THE MAZAR

##### **Ismailov Ulan**

*Ulan was born in Kichi-Jargylchak village of Jeti-Ögüz in 1984. When he was 17 years old he received a vocation dream and started reciting "Manas". Ulan graduated from Karakol Law Academy in 2008. In 2004 he was awarded the "Kyrgyz Tili" prize by the National Language Commission. In 2005 his recitation of "Manas" won the international festival "The Land of Manas - Song-Köl".*

I was born and raised in the countryside and the culture and character of village life is closest to me. In this rural world, faith, its traditions and rites are very important. I learnt from my own experience that there is such a thing as fate and that it cannot be avoided. People cannot deny the path of their destiny. My own path took a sharp turn when I was seventeen. I saw a *Kyzyr daaruu* [q.v.] spirit and from him I received my vocation and started to recite "Manas".

Knowing your roots is very important in Kyrgyz culture and on making a new acquaintance, we usually ask about descent and family history first and then begin to converse. Therefore let me also start by telling you a little about my roots. I am from the Bugu clan [q.v.] that lives around the blue lake, the Ysyk-Köl. I belong to Jeldeng tribe of Bugu. Our *sanjyra* [q.v.] describes the history of Jeldeng as follows:

Orozbak had five sons and each of them bore the title *myrza*<sup>35</sup>: Aryk Myrza, Myrzakul Myrza, Asan Myrza, Kara Myrza and Tokoch Myrza. One of them, Myrzakul Myrza had a son named Alseyit and our clan is named after his second wife, our grandmother – Bugu Ene.

Alseyit had three wives: the eldest was Tobykty, the second Bugu Ene and the third Chegimjan. Bugu Ene herself found her husband a third wife. The story of Bugu Ene starts when two sons of Orozbak, Kara Myrza and Tokoch Myrza, were hunting and shot a deer on Alamyshyk mountain. When they arrived at the elk's body, they found a nine year old girl crying, embracing the dead deer's head. They brought the girl home with them and their eldest brother Aryk Myrza adopted her as a daughter. People assumed that she was raised on the deer's milk and named her Bugu kyz which means Deer girl. When she grew up, she was given to Alseyit as a second wife. They say

Bugu Ene would do things that even first wives did not do. *Sanjyrachy* say that one such thing was bringing her husband a third wife, Chegimjan who was the daughter of Choktoro, khan of the Kalmak people.

Alseyit had two sons from Bugu Ene – Jamangul and Bapa. Chegimjan brought him one son – Tuuma.

Once a year, Bugu Ene would wash her hair with milk and one year she asked Chegimjan to pour it out the used milk in a secluded place, where no person or animal walks. But Chegimjan took it away and instead of pouring out the milk, she drank it. Seeing this Bugu Ene blessed Chegimjan saying: “may your children be equal to mine and may they be healthy and prosperous”.

Not long before she died she washed her hair with milk for the last time. She decided to give the milk to her favourite son Bapa and so make him the heir of her powers. The boy was sixteen and he liked to stray far from home. His mother left the milk in the house and went to find him. After a long search, Bugu Ene found him, but when they got back to the yurt they found the bucket with milk empty. Bugu Ene went to her eldest son Jamangul, who was already a prospering farmer and asked if he had drunk the milk, but he said he had not. Maybe it was the will of Tengri, maybe of fate or the result of Chegimjan’s blessing and a reward for her good work, for the milk was destined for her son.

Chegimjan’s son Tuuma, was three years old, he was allowed to go into the yurts of all his father’s wives. He was used to eating whatever was underhand and doing what he liked. When Bugu Ene went searching for Bapa, he went into her yurt and saw the bucket full of milk. Since he has been playing since morning, he was hungry and drank all the milk. How was he to know of the great power of the drink? He happily ran out of the room with his belly full and fell asleep by a black stone nearby.

On the way back from Jamangul’s house, Bugu Ene saw Tuuma sleeping beside the rock. She guessed at once that he had drunk the milk. She said to Bapa: “The milk was drunk by your father’s youngest son and he has taken that what I wanted for you. His descendents will always be lucky and live in prosperity, his children will be the leaders and yours will only follow them. The milk drunk by his mother gave her my good wishes; the milk drunk by her son will give him my sacred power. He was faster than you, and he will get the better of Jamangul and lead the clan.

In those days there were strict rules to how one could brand cattle, each family had their own *tamga*<sup>36</sup>. Among the descendants of Orozbaks five sons, everyone used the sacred Bugu Ene tamga. Only Tuuma’s three sons – Karakozu, Akkozu and Bozkozu had their own “Tuuma cholok” stamp. It was called this because Tuuma’s favourite fur coat had short sleeves and his nickname was cholok meaning short-sleeved.

We are descended from Karakozu, Tuuma’s son and there is a story to tell about this too. Karakozu’s first wife was from a well to do family of the Sayak tribe. She had been brought up to like riches and maybe for this reason she liked to change her clothes several times a day and people quickly nicknamed her *Kuul*<sup>37</sup>.

Kuul Ene soon won the respect of her husbands’ relatives and started to live with them as an equal and one day she told Karakozu: “I am tired of milking horses and stirring *kymyz*. You need to take a *tokol*<sup>38</sup> and she should do this kind of work. I will supervise the housekeeping and have more time for going to festivities, after all I am from a noble family”. No man would reject the idea of a new woman in his bed and Karakozu quickly agreed. He married a young girl captured during a raid on the Kalmaks.

One day, Kuul Ene’s mother visited her daughter. Kuul Ene started to brag that she had found a second wife for her husband. “Oh, my daughter, how could you willingly get a second wife for your husband, while other women can’t get rid of them?” the mother railed. She knew well the difficulties of life among other wives and she could foresee that her daughter would suffer for her recklessness.

“Call the second wife. Let me see her” said the experienced mother. The new wife entered and gave a respectful bow, but looked straight into the eyes of the guests with a firm gaze. At bedtime, the old lady told her daughter that she had ruined her own life. “She has a direct gaze and she will be a strong mother. You must find a way to get rid of her!” she said. “Oh, no, mother! I am the first wife! Do you really think I will give up my position to the second wife?” replied her daughter. “It is not about being first. It is about the children that will come out of her belly. This Kalmak will have three boys. The first boy will be strong and successful and other two will be frail. But when her eldest boy becomes powerful, she will take the place of the first wife and if your children are not as strong, the first wife will become the second,” her mother foretold.

And indeed Karakozu’s second wife had three boys and they were called Jeldeng, Jüdömüsh and Itiiybas. At this time the clan of Tuuma’s descendents was settled in the Solto-Sary pasture of Naryn. Early one morning when the

camp was gathering to move, Kuul Ene told *tokol* to milk the horses. It seems her time in this world had come, while milking she was kicked by a mare and died. To pay respects the clan should stop and hold a funeral, but Kuul Ene yelled at her husband and his relatives: “Do you really think we should stop the move because of some Kalmak woman of unknown origin?”. Karakozu did not say anything, he did not dare to defy his wife and he left the body to two herdsmen and asked them to bury it and then follow the camp. But who would dig a good grave for somebody else’s wife or mother? The sheperds did not, they left the body in a small cave by the river, barely covering it with earth and hurried to join the others. But one of them turned back. “Wait I don’t want to be in debt to the dead. We should come back in summer when the ground is easier to dig and bury her properly. We’ll mark this place, so that we can find the body later” he said and he left a dry stick he was using as a whip at the entrance. In the summer they returned to bury the body, the ghost of the second wife had haunted them all winter, she had also visited Karakozu and Kuul Ene in their dreams. When the herdsmen arrived at the cave which they had marked they saw the dry stick had bloomed and turned into a tree. The two men went back and told of this miracle.

As Kuul Ene’s mother predicted the first of the second wife’s three sons turned out to be very smart and strong, while the second one was frail, which is why he was named Itiibas<sup>39</sup>. The youngest son was so weak that he did not begin to walk until he was six and his name was Jüdömüsh<sup>40</sup>. After their mothers death, Kuul Ene would make Jeldeng look after the horses, bring water and wood and do all kinds of other work. Karakozu’s younger brother, Akkozu noticed this and didn’t like it, he told her: “*Jenge*<sup>41</sup> don’t torture the boy. He has a fire in his eyes, don’t put it out”. “That’s exactly what I’m trying to do” Kuul Ene abruptly replied.

One day Karakozu was walking home and he found a small round loaf of bread. He broke off a piece to eat and put the rest in his pocket. Later, he wanted to break of some more bread and found that the piece he had broken off had been restored. He was amazed and deciding this was no ordinary loaf he took it home for his family to try. Only Jüdömüsh was at home. Although he couldn’t walk, he was smart and could talk very well, he told his father that Jeldeng had been up at the pasture for five days and had not yet come home and that the others were at the funeral of a rich relative.

Jeldeng came home from the pasture that day, he arrived around noon and asked for something to eat. Jüdömüsh told him that their father had hidden a loaf of bread in the cupboard. Jeldeng found the loaf and shared it with his brother. In the evening he went back to the pasture. Karakozu told Kuul Ene that he had found some magical bread and said “It would be good, if all my children tasted the bread”. When he saw that Jeldeng was not home he wanted to wait but Kuul Ene said that nothing would happen if Jeldeng did not have any. After laying the table, Karakozu looked for the bread but could not find it and Jüdömüsh admitted it had been eaten. Fearing Kuul Ene he said that Jeldeng had eaten it all alone. Kuul Ene was very angry and screamed at her husband “You must kill him! That boy ate the blessing sent to my children!”. Karakozu was so used to listening to his wife that he didn’t say a word but set out early next morning to kill his son.

It turned out that the sacred bread was too powerful for Jeldeng and after eating it he lost consciousness and did not reach the sheep. He was riding on the northern, colder side of the mountain and he fell off his horse onto a thick layer of snow. When his father found him he was still unconscious. A large area of snow, the size of a yurt had melted around the boy and become dry, he was waving his hands as if in a dream. Seeing this a thought crossed Karakozu’s mind. “Maybe he will be the one to make me proud. I will not kill him, but I should find a way to let him escape”. Jeldeng woke up around noon and his father asked if he had been dreaming of something. “Yes! I was riding a fast horse around the lake in my dream, we circled the lake three times. Even then I could not stop the horse and we travelled to Andijan and back. On the way back, I came across a *mazar* with a tree. I stopped and prayed there. In an instant, I turned strong and felt powerful, I forgot all my problems. I took nine sprigs of that tree and planted them on the northern side of Ysyk-Köl. The three sprigs on the west did not grow but the other six did” he said. “Your dream is good, my son.” his father replied and explained his dream thus: “The horse that took you thrice around the lake and to Andijan means that your fame will spread not only around the lake but to Andijan and Kokand. As for the *mazar* with a tree, where you gained strength; there is an old saying, a mother is the *mazar* of her child. I was told a simple stick had bloomed into a tree at your mother’s grave. If you visit that place and pray, you will gain strength and succeed in everything. As for the planting of sprigs from that tree, it means your family will settle on the northern side of the lake. Now, my son, the children of Kuul Ene are planning to kill you because you ate the magical bread. I cannot protect you, my son, you should run. If the

bread is truly sacred, it's power will protect you. A good son does not forget his father, don't forget about me, my son!"

Karakozu then slaughtered a foal and soaked Jeldeng's underwear in blood to prove to his wife that his son had been killed. He gave him a horse and saw him off with the words: "In Naryn there is a girl from the Bugu tribe. Tell her you are the eldest grandson of Tuuma and she will help you with all she can."

Following his father's words, Jeldeng left his home and found his aunt. He spent two years at his aunt's house looking after their calves. But his aunt's husband did not like him for everyone praised this strange boy but no one pay heed to his three sons. Since the head of the household did not like him, he decided to leave, despite his aunt's invitations to stay. Maybe hardships had made him stronger or maybe it was in his nature, Jeldeng as a sixteen year old boy crossed mountains and passes and spent many nights in strange places until he reached Sary-Özön in Chuiy. And maybe it is in the nature of womankind to be caring and gentle, or maybe it was the longing for someone familiar that caused one women he met on his way to invite him to stay in her home and become her family's younger brother. She was also from Ysyk-Köl and had moved to Chui with her husband. So, he stayed with them and helped as much as he could.

One day, a well-known Sansyz *Synchy* [q.v.] visited the house of Jeldeng's new sister. This being a very special event and a special guest, the family hosted the synchy as well as they could and slaughtered a large sheep for the meal. The next day, as the clairvoyant was leaving, the sister turned to him addressing him respectfully "Körögöch<sup>42</sup> Ake, only God knows whether you will come to our house again as he sent us this visit. I have six boys and I would like to know whether there are any worthy ones among them." The clairvoyant must have liked how they had treated him and he nodded. He looked well at all six of her sons but did not say anything. Then Jeldeng, who had left for pastures early in the morning, came in. Seeing him the synchy quickly asked if he was their son too. "No" the sister's husband was quick to answer, but the sister felt uncomfortable in front of the boy and said "It has been three years since he came to us – he is our son." Sansysh synchy turned to Jeldeng with the following words: "You have eaten the sacred bread of the Kyrgyz and you are like a jar full of grain, full of potential. You have Tuuma's eyes. Are you from his tribe?". "Yes, he is a grandson of Tuuma Ata" his sister answered. "So you belong to one of the powerful tribes. You are a man that knows no fear and you will lead a great army under a green flag. You are stubborn and fearless and you are a man who did not feel the kindness of a mother. You must go to your mother's grave and mark it with a holy sign and it will be your *mazar*. Your family will be successful and strong and you will receive the blessings of the spirits. Among your people, there will be good and wise leaders, there will be rich men whose cattle it will be difficult to count, there will be sharp witted people, whom everyone will listen to, there will be people who will write on white paper and there will be people who will study the secrets of the universe. But your children will be few. Your tribe will make stones bloom and make you proud in the battlefield. He is the best one of these children!" said Sansysh synchy and left.

We are descended from Azarbek – Jeldeng's son from his second wife. Azarbek's son was Jumagul, Bütösh is the son of Jumagul and Chychy the son of Bütösh. Chychy Ata is also known as *kyzyl moldo*<sup>43</sup> in the history of our family. He was called *moldo* because he could write in Arabic, in the past all educated people used to be called *moldo*. He lost his name Chychy because he had a red complexion and people started to call him *Kyzyl Moldo*. After Karga ake died, Chychy Ata took his place in the Bugu clan council as head of the Jeldeng people. Masylbek was the son of Chychy, Ismail the son of Masylbek, Imanbek the son of Ismail, Jumabek the son of Imanbek and after Jumabek – me, Ulan.

I heard the story about the Jeldeng tribe from my grandfather Imanbek. My grandfather was a shepherd all his life. Once while herding in the mountains, the great hero Manas and his forty men came upon my grandfather and told him "You must recite about us!" He promised to recite, but he could not keep his word because of the Soviet government. His father Ismail heard him reciting once and railed at him saying "There have never been any singers, no pipe players, or *manaschy* in our clan. I forbid you to recite!" Later my grandfather found out there was a good reason for his father's anger. During *raskulachivanie*<sup>44</sup> years, Ismail had been imprisoned for three years because his father had been a *biyy* [q.v.]. Fearing his son should receive the same punishment for his "Manas" recitation, he silenced him. Again Manas Ata came to my grandfather in a dream and said "You did not fulfill your promise. Unfortunately I didn't say that I would punish you for not keeping your word, I would have had reason to punish you heavily now. But I delegated "Manas" reciting to you and will not take it back. I will wait until there is someone worthy in your tribe."

I used to be like so many other of my contemporaries, I listened to and perceived the great world of Manas as a fairy tale. As a child, I dreamt of many things but the thought of being a manaschy never crossed my mind.

The Kyrgyz talk of two kinds of *ayan* [q.v.] which are vocation visions, the first is a message seen in a dream, the second in real life. I experienced what the Kyrgyz call a “real dream” in 2001 and I started to recite “Manas”.

This is how it happened. My grandfather and grandmother usually spent their summers in the *jaiyloo* mountain pastures. One day, they had to go back to our village as one of our close relatives had passed away and they left me at home to look after the cattle. In the evening I drove the cows into the yard and started to milk them. Suddenly, someone incredibly strong grabbed my neck from behind, lifted me off my stool and ordered “Get up, and climb that hill!” So I climbed the hill and sat on top of it; no matter how hard I tried and turned my head to see, the man behind was invisible to me.

The land on the other side of the hill on which I was sitting is called Eshperdi. A massive whirlwind spread all over Eshperdi and was heading towards me. The man behind me pointed at the whirlwind and said “Keep looking, the spirits of the Great ones are coming.” The whirlwind stopped right in front of me. Out of the whirlwind stepped a huge and impressive man on a massive horse. “Look close, you fool, the Manas is coming!” I heard from behind. I looked up and saw him staring with his burning eyes at me. He was looking right into me and I shied away and looked down. “Hey, you fool, look closely; he must be familiar to you. How will you recite if you don’t know him?” the man told me from my back. His eyes were still burning when I looked again and I could not help looking away again. This time, the man at my back grabbed my chin and forced me to look up. The eyes were still burning but I had to look into them for about a minute. And the man behind me said: “This is the great Manas. Know him well and recite of him in words worthy of his power!”. I was introduced to 45 men in this manner. My invisible teacher told me their names, their horses’ names, described their clothing and weapons. Suddenly, the one who was introduced as Manas asked me: “Will you recite, *baatyr*<sup>45</sup>?”. I nodded my head out of fear. “You, fool, raise your voice and say ‘yes’ or else he may not hear you”. I heard the voice from behind me again. I said “yes”. Then Manas pointed at the east and said: “Over there Kongurbaiy’s<sup>46</sup> army awaits us. We are heading that way. Make sure to give respect to his army as well!”. Then he looked at the man behind me and said “Host him! Put something in his mouth, don’t leave it empty!”. The knights made to depart and Manas told me we would meet again. My teacher gave me a fist full of *talkan* [q.v.] and ordered me to eat. I bit it once, but could not swallow the dry food. Then he took it from me, opened my jaws and put it into my mouth, ordering me to eat. Fearing the invisible man, I just swallowed the whole thing. I don’t remember what happened after that, I woke up at noon next day.

After that Sayakbaiy would visit me in my dreams and teach me to recite “Manas”. After a year of this kind of apprenticeship Sayakbaiy said “Oh, Sher (my *azan*<sup>47</sup> name is Alisher, and he would shorten it to Sher), it is time to receive Manas’s blessing. You must work hard and earn it. You will go to his mausoleum and receive it there”. So I went to Talas and there I recited the “Manas” for seven days, this is how I received the blessing of Manas. Since that day I have been reciting “Manas” in front of people.

Before I set out on the *manaschylyk* path, I would often visit a cherished *mazar* called Jetigen at the end of our village. We would pilgrimage here with my grandfather and mother, we would sacrifice an animal and pray. But I never realized why that place was sacred to people, why they kept it clean and why pasturing animals was forbidden around the site. Sometimes, if I came close to the *mazar* with my sheep, people walking by would tell me to find another place to pasture. It seems that no matter how hard the mullahs tried to stop this practice, most village people instead of following *Shariat* [q.v.], cherished our ancestors traditional ways of belief and worship which we call *kyrgyzchylyk* [q.v.]. And we also continue this, even though we were not taught how to worship or how to treat sacred sites the spirits seem to have brought us to back to our own traditions.

But when I began reciting “Manas”, I started to pray five times a day because I wanted to stay pure, I stopped visiting the *mazar* and tried to explain to others why they should not do so. I had decided that the mosque was the only place to communicate with God, but we didn’t have a mosque in our village and so I prayed at home. Every Friday I would go to our central raiyon mosque and participate in Friday *namaz* [q.v.]. Time flies, as they say, and six months passed this way. One day, Sayakbaiy visited me in my dream and told me to go to Jetigen *mazar*. I woke up and realized it was time for a morning prayer, instead of praying I went to my grandfather who was tending to the cattle and described my dream. He told me I should go to the *mazar*. So I dressed warmly, as it was winter, and headed towards the *mazar*.

The *mazar* is close to a lake and surrounded by bushes and water. There are about 60 poplars, three willows known as “goat willows”, two wild apple trees and two springs that make up the *mazar*. As it is surrounded by bushes, there is only one path which leads to the eastern side of the clearing. I didn’t really know what I was supposed to do at the *mazar* and at first I didn’t notice the old man sitting under a willow. He was about eighty or ninety years old with a long snow white beard and a *kalpak*<sup>48</sup> on his head. Suddenly, I was startled by a voice that said “Hey, *baatyr*, why are you standing there? Come over here!” It was early in the morning and I was alone in the middle of the woods so it’s no wonder this frightened me. But when I noticed the man, I apologized for my fright and I tried to remain calm as I approached and greeted him. He did not reply, just slightly nodded his head to the right, as if inviting me to sit. I sat down. The man turned to me and said “You don’t follow orders, do you?” I didn’t understand what he was talking about. He looked at me again and asked “Are you a *manaschy* or *azanchy*<sup>49</sup>?” “I am a *manaschy*” I replied. “Then stop your prayers!” he said. I did not say anything and wondered why he was saying this. “Hey, once you’ve received the blessing of the *baatyr*, you should live up to it and give your whole self up to the dead. You should get a good education. Now don’t stray from your path, go!” he ordered me. I got up and headed home without looking back. To this day I don’t know if I really saw that man or was he a vision, maybe I should have looked back to check.

I got home very quickly, I suppose it was fear that gave me wings. My grandfather was waiting for me outside and he asked about my visit to the *mazar*. I recounted what had happened and my Grandfather thought for a while and said “Son, it seems God and spirits do not like you being too religious, I think you should stop.” So I stopped performing *namaz* five times a day and I rejected the ideas of the mullahs from the mosques and started to visit *mazars*.

At *mazars* I don’t follow any special rites or procedures. I wear a hat and I just sit at the holy places and ask for strength, a clear mind, health and success. I accept the fact that in front of Tengri and the spirits of my ancestors I am weak. I pray for all these things and then I go home. And now I pay heed to the words of our parents who taught us to go to the *mazar* with your head covered, to say a prayer when passing a holy place and when riding by a on a horse you should free the foot, on the side of the *mazar*, from the stirrup. I remember these words and traditions, now I try to teach them to my peers.

I have visited several *mazars* including Jetigen, Töö-Tash, Ak-Terek in Jeti-Ögüz, Manjly-Ata and Archa in Tong as well as Ak-Baka in Ak-Suu. As I understand them and trying to think about them in modern words, *mazars* are places in which some kind of special energy and power is concentrated and that is why they influence people. I firmly believe in the power of *mazars*.

I plan to visit the *mazar* in Naryn where the mother of my ancestor Jeldeng, was buried and pay my respects to her spirit. This place has already been visited by a group of respected men and elders of Kichi-Jargylchak village. Normally my grandfather would never miss such an event, but he his leg was broken at the time and he was not able to go. As for me, I couldn’t go because I had classes at Karakol University. God willing I will go soon, I think it is my duty to visit this place, sacred not only for me, but for generations of my ancestors.

<sup>35</sup> *Myrza* [Kyrgyz] - a title of respect, Sir [ed.].

<sup>36</sup> *Tamga* [Kyrgyz] - brand sign [ed.].

<sup>37</sup> *Kuul* [Kyrgyz] - probably from the word *kubul*, which means changeable, variable [ed.].

<sup>38</sup> *Tokol* [Kyrgyz] - the second (or more) wife [ed.].

<sup>39</sup> *Itiybas* [Kyrgyz] - meaning barely alive [ed.].

<sup>40</sup> *Jüdmüsh* [Kyrgyz] meaning unlucky [ed.].

<sup>41</sup> *Jenge* [Kyrgyz] - kin term for a brothers’ wife [ed.].

<sup>42</sup> *Körögöch* [Kyrgyz] means all-knowing, observant [ed.].

<sup>43</sup> *Kyzyl Moldo* [Kyrgyz] - red mullah [ed.].

<sup>44</sup> *Raskulachivanie* [Russian] - the repression against the *kulaks*: those deemed as rich land-owners; the aim of the repression was to eliminate the social group in order to ensure equality of all the people. This repression accompanied collectivisation in the 1930’s [ed.].

<sup>45</sup> *Baatyr* [Kyrgyz] - hero [ed.].

<sup>46</sup> *Kongurbaiy* - a hero of the “Manas” epic, Manas’s main adversary [ed.].

<sup>47</sup> *Azan* [Kyrgyz version of *Adhan*] is the call for the prayer. Muslim people used to perform *Azan* in order to give a name to new born child [ed.].

<sup>48</sup> *Kalpak* [Kyrgyz] - traditional felt hat for men [ed.].

<sup>49</sup> *Azanchy* [Kyrgyz] - the one who performs *Azan* to call for five times prayer in Islam [ed.].

## **Kasmambetov Saparbek**

*Saparbek was born in Chalaiy jaiyloo of Kochkor raiyon, Naryn oblast in 1934. After graduating from Pedagogical Institute of Karakol in 1972, he finished the Beiyshenaliev Institute of Arts in Frunze (current Bishkek) in 1982 with a major in folklore. He has published several books titled "Bala Kyyaly" (1994), "Er Koshoiy" (1994), "Manas Bayany" (1998), "Balykchy Bayany" (1998), "Bilerik" (2003)<sup>50</sup>. Presently, he is publishing a book "Manaschy life experiences" in London, Great Britain.*

Our father Kasmambet Tynaev moved to Kochkor in 1934, when he was made the director of the Union of Leather Production. There is a *jaiyloo* called Chalay in that region, which is surrounded by the mountains Ilebaiy-Tör, Kökchö-Tör, Chong-Küngöiy, Er-Chap and Kapchygaiy. The pasture is crossed by the river Chalaiy, an old man named Kalkaman used to spend winters along that river, he died recently; he was almost a hundred. Next to Kalkaman's place there is a big black stone. We would always stand our yurt next to that stone. I was born in that yurt on May 30th, 1934. My childhood passed in Naryn and Kochkor. Later, I moved with my parents to Korumdu village in Ysyk-Köl raiyon. Our kolhoz was called Birlik back then. Then it was renamed Komsomol and then again Sögötü.

During the Great Patriotic War, all the grown-up men of my village were sent to the front. There were three of us children in my family. In 1941 my mother took us to her relatives, who lived in Song-Köl sovhoz in Kök-Jar village of Kochkor. There we were brought up by my uncle. In those times families took turns to graze the sheep of the village. Kyrgyz shepherds divide the day upto noon, when you bring sheep from pastures to be milked and then take them back to the pastures, leaving the lambs at home.

When it was my families turn to graze the sheep, they would send me as the shepherd. I was just a school boy, I think I was in the fourth or fifth form, but they sent me to look after the sheep alone. It was warm day in middle of May and the crops were growing well. Around noon all the sheep lay down to rest along the Mykan River. I lay down as well and fell asleep. I had a dream, in it everything was covered in fog and a stranger on a horse was beside me shouting "You must sing louder and better!" and I was being pushed around by his horse. Then I felt someone whipping me. Waking up, I realised I was being beaten by a kolhoz crew leader. "Wake up, you, fool! Why are you sleeping while all your sheep are in the crops?" he shouted. I looked and saw all my sheep were in the fields eating the kolhoz crops. It seemed the kolhoz crew leader had seen a big cloud of dust rise above the place where I was sleeping and when he came down to find out what was happening he had found me lying there.

The angry crew leader drove the herd out of the crops and left taking one fat black lamb with him saying, "You're fined! Pay it to the owner in the evening!" The crew leaders name was Mambet. When I got home in the evening, I told my mother my story but she did not believe me. But in the evening, the crew leader visited us himself and told my mother "Saiyrake Eje, something magical happened to your son today, you should make a sacrifice! I saw clouds of dust in the fields and when I came closer I found your son asleep. There were a lot of horse hoof prints around him. Whatever it was, something miraculous happened to him." My mother was also a very talented person, she used to tell stories and legends, she knew geneology and family history. "But you took a lamb. We could have sacrificed it together for my son" she said. Mambet replied "We had to. An official, some big man came to our village and we had to use that lamb, I am sorry." Later we made a sacrifice. We slaughtered a young ewe and I think this is why my voice is now thin and high-pitched. It would have been different if we had sacrificed a ram or lamb.

After that from time to time I would recite in the night. I wasn't a good student and I couldn't understand anything at school. My teachers would report to my relatives and criticize my work. I was good at literature, history and classes on Stalin's philosophy, but maths, chemistry and biology were beyond my comprehension. And I behaved very strangely: I didn't really have any friends, for some reason I only had the desire to fight people and I always wanted to recite. I tried to recite, but I couldn't, it just came out as incomprehensible mumbling, it was strange.

The next time it was our families turn to graze the sheep, I went up to the pastures again, I was bored, so I made a fishing rod and was trying to catch some fish. Suddenly I felt someone come up to me from behind and tap my leg. I turned to my left and saw a short man with a red face, who looked at me with a smile and said, "Don't eat fish, you will become dumb." He was strange, his hat was red and so were his shoes. Then he was gone in an instant. I got really scared and I don't eat fish up to this day.

Later that day, in the evening, I went to look for a calf which had managed to get loose and wandered away somewhere. I set out to find him and crossed the Mykan River over a bridge to look for the calf among the cattle grazing in a place called Chekildek, but the calf wasn't there. Winter days are short and it was getting dark quickly. At the edge of the woods I saw a man, who was loading wood onto his sleigh. It seemed he had gathered two stacks of wood. He was a tall man with a long beard and he was wearing an old brown fur coat and a hat.

Son, come over here! – he called. Where are you walking from? Whose son are you? - he asked. I went over to greet him. People didn't know my father's name, Kasmambet, very well, so I replied.

- My mother is Saiyrake.

- She is Sydyk's daughter, I know her. She's a very sharp witted and good woman. How is she? – he asked.

- She is well.

- Well then, help me load this wood. Why did you come here?

- The calf over there is ours, I was looking for it.

- Oh, well, come with me and stay overnight at my house. You can go tomorrow and take your calf home.

- But my mother will worry...

- Nothing will happen. A man is free to go anywhere he pleases, nothing will happen for one night.

I helped to load the wood and we left together, we crossed two small rivers and reached a small one room house standing beside a precipice. After unloading the wood at the door, I saw that he had about five or six goats. The old man brought out a good, sharp axe. Back then we were brought up to heed our elders, we used to do all the work for the elders. If we saw a man with a beard we would stand up and free a seat for him. If they asked us to, we even washed their clothes. It seems youth was highly disciplined in 1942-1943.

I cut and stacked the wood in minutes. After that he offered to make a soup for me and said "A guest has to be honoured and thanks to you we will also eat *shorpo*<sup>51</sup> tonight", and we slaughtered one of his goats and cleaned it. I was quick at cleaning meat back then and helped to cook the head and legs on the open fire. We put everything in a pot and sat down to drink tea, which sharpened our appetite. People did not have much back then and we had tea with *kalama*<sup>52</sup>. "I reserved this for grandfather" said his wife and brought us something sweet that we used to call *jazyk bompoziiy*<sup>53</sup> to eat. We talked for a while and the man asked what I can do. I told them all about myself and also said "Aksakal, I have had a great desire to sing, since the time I fell asleep in the field. But somehow I can't, I don't even know how to recite "Manas". "Ah, I see that you have also been given the vocation" said my host, "how interesting, in that case it is fate that I picked you up today. Come and sit closer, I can tell you that I only came from Bishkek two days ago. I am the great *manaschy* named Shapak," he said. "We made a sacrifice today, as if I knew it all," he said and started to recite a piece from "Manas", when he stopped he told me to try. I don't remember how I started to recite, but I remember they stopped me when the soup was ready. Goat meat should boil for about an hour and a half, so I must have been reciting for about 40 minutes. I couldn't remember which part I recited and even if it was "Manas" or "Semeteiy". Shapak gave me his blessing and said that I will have a great future.

The next day, his wife gave me a piece of meat and a headscarf for my mother. That is how I met the great *manaschy* Shapak Rysmendeev. Later I found out that at the time of our meeting his two sons were both in the army. He and his wife had moved closer to the forest with their five goats, in order to be closer to water and wood. But their native village was the one in which we lived with our relatives Kök-Jar and it was only a kilometre away. I returned to visit him in 1950.

My mother decided we should move closer to some of our other relatives. So we took our only ancient cow and travelled from Kök-Jar of Kochkor to Korumdu of Ysyk-Köl by foot. On the way to Korumdu, we made stops at Balykchy, which was called Katmaldy back then, and Chyrpykty. These were the war years and life was really hard. All the strong men were at the front and there was no one to tend the land. In 1944, people were starving and everything was scarce. One of my uncles, Junushbaiy Turdakunov was the director of a kolhoz village called Kök-Döbö. When she found out about this my mother decided to visit him and ask for some grain. By some amazing stroke of luck it turned out there were guests at the village, artists from the big city and of course they were staying at my uncle's house. The guests were the great artists Sayakbaiy, Karamoldo, Chalagyz, and there were other famous names, *akyns* [q.v.] and two young singers. The directors' house was huge and made of pine wood. A big, black sheep was slaughtered for the guests. That night Sake was reciting the episode "riding Taiytoru". I was lucky enough to be sitting in front of him but I fell asleep. This was really shameful and one of the listeners said "Let us take this boy home, he

is bothering others”. Sayakbaïy stopped his “Manas” and said “Please, don’t touch him, he looks like he is enjoying his sleep” and they left me alone. Later, having finished reciting “Manas”, Sake received *jambash* [q.v.] when it was time to distribute the meat. This is the best part of the sheep. He ate just a little of the meat and then passed the rest to me. In those times it was a great honour to receive a piece of meat from an elder and from Sayakbaïy no less.

That’s how I met Sayakbaïy Ata. Later he found out I was from Ysyk-Köl (to this day most people don’t know this). Much later when he was 70 or 75 years old, he moved to Balykchy. I was also living there and I worked with his son Syrgak at the train station. Sake would always joke when we met saying “Hey, Junushbaïy, (he used to call me Junushbaïy, which was the name of his dear friend, my grandfather) did you finish eating that meat?” I would always jokingly ask for more, since I had eaten it a long time ago. “Where would I get *jambash* from now?” he would cheerfully reply.

I have published my books titled “Er Koshoy”, “Story of young Manas” and “Balykchy story”. Maybe I could have published one more book with my story of the “Manas”. In the seventh form, my “Manas” recitations had started to get popular in the neighborhood. Several men visited us from the Manas Studies department of the Academy of Science. Aaly Tokombaev, Ömürkul Jakishev and Kybanychbek Malikov were travelling around and collecting folk tales of the oral tradition. Having heard about me, they came to our house as well. They asked my mother to record my “Manas” and left some pens and paper. She managed to talk me into it when I got home, she said “My son, you will write “Manas” now”. In one month the notebook was full. On their way back from the mountains, from Jungal, the folklorists visited us again and took the notebook, leaving us twenty thousand roubles. They put it in the archive with my name and address on it.

Years later, Kenesh Kyrbashev, the director of the Manuscript Archive in the National Center of Manas and Literature Studies Department of the Academy of Science, showed me my childhood writings. After numerous unsuccessful attempts to publish them through the Center, I gave up.

The place where I received my inspiration is on the right side of the road to Jungal. Now it is a cemetery for the village of Kök-Jar. The narrow but very deep Mukan River flows right beside my place.

I have developed my *manaschylyk* talent and I also write poetry. I worked on the art of improvisation for many years at a famous poetry school. I used to travel around and perform with famous people like Ashyraaly Aiytaliev. Talented people are good teachers, but your audience gives you the best school. If they don’t like you, you can’t give up, but you should listen to what they want and work for their appraisal. Nothing can beat the appreciation of the crowd.

Ysyk-Köl holds a special place in my works but I think there are not enough words to describe it. Every wave in this lake is sacred and I am very grateful to be a son of the lake.

<sup>50</sup> *Bala Kyyaly* [Kyrgyz] - Dreams of a child; *Manas Bayany* [Kyrgyz] - Story of Manas; *Balykchy Bayany* [Kyrgyz] - Story of a fisher; *Bilerik* [Kyrgyz] - Bracelet.

<sup>51</sup> *Shorpo* [Kyrgyz] - traditional Kyrgyz soup which is mutton boullion [ed.].

<sup>52</sup> *Kalama* [kyrgyz] - thin white bread [ed.].

<sup>53</sup> *Jazdyk bompoziy* - square sweets popular in Soviet times [ed.].

WHAT IS THIS FORCE THAT GIVES ME STRENGTH,

WHAT IS THIS DREAM THAT LETS ME SEE?

### **Mambetaliev Urkash**

*He was born in 1934 in the village Taldy-Suu of Tüp raiyon of Ysyk-Köl oblast. In 1948 he enrolled at M. Kürönkeev musical school. After his military service, he worked as an actor at Ysyk-Köl oblast Drama Theater. Later, he was accepted to Toktogul Satylganov Philharmonic Hall as a manaschy-soloist.*

*Many parts of “Manas” in his reciting were recorded and archived in the Manas Studies section of the National Academy of Sciences. His versions of the “Birth of Manas”, “Fight of Almambet with Chubak”, “Wrestling of Koshoy and Joloiy”, “How Kanykeiy rode Taiytooru”, extracts from “Töshtük” and the story of “Cholponbaïy” recited in “Manas” style were included in the Golden Collection of the Kyrgyz National Radio.*

*He is also a poet, and has published several volumes of verse these are: “Köktöm” (1968), “Jol Yrlary” (1972), “Ashuu” (1975), “Too Jyldyz” (1979), “Altyn Ayak” (1982), “Taazim” (1985), “Tulpar” (1988), “Archa Jyty” (1994), “Semeteiy” (1995), “Kabylan kurak dübürtü” (2004)<sup>54</sup>.*

*Currently, he is teaching young manaschys at the “Manas-legacy” state school.*

I was interested in *manaschylyk* ever since my dusty feet passed through the doors of my school. My father died in the Great Patriotic war. That's why I, as did many of my peers, came to face hardship early in life.

The beauty of nature inspires all those who are open to it. Our land has beautiful landscapes, we have fir trees, birches, walnuts, wide glades in the mountains, many birds and animals. The valley of the river Tüp is a paradise for cattle, with green, luscious pastures and clean streams. There are beautiful carp and golden striped *chebak*<sup>55</sup>, which jump to the moon at night.

My grandfather Duiyshaaly pastured *kolhoz* cattle and in the summer we lived in all these beautiful places. I spent my childhood among the rocks and gullies of mountain passes. The romanticism of nomadic life, mountain air and spring water give one a feeling of peace and harmony with surrounding world. My grandfather was a healer, excellent speaker and a keen observer, he was a *sanjyrachy*<sup>56</sup>. He would also tell "Manas" masterfully in rhythmic prose. My mother Katipa, was a good singer and she had a very kind, attentive nature. All this influenced my inner world and led to the development of my talent.

Let me start my story of *manaschylyk* with the vocation dream I had. I used to pasture cattle with my uncle, my grandfathers' middle son, Saty. One day, when the herd was grazing near the Tüp river, I suddenly felt very sleepy. I told Saty I was going to sleep, tied my horse and lay down comfortably under a bush. And I dreamt a really interesting dream. In my dream, I was walking along the river Tüp as if in a hurry on some urgent business. Then right in front of me I saw an elegant white yurt with beautiful ornaments. Its door was open. I felt a great desire to look inside, where I saw an old man was sitting in the *tör*<sup>57</sup>, he was wearing a white kalpak and had a long silver beard. His jolly face looked welcoming and he stretched out his arms inviting me in "Come in, my son". Somehow I guessed that this was the most learned of our Kyrgyz ancestors Bakaiy Ata.

Then a very beautiful tall lady came out of the kitchen part of the yurt, I assumed it was Bakaiy's closest daughter-in-law Aiychürök. She spread a tablecloth in front of me. On it she placed a small loaf of white bread, a wooden bowl with honey and a porcelain cup of *kymyz*<sup>58</sup>. With difficulty because hot and cold shivers were passing over me, I sat down and started to eat all the tasty food. When I took the first mouthful suddenly, it all disappeared, as if it had never existed. I heard a very loud voice shouting "Hey, wake up, boy!" that almost scared me to death.

It turned out that Saty had tried to wake me up, but hadn't managed to do so and assuming I was dead, had rushed to my uncle's wife, Shamshy, and told her that I had died. She came and also couldn't wake me up. She then called her elder son Esenaiy, to go with Saty and bring me back to the village. When I woke up they were carrying me home on a horse. On the way back I had been reciting some unclear extracts from the "Manas". My grandfather Duiyshaaly guessed that I had had a vision of Manas and he decided to sacrifice a white goat and called the neighbours to get their blessing.

From that day on I dreamed of becoming a *manaschy*. And as time passed my interest in *manaschylyk* did not fade away but increased with each day and I started to live more and more in the world of Manas. And then the day came when my wish came true, I met Sayakbaiy and received his blessing.

This happened around 1946-47, when the war was just over. Our village, Taldy-Suu, was visited by three artists from the capital city. These were the legendary Sayakbaiy, who at that time was at the peak of his career, an opera singer Anvar Kuttabaeva and the great singer Tölösh Turdaliev from Talas. I guess Sayakbaiy was then middle-aged, I think he was in his mid-fifties and he was in fine spirits. He was riding a noble-looking horse, which had a round belly and I remember thinking that Almambet's<sup>59</sup> horse, Aysarala, must have looked like that. The man himself was also impressive, he was medium-height, but held himself tall, he had sharp features and a wonderful flowing moustache. His eyes sparkled with a creative twinkle. On his arm sat an eagle. All this made him look like a figure from the epic tale.

In the evening Sayakbaiy recited in the village concert hall, he expertly recited the episode where Kanykeiy rode Taiytoru and wins a race. The great *manaschy* also looked like he was winning. Such was the power of his recitation that everyone returned home feeling excited and spiritually renewed, as if we had all won the prize described in the story.

The night of festivities was continued in the house of the kolhoz director, our relative Osmon. He introduced me to Sake<sup>60</sup> with the following words: "Sake, this boy has followed your path and recites the story of the Magnanimous from time to time. Please listen to him and if he deserves it, give him your blessing." He agreed and although I felt

timid in front of this great man I decided to recite some verses of his version of the tale. I wanted to look good in front of him and my recitation seemed to go rather well. Sake made everyone around him laugh by saying “Oh, what a bravery for a small puppy to bark in front of a great tiger?! This boy has a seed inside, he will become a *manaschy*”, and he sipped his drink and passed it to me and then gave me some of his meat.

Years later I met him again, I don't know whether he was alive at the time, I can't remember exactly, but he came to teach me in my dream. In the dream this great man seemed to be similar to the first *manaschy* Jaiysang, who used to recite for Manas. I dreamt it was a hot summer day. A meeting was taking place in Panfilov Park in the capital city. I was sitting behind Sake. The meeting was over and Sake started to walk slowly in the direction of the summer philharmonic hall. I did not dare show myself to the great man but walked slowly behind him. Suddenly, Sake turned around and said to me “Urkash, my son, could you bring me my hat and stick. I forgot them on my seat.” I ran back and saw his kalpak and beautiful stick topped with gold decorations on the side of the seat. I grabbed them and quickly walked back to Sake. On the way, I wondered if the hat would fit me. The dream ended as soon as I tried it on. I interpreted the dream as a sign of kindness of the great father *manaschy*, he wanted me to have some of his talent. The dream touched me so much that I described it in a poem devoted to my Sake:

What is this force that gives me strength?,  
What is this dream that lets me see?  
When everything flows smoothly  
What might be hidden in a tightly clenched fist?

The sun is hot on top,  
Like a boiling pot.  
It burns like an open fire,  
In the fire place.

There are a lot of people around,  
In Panfilov Park.  
And I sat down,  
Behind my Sake,

As if by request,  
The crowd disappeared quickly.  
Not a single person was left,  
All the places were empty.

The great father *manaschy*,  
Walked slowly as if he was made of rock,  
He took small steps,  
I was walking behind him.

Suddenly, I heard his voice  
He turned to me slowly,  
“Hey, son!” he said:

I was also young,  
But I am older now.  
Although my head still has value,  
My brain has holes now.

If it is not difficult for you,

Please return there.  
I seem to have forgotten my  
Kalpak and stick.

As if Sake was in a hurry,  
I hurried back to pick it up.  
A thought crossed my mind,  
Will this kalpak fit me?

As I noticed,  
It was very nice.  
And it fit me,  
As if my mother made it for me.

I will not forget the time,  
Spent with the great Man.  
Thus I decided,  
To put these lines together ...

<sup>54</sup> *Köktöm* [Kyrgyz] - Spring; *Jol Yrlary* [Kyrgyz] - Songs of the road; *Ashuu* [Kyrgyz] - Mountain pass; *Too Jyldyz* [Kyrgyz] - Star of the mountains; *Altyn Ayak* [Kyrgyz] - Golden feet; *Taazam* [Kyrgyz] - Respect; *Tulpar* [Kyrgyz] - Stallion; *Archa Jyty* [Kyrgyz] - The smell of juniper; *Kabylan kurak dübürtü* [Kyrgyz] - Stories of a heroes years [ed.].

<sup>55</sup> Chebak [Russian] - a small fish found in high mountain streams [ed.].

<sup>56</sup> Sanjyrachy [Kyrgyz] - a reciter and researcher of genealogies and family history [ed.].

<sup>57</sup> *Tör* [Kyrgyz] - place of honour in a yurt, facing the door [ed.].

<sup>58</sup> *Kymyz* [Kyrgyz] - traditional Kyrgyz drink made from fermented mares milk [ed.].

<sup>59</sup> Almambet baatyr is one of the main heroes of “Manas”, a friend and counselor of Manas [ed.].

<sup>60</sup> It is tradition among the Kyrgyz people to refer to those they greatly respect, for example great artists, in the diminutive form, here Sayakbaïy Karalaev as Sake [ed.].

## MY FATHER MAMBET WAS THE GUARDIAN OF MANJYLY-ATA MAZAR...

### **Mambetov Kasymbek**

*Kasymbek is the son of the manaschy Mambet Chokmorov. He was born in 1934. He worked as a teacher for 40 years. He later worked as an Education Specialist and is now retired.*

Some people say that *manaschys* received their skills from their ancestors. My father was not one of them, he didn't receive *manaschylyk* from his father Chokmor, who was a simple man and didn't possess any special talents. But my father's uncle Dengizbaïy (who was known by some as Donguzbaïy) was a great *manaschy*. Although, his version of the story was not written down, Dengizbaïy was well known among people and a great storyteller of his time.

My grandfather Chokmor used to spend the summers at the Archaluu high pasture in Tong. The summer my father Mambet was four years old, they were at the pasture, he disappeared for four days. His parents couldn't find him but he came back by himself. The four year old boy could not explain where he had been.

Tashtar-Ata hill in our valley is a sacred place. When my father was ten, he was herding his sheep behind that hill and on the way back home he saw a strange vision. The sun was setting in the sky and as my father recounted: “there were some dark figures approaching from the distance and I didn't realise when they surrounded me, they were unnaturally huge figures and their horses were huge and strong. Then I realised it was Manas with his 40 knights traveling from the east to the west” he said. When he saw these great people my father lost consciousness, but he recounted “then I heard a voice; I don't know which one of them was speaking. ‘He can't recite “Manas” yet, he is still so small that a horse's breath will topple him over”. He will recite when he turns 20 and will become a great *manaschy*. Brand him!” he said. My father said he does not remember what happened next. But that night it rained and my grandfather found my father only the next day.

And when my grandmother Aiymbacha was pregnant with my father, she was visited in her dreams by Almambet *baatyr*, who said “You will have a son, who will recite “Manas”; don’t show him to the people and let him be a shepherd, until he is grown up enough to recite.”

My father started to recite “Manas”, when he turned 20. Our redeemed ancestor Manas spoke to him and forbid him to receive gifts from people, he said “People will give you horses and put clothes on you, don’t take them. When you start reciting you cannot accept even something as small as a thread that will go around your finger three times”.

When my father started reciting “Manas”, his uncle Dengizbaiy said “I gave my “Manas” to Mambet. He will recite “Manas” instead of me from now on”. Dengizbay never recited “Manas” after that.

Our clan is called Ulak uulu, in those times it consisted of 40 families. When my father Mambet had just started to recite, he was commanded to recite the story of Manas up to seven generations of his descendents. This was to be his offering to the Manas. Every day he would stop at one Ulak uulu family and recite “Manas”. After he had been reciting for 40 days he had reached the story of the third generation. People became interested in his tales and asked him to recite the episode of the “Great March” again. They didn’t allow him to continue the tale, after that my father would tell only the story of the three fathers – Manas, Semeteiy, Seiytek. My father recited these three parts with great emphasis all his life. He would tell these in full, but did not recite the story of the other generations. He would continue their story in prose, not in poetry, because the people stopped him learning the rest of the story, they hadn’t wanted to listen to the story of fathers after Seiytek and would asked to recite the episode of the “Great March” again.

In the sixties a folklorist named Buudaiybek Sabyr uulu came to our house. He explained the reason for his coming to my father “*Aksakal*, we are planning to write a book based on the stories of *manaschys*, komuz players and other skilled people. We heard there was a great *manaschy* in Tong and came here” he said. My father did not want to talk to them and he replied “You, unworthy sons, are trying to make easy money. You cannot write a book!” Then Buudaiybek asked “Father, can you at least tell us how you came to reciting “Manas”? Who taught you?” My father replied, “Oh, my son, I was told not to tell anybody how I received “Manas” and I cannot reveal its secrets”. Then Buudaiybek sat closer, put his hands on my father’s knees and begged “Dear father, please, tell me about it. I will quickly write it down, without interrupting you”. My father was a kind man and quickly replied “Ah, unworthy son, I will recite, but I will not let you write it down, my son will.” and he turned to me and said “Write!” So I wrote down his story of what happened when he was four and ten years old, and how he started to recite when he turned twenty. We gave my father’s story to Buudaiybek and he published it in a book entitled “El Shaiyrylary”<sup>61</sup>. It was published during Soviet times. Later, I happened to meet with Buudaybek Sabyr uulu. I asked him why he had changed my fathers words “Didn’t my father say that he met the Magnanimous<sup>62</sup> in real life, not in dreams?” Buudaiybek replied “I had to write it that way, according to Communist party rules. My book wouldn’t have been published otherwise”.

My father really did meet Manas in reality and then he lost consciousness. He used to say “Those who meet Manas in real life, become excellent *manaschy*. Those who come to recite through dreams or other ways cannot equal those who have met Manas in reality. They recite, but they have limits.”

Our father was a pure person, he was very humble and holy, he prayed five times a day and always performed the *namaz daarat* [q.v.], he honoured Tengri. In our land, there is a mazar called Manjyly-Ata. It is here that Moiyt Ake<sup>63</sup> was buried. My father Mambet was the guardian of this holy place and always kept the *mazar* clean, he would show people the paths to the *mazars* and the correct way to perform the pilgrimage. Today, an outstanding young man named Kadyrbek is the guardian, he is following my father’s path. When Kadyrbek prays, he also addresses his prayers to my father, the previous guardian – Mambet Ata.

I go to the *mazar* with my family and pray in the way my father showed me, but *manaschylyk* skills were not passed on to me. My father used to say “My children will not be *manaschys*, but my grandchildren will”.

I do not support those uneducated mullahs, who forbid pilgrimages to sacred sites and believe that they are inhabited by bad spirits. I believe that a person who believes in God can also visit and pray at *mazars*. In Soviet times, when I worked as a teacher, we used to have *politminuty*<sup>64</sup>. During one of those sessions, our teacher asked me if I believe in God. I replied “I believe in God, but I don’t teach my children about my faith”. God would not forgive me, if I had replied “There is no God”. A human being has to believe that there are spirits *aktyk* [q.v.] who support and protect him or her from the cradle to the grave.

My father used to treat sick people, who would come to our house from various raiyons and oblasts, some even came from Tian-Shan and Chuiy and they would return home cured. How did my father treat them? Some he would

treat by placing his hand on their head, others by giving them water from the streams, sometimes he gave people butter to eat. Later I published a small book with stories of those who were healed by my father and I gave almost all the copies away.

My father had one more power. It is said that sometimes a woman cannot deliver her baby, because of dark forces in the form of a goblin called an *albarsty*<sup>65</sup>, these women can be helped by prayers. My father had a piece of paper with such a prayer, it had on it the oath of an *albarsty* not to bother women anymore. My father used to tell the story of how he obtained this piece of paper. Long ago, he helped a woman who was having a very hard time delivering a baby. Her relatives decided to call two mullahs to help, a dervish and my father as the *manaschy*. My father's older brother Madreiyn was a mullah, he knew the Quran by heart. They were accompanied by an Uzbek mullah, Maiytyk *dubana* [q.v.]. Maiytyk *dubana* was a very well known mullah, he once planted a stick at Manjyly-Ata, the stick became a stem and a spring started to flow from under it. This stem grew into a big tree and the spring still flows to this day.

So the mullahs, the relatives and the woman were praying for her childbirth at Manjyly-Ata. In the evening, everyone was sleeping in the right side of the yurt, with a bonfire in the middle and only the pregnant woman was lying on the left side. My father described the following scene: "I was lying closest to the fire and couldn't fall asleep. The yurt was lit only by burning coals. A long time seemed to pass and suddenly, something glutinous like calf placenta fell through the open roof of the yurt and landed near the fireplace. I watched it. It started to jump about and turned into a lamb, and then into a calf and licked itself. Finally, it turned into a woman who approached the pregnant woman with her arms stretched out and tried to grab her. At that moment I grabbed her hair from behind. I knew I was holding a fistful of hair, but when I looked at my hand I couldn't see anything in it, even so I kept a fast hold on what I could not see. She started to curse, and I started to say my prayers. She had a lot of strength and tried to throw me off three times, but I did not let go and held on even tighter. Suddenly, she turned into a big, dark, terrible looking woman and she said to me: "My dear Maken<sup>66</sup>, please let me go, I promise I will never go to the places you go and I will make your children such and such and yourself so and so." She was trying to bribe me with false promises. But I kept my hold until she reached into her robe and took out a piece of paper with a written oath, which was her guarantee." Only then did my father let the woman go. As soon as she left, the pregnant woman cried "Oh!" and regained consciousness and soon the problems that she had had with the birth left her.

Then my father woke the others up with the words "Hey, wake up, I caught an *albarsty*" and told them what had just happened. It seems the curses of the *albarsty* had kept them asleep, while my father did not sleep due to the power of Manas. "They did not hear us while we were fighting and throwing each other around, up to the ceiling. I used to carry that paper in my pocket, just like that. But once when I was reciting "Manas" at the house of a man named Jaraman, whose wife had problems delivering a baby, it was stolen from my pocket. Somehow the power to help women stayed with me. Things like that are very difficult to keep safe from thieves, it would have been stolen anyway, unless I had hidden it in the muzzle of a gun or in your mouth," my father said. That is how he would tell his interesting stories.

One of my close relatives told me another curious story about my father. "I have seen only two clairvoyants in my life," he said. "In 1941, after enlisting in the army, I was traveling through the Kazakh steppe by train, there was a Kazakh in our carriage who was telling the other soldiers their fortunes, there were Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, and Uzbeks all asking him about their futures. Some he foretold "you will die in the war" to others that "you will be wounded" and yet others he told "you will come back safely" or "you will be captured and die in pain". I got interested as well and approached him when the crowd got smaller. The Kazakh man said "Oh, you will come back wounded from the war, have three sons and three daughters and they will be good children. You will grow old and die a natural death at the age of 61." The prophecies of that Kazakh have come true, although I'm not yet 60 and I don't know what will my death be like – he was the first clairvoyant I ever met.

The second clairvoyant I knew was my uncle Mambet. Once he was reciting "Manas" in a yurt in the Archaluu pasture to a crowd of enthralled listeners, none of whom were interrupting his tale, when he suddenly stopped and said "Someone is coming to see me in a hurry, let him through" and then went on with the recitation. Shortly after, a man rode up and jumping of his horse ran into the yurt and addressed the people, "I beg you to let uncle Mambet come with me, bad spirits are preventing my brother's wife from having her baby." Uncle Mambet stopped reciting and replied, "Your brother's wife is well and she has delivered a boy, you can go back now," and then he returned to the

tale, taking us with him, back into the world of Manas. The man stood there for a while and didn't want to go away, but having nothing to do, he rode away. When he got back home he discovered that his brother's wife had indeed had a boy. How could Mambet have known about the man looking for him and the baby being born, if it wasn't for his clairvoyance?"

Let me tell you another story about my father. Our maternal grandfather Baiybagysh was a very knowledgeable man and everyone called him *moldoke*<sup>67</sup>. He could command the weather, so that the sun would shine on the mane of his horse and rain would fall on its' tail. My grandfathers' guards accompanied him everywhere and they liked to dress like him. My father told me: "Once, I was lying in one corner of our yard covered by some old furs and I saw a lot of soldiers coming across the yard, they noticed me and shouted "Ah, there is Mambet, grab him!" I threw off the furs and started to run. They chased me for a while with the words, "Catch him! He may trip over a stone and kill himself!" But I kept running and suddenly Semeteiy appeared right in front of me on his horse, Taiybuurul. He said "Don't be afraid, those were the powers of your father-in-law. They will not come after you again, you may go back home." I turned around and saw that there was nobody chasing me anymore." It seems that powers of Manas chased the powers of my grandfather away from my father.

<sup>61</sup> *El Shaiyyrlary* [Kyrgyz] - Talented people [ed.].

<sup>62</sup> Magnanimous, in Kyrgyz *Aiyköl*: an epithet for Manas [ed.].

<sup>63</sup> Muiyt Ake, one of the six revered *ake* of the of the Ysyk Köl oblast [ed.].

<sup>64</sup> These "contemporary politics lessons" were obligatory sessions of political propaganda [ed.].

<sup>65</sup> *Albarsty* [Kyrgyz] - goblins who haunt people; read more in the glossary [ed.].

<sup>66</sup> Maken is a nickname for Mambet [ed.].

<sup>67</sup> *Moldoke* [Kyrgyz] in this context: respected mullah [ed.].

BEFORE SOMETHING HAPPENS IN REALITY,  
IT WILL BE SEEN IN A DREAM

### **Sydykov Döölöt**

*Döölöt was born on August 25, 1983 in Shor-Bulak village of the Tong raiyon. He inherited manaschylyk skills from his ancestors. Currently, he is a third year student majoring in folklore at the National Conservatory. He is a winner of the manaschy festival titled "Bashkany koyup, Manaschy ait"<sup>68</sup>, and participant of international festivals in China (2005), Kazakhstan (2007) and Yakutia of Russia (2008).*

In the Tong valley where I live, on the upper side of Tuura-Suu there is a place called Ak-Korum, they say Koshoy Ata was buried here. This place is considered very sacred and powerful, it is a renowned *mazar*. This place was uncovered by the great *manaschy* Sayakbaiy Ata. He had been eagle hunting in Naryn and on his way home they say he stopped here and wept for three days and then recited "Manas" for three days. He wept for the wise ancestor of the Kyrgyz people and said "So, this is where my great-grandfather Koshoy is buried." People, who could not have children are healed at this place. There is a saying "If you wish for a child, go to Manjly". But those who didn't get a child from Manjly, go to Ak-Korum. I also visit this place and pay my respects to its spirits.

I inherited my talent for recitation from my ancestors. I chose my grandfather's surname Sydyk as my own because he was a poet and he would recite our national poetry. My grandmother was a *koshokchu*<sup>69</sup>. She passed away recently in the year 2000 when she turned eighty-five. She used to say she was scared of our grandfather when they were first married: "Because he would recite "Manas" at night, when we were in bed, rather than during the day" she explained "as soon as he fell asleep he would recite". When she complained to his brother's wife, she advised her not to worry and that if she was frightened she should sleep with a knife under her pillow. At first she did and then gradually she got used to this nocturnal creativity.

My grandfather used to recite the epic tale Kurmanbek in a very characteristic intonation and his version of the song was also slightly different than any other I have heard. He also recited "Manas" and "Semeteiy". Unfortunately his versions were never recorded. My grandfather died when my father was ten years old.

In my village, people know my father as a *semeteiychi*. I was not familiar with "Manas" but I started to recite in the 7th grade, when I was 13. Maybe my fascination with the great epic started with hearing my father's recitation or maybe I came to it on my own. Once, when I was still at school, my teacher pulled me out of the line and asked me to recite "Manas" at a school meeting in front of numerous onlookers, I think they assumed that I was able to recite since my father could. But I

had no idea what to recite and I started to cry. My teacher took me home all in tears. I think I will remember that day all my life.

After that event, Sayakbaiy visited me in my dreams and told me I would learn to recite “Manas”, saying “This is how you do it!”. I have been reciting ever since. Sayakbaiy would visit me from time to time, recite “Manas” and stare at me for a while. I recited while walking, pasturing sheep and even when riding a horse. People got used to the fact that my horse and sheep would be wandering about in different directions. My family treated this with understanding as they were familiar with the nature of the skill.

I think dreams are very important. Before something happens in reality, it will be seen in a dream, dreams give signs of future events. Sometimes, you may not notice the sign and not pay heed to its message. But I think that the images in my dreams determined my destiny.

Later, I started to dream of various events related to “Manas”. In one of my dreams I found myself in a wide open space, far away I could see the mountains and the high pastures with rocks and trees. The sky above me was very blue. I heard a voice ask “Tell me, do you see the Magnanimous Manas?” “No” I replied after looking around. The voice said “Look more carefully, Manas is here”. I looked again but all seemed the same. Then I realized that the world of Manas was as wide as that field, and as broad as the endless sky. I realized that I was in the universe of Manas.

And then I saw the Magnanimous himself, he was standing in a large crowd of people all dressed in black, there were so many of them they filled the vast plain. It must have been the Great Funeral. Manas himself appeared as described in the epos:

He is thunder and he is lightening  
He is like the bullet of a cannon  
The look of our hero

He moved through the crowd alone. I saw him for an instant, when he got closer, but then he walked away. I was astonished at his movements, they were like the wink of an eye and the flow of fast water.

Bakaiy Ata also visited me in an inspirational dream. He also fitted the description given by many *manaschy*. “Kongurbaiy is coming. Let’s go out to meet him” he said. We went outside and waited for him and in the distance I heard a very loud noise as if a mountain were moving but I couldn’t see anything “He said Kongurbaiy was coming, but where is he?” I wondered. The wind began to blow even harder, the rumbling got louder and closer, the earth started to quake and then Kongurbaiy was beside us. I saw a huge dark skinned man with a straight chin and piercing look sitting on an armoured horse. He was accompanied by dozens of his knights. Although they were also finely dressed, they seemed insignificant in front of Kongurbaiy. When he stopped in front of us I felt very small, we were no taller than his horses hoof. Although I knew that Bakaiy Ata is also an epical figure and that he is taller than me, somehow in front of Kongurbaiy he seemed to be an ordinary person, just like me. Then Kongurbaiy got off his horse and stepping down became our height. He greeted Bakaiy Ata in a voice that sent shivers down my spine. I wanted to be polite but I was so scared and could not even get out a word of greeting. People were talking all around me and after talking to Bakaiy Ata, Kongurbaiy turned to a man on his right, who brought a horse for me. As I took the horse’s bridle, suddenly all of the men disappeared. I brought the horse home and discovered it was a fast horse, a stallion, it was neither too fat nor too thin. I was really pleased with my gift, especially since I had never liked taking our sheep to the pasture, because sometimes I had a horse but mostly I was on foot. “Now I will always look after cattle on horseback. One can even play *Ulak tartysh*<sup>70</sup> on it. I will feed him in the morning and in the evening.” Usually, horses refuse to walk when they eat in the morning. But I brought him some hay and he ate it all and wanted more. “How should I tether him, it won’t do to just tie him to a fence” I thought and I drove a stake into the ground and attached him by the canter and decided to ride him the next day.

When reciting I had always talked of Kongurbaiy as an enemy, but I was treated very well by him. He gave me the art of reciting in the form of this winged horse.

In another dream, I saw four heroes in the Tal-Choku mountain pass. There were crowds of people gathered beneath the mountain range in Tong, on the northern shore of the Ysyk-Köl lake. They were burning fires and cooking meat. Suddenly I saw four heroes coming from the east. Their horses were not running on the plain, but jumping from one mountain top to another and from one rocky ledge to another. It looked more like they were flying. They were clad in armour. I followed them and soon I was flying among them. When we reached the Tal-Choku peak

they showed me the river delta and they told me the names of the three river branches. Further away there was a plain rolling into small hills and then they pointed out Chinese lands. That's how the heroes introduced me to Tal-Choku.

I also saw Semeteiy in one of my dreams. Külchoro and Kanchoro<sup>71</sup> were with him and they were traveling back from Urgench. All three were dressed in armour. Gulchoro was a very handsome, straight and intelligent man. They were heading towards Afghanistan. Gulchoro was saying:

My dear brother,  
You took the two of us with you  
One of us is a mountain, the other is a peak  
One of us is a forest, the other is a grove  
One of us is the motherland,  
The other is an expanse without borders,  
We followed you, dear brother,  
Together we discovered new lands.

As I watched the three heroes stood together, the other two continued to listen to Külchoro's words.

It is impossible to recite the whole of "Manas" just as it is impossible to tell all the stories one receives in one's dreams, but these visions seen in dreams are the source of my endless story-telling. I recite because:

I have received inspiration from the spirits,  
I saw Manas in my dreams.  
And now I must tell of him.

I used to recite "Manas" and "Semeteiy". When I met Sayakbaiy for the first time, he taught me the story of the ten sons of Oroz, the ancestors of Manas. I have always heard the "Manas" being recited by *manaschy* and to be honest, I have never read the book version to the end, I find it easier to listen to it. But when I start to recite, I feel the flow of poetry and the strength of my improvisation. It doesn't always come out the same: sometimes it's good, sometimes it doesn't go very well. I think it depends largely on the audience I am performing to.

I wasn't familiar with the words of "Seiytek" until recently. But currently, I am writing down this part of the trilogy. There is a story behind this. When I was living in the city, I sometimes felt strange, as if I was missing something. I was restless, always wanting to walk around and I couldn't sit in one place. On one of these days, I had a dream where someone was chasing me. They were throwing rocks at me and I ran into somebody's house to hide. There was an old man sitting in the house, he had a white beard and was wearing a *chapan* and *tebeteiy*<sup>72</sup>, something told me he was a *Kyzyr* [q.v.]. I took a peek out of my hiding place and saw my pursuers were still there. I turned back to the man and he stretched out his hand and placed some kind of living creature onto my palm. I looked and saw it was a grasshopper. The man had ripped off its wings, antlers and hind legs, leaving only the ones for walking. He had also burnt a sign on my hand which read the name "Aaly". "All this land will belong to you and those who are chasing after you will not stand a chance against you" he said. I looked and saw my pursuers were backing away. Then he and two other old men who had appeared beside him gave me their blessing. I have been writing down "Seiytek" since the day I met that *Kyzyr*. I record myself on tape and then write it down and this gives me great satisfaction, thanks to this I no longer feel restless.

I don't know why he did not give me the whole grasshopper; maybe he thought it would be too much for me to handle, maybe he removed all the bad parts and cleaned the gift in this way. If you try to understand each detail of your dream, you can become very superstitious. But I know one thing, the signs that *manaschy* receive from time to time help direct their thinking and are always a source of inspiration.

The fact that my skill is inherited from my ancestors is one thing, but the influence of my family upbringing is another. My father used to have each of his children take turns reading Sayakbaiy's version of "Manas". In the winter evenings at bedtime, after taking care of the cattle and finishing our dinner, my mother would read us "Manas". She would read until she we fell asleep and then mark the page to continue the next evening.

The wife of my fifth great grandfather Nazar, so the grandmother of my grandfather Sydyk, was a wonderful woman and a very talented improviser. This was a sacred gift. When Nazar Ata died in a war, his younger brother tried to get her to marry him, but she ran away to her father with her five children. She brought them up very well and returned to her husband's family years later. In this regard, her destiny is very similar to that of Kanykeiy Ene's.

Nazar's son Jöjö was a *biiy* [q.v.]. Jöjö's son was Alagys, his son was Chymyrbaiy and then his son was Sydyk – my grandfather.

My mother is the daughter of Kazakhs, but has some Kyrgyz blood. She is also a traditional healer and she heals children. She gave birth to twins. It's a good sign if twins run in the family. My grandmother, Sydyk's wife was one of a set of triplets and she was one of 33 children. In my grandmother's family there have always been triplets.

There are twelve of us in my family, I have seven sisters and four brothers. There are also twins among us. My sisters also have supernatural talents. When my eldest sister was born, they named her after Nazar's first wife, Bayan, whose fate was similar to that of Kanykeiy Apa. Then my mother had a dream, she saw an old man, who told her to change her daughter's name. She called the girl Aiytuyak. The old man also said the little girl will start reciting "Manas" and his words came true, she used to recite the "Manas" even when doing household chores. Sometimes she would drop everything and recite long episodes of the epic. My grandmother used to say that if she had been a boy, she would have been a great *manaschy*. She stopped reciting when she finished school. She has a family now, a daughter and two sons. I always wonder whether if her husband had understood her gift and let her recite the "Manas", she would have continued to develop this talent given to her from the spirits.

"I saw Manas Ata and he saved me" she says. When she was a little girl she got sick with goiter and went to hospital, but there were no doctors, they were all away somewhere, so she was just lying there in pain, waiting. Suddenly, she started suffocating and staggered to the door to let in some fresh air. She barely reached the door but on opening it she saw a fiery cloud in the corridor, Manas was walking through the flames towards her. "As soon as the Magnanimous passed by my door I could breathe again" she says. Even now, she says, Sayakbaiy and other talented reciters visit her in dreams and tell "Manas".

My second sister's name is Birmyskal. She used to participate in various contests on raiyon and oblast levels. She also stopped reciting after getting married. She told us of her vision of Manas Ata and his forty knights. She saw them by the Ysyk-Köl lake and Manas told her to recite. She also talks of how she saw two *peri* [q.v.], the patronesses of the lake, they looked like two beautiful women with shining bodies. I have no words to describe that vision, she says. But she hasn't had a vision since she got married.

Whatever happens, I think this great gift that is connected with my ancestors will not abandon my family.

<sup>68</sup> *Bashkany koiyun, Manaschy ait* [Kyrgyz] - Drop everything else and recite Manas [ed.]

<sup>69</sup> *Koshokchu* [Kyrgyz] literally is a weeper or a mourner. This is the title given to special funeral singers. Read more in the glossary [ed.].

<sup>70</sup> *Ulak tartysh* [Kyrgyz] - lit.tr. tearing the goat. Traditional game, played on horseback, where two teams compete and score goals with a goat carcass [ed.].

<sup>71</sup> Külchoro and Kanchoro are Seiyteks knights [ed.].

<sup>72</sup> *Chapan* [Kyrgyz] - traditional tunic; *Tebetey* [Kyrgyz] - flat black hat [ed.].

## CHAPTER 3

### PEOPLE AND EARTH ARE KIN

#### INTRODUCTION

The Kyrgyz people have a saying "*El menen jer kindiktesh*" which means "The people and the earth are connected by an umbilical cord". Just as twins are said to be kin by the Kyrgyz people, people and the earth are also considered kin. As people cultivate the earth and make it more beautiful turning a desert into a blooming paradise, the earth in its turn feeds the people with its resources. Not for nothing the Kyrgyz people say "respect the land as you respect your brother".

Ysyk-Köl, which in Kyrgyz means "warm lake", attracts many people to its shores. This includes city folk looking for entertainment and rest but also many local people, for whom the lake is a holy place coming to pray. Their faith forbids them from treating the lake as a playground, where one can carelessly sunbathe and swim. The elders

who respect the lake draw attention to its marvels and they start by noting that each shore is different from the other. The weather is different, on the north-eastern side of the lake, where the Tüp and Ak-Suu regions lie, it is rainy in summer and cold in the winter. In the town of Balykchy and the Tong region in the west, it rarely snows in winter but it gets very cold. On the Lake's northern shore it is warmer in both the summer and winter than the other shores of the lake.

The Teskey Ala-Too and the Kungöiy Ala-Too mountain ranges surround the lake. The northern Kungöiy Ala-Too mountains are barren and few trees grow on their slopes. The southern Teskey Ala-Too mountains are densely forested with pine trees and thick green shrubbery and their summer pastures are breathtakingly beautiful. The glaciated peaks of the Ala-Too range look down at the Ysyk-Köl lake with the wisdom of their years.

In the Ysyk-Köl oblast, which takes its name from its lake, there are four raiyons, 3 towns and more than a hundred villages. The majority of its population consists of ethnic Kyrgyz people, but it is also the home to many other nationalities including Kazakhs, Uzbeks, Russians, Uyghurs, Dungans and Tatars.

One of the basic concepts of traditional knowledge and consciousness amongst the Kyrgyz people is that of remembrance of one's ancestors and of one's roots that is of one's *uruk* and *uruu*, tribe and clan. The largest tribe living in the Ysyk-Köl province is the Bugu. The second largest is that of the Sayak. Beside those two, there are also the tribes of the Döölös, Kytaiy, Saruu and others. Each tribe has their own history that is comprised of folk stories about the genealogy called *sanjyra*, which give an interpretation of the meanings of the tribe's names.

For example, one such collection of folk tales is about the Bugu *uurusu*<sup>73</sup> which means the tribe of the Deer Mother. The tales about Bugu Apa do not say where she came from, whether she was the daughter of a deer, who looked like a human woman, or whether she was a woman with deers' antlers on her head. Bugu Apa had two sons, named Jamangul and Bapa, and they are the fathers of the Bugu tribe, among whose descendants there are those born with antlers on their heads. Chinara Seidahmatova talks about his phenomenon in her article found in this chapter.

Ysyk-Köl is well known for its natural beauty, biological diversity and its fertile *jaiyloo*<sup>74</sup>. These wonderful summer pastures are, Karkyra, Sary-Jaz, Altyn-Arashan, Kok-Jaiyyk, Juuku, Chychkan-Bashy, Kosh-Jargylchak, Arabel, Saiykal-Tör, Kum-Tör, Chong-Aksuu, Kyrchyn, Kök-Oiyrok and others. The meadows and slopes of these pastures are a feast for the eyes and a summer that smells of grass and flowers is medicine for the soul. This beauty and power of the pastures brought the Kyrgyz people together, these were the sites of many gatherings, celebrations, discussions, disputes and battles that decided the futures of many tribes and families. The wealth of nature and history should be protected in a nature reserve. In this chapter the *jaiyloo* Bel-Kara-Suu will be described, where the incredible Tulpar-Tash stone stands and the place and role of the pastures in the life of the Kyrgyz people will be talked of in the writings of Aman Aitpaev.

The wonderous land around the Ysyk-Köl has been the chosen land for hundreds of generations of people. They have left behind them signs of their existence, their cultures and beliefs. One of these historical places where memories have been left engraved on stones will be discussed in Aidarbek Sarmanbetov's article. And it is said that much more remains unseen than seen in this beautiful land; much more remains undiscovered than has been discovered.

In the south of Kyrgyzstan, elder men are traditionally called *ake*. However among people who live around the lake Ysyk-Köl *ake* is not only a respectful title but it also means a special status. It is used only to refer to those who have been deemed worthy of the respect of all the people. A man was referred to as *ake* if he was just in his deeds, stable in his words and took the responsibility for his people. The *akeler* should also have the power to foresee the future and use this gift wisely for the benefit of their people. Their wisdom and just advice was to serve the whole Kyrgyz nation and reach beyond divisions of family and tribe. There have only been seven great men, worthy of the title *ake* of the Ysyk-Köl. These are Karga Ake, Moiyt Ake, Sart Ake, Tilekmat Ake, Karach Ake, Sadyr Ake and Kydyr Ake.

The lake was very important for all the Ysyk-Köl *akeler*. Maybe the powers and wisdom of the *akeler* was influenced and strengthened by the lake. Moiyt *ake* said before his death, "My people, there is no hole in the lake through which it can flow away, but people who will not care for the lake will be wretched and deprived of its wealth. Take care of the lake." Karga Ake reprimanded his people by saying "If we had looked after our lake, we would not have lost it to the Kalmaks", he would teach "it would be better to be deprived of your eyes than of our lake." Karga *ake*'s sayings are talked of in this chapter by Üsönbek Asanaliev.

In difficult times the lake has been witness to the bravery of many *baatyr*<sup>75</sup> willing to die for their people and their land, and it holds the memory of many meetings and debates held at its shores. Balbaiy Baatyr, Ömür Baatyr, Janek Baatyr, Baldaiy Baatyr, Teke Baatyr, Nurdöölöt Baatyr, Shapak Baatyr served their people and tried to protect their traditions and culture. It is good to remind ourselves of the wise words that the great *akyn* [q.v.] Soltobay composed in 1916 as he fled from the Russian repressions into China<sup>76</sup>. His words are a “Farewell to the Lake Ysyk-Köl”

Holy Lake Ysyk-Köl,  
You are like a layer of the sky.  
Plastered on my palm.  
Is there anywhere a lake like you?  
Is there anywhere a word worthy of you?  
Is there any eye to see you?<sup>77</sup>

<sup>73</sup> *Uruu* [Kyrgyz] - tribe [ed.].

<sup>74</sup> *Jaiyloo* [Kyrgyz] - summer pastures [ed.].

#### BEL-KARA-SUU AND TULPAR-TASH IN THE WORLD OF THE KYRGYZ PEOPLE

##### **Aitpaev Aman**

*He was born in 1931, in the village of Sary-Bulak, Tüp raiyon. In 1943 when he was 12 years old, he began to work in the sovhoz (collective farm) “Karakol” of the Ak-Suu raiyon. Between 1946 and 1950 he attended the horticultural school and then an agricultural technicum in the town of Karakol. After graduation from the Kyrgyz Agricultural Institute in 1955, he first worked as a veterinarian for 6 years and then as the director of the sovhoz “Karakol” for 17 years. Between 1972 and 1976 he was chairman of the Kemin Regional Executive Committee. From 1976 to 1985 he worked as a veterinarian in the Dzerzhinskiy collective farm in the Ak-Suu region as the director of the complex for home animal fattening. He then served as deputy General Inspector of the oblast inspection committee. From 1986 up to the collapse of the Soviet Union, he was chairman of the farm “Kunduz”.*

*He is a candidate of agricultural sciences. For his dedication to his job and contribution in the development of the agriculture of the Kyrgyz Republic he was awarded an order of Emgek Kyzyl Tuu<sup>78</sup> by the Supreme Soviet Presidium of the Kyrgyz Republic. He is an author of the book “Köndöydün Syry”<sup>79</sup> published in 1991.*

There is a wonderful *jaiyloo* of great natural beauty, located in the eastern side of the Ysyk-Köl Lake. It is known as Bel-Kara-Suu. This *jaiyloo* is situated to the south of a small town Jyrgalan where there is a coal pile. It differs from others in that the pasture is relatively flat. It is 10 km long and 4 to 5 km wide. On the eastern side is a grey and dark blue stone called a Tulpar, which is the name for a fantastic kind of horse.

When you stand on Tulpar-Tash and look at the surrounding environment, the *jaiyloo* can be seen in its entirety as if on the palm of your hand. Lower down, the high mountains change into rocky hills and gradually turn into a plain of black clay. Because of the black clay, the water seems to be dark. That is why this *jaiyloo* is called *Bel-Kara-Suu*<sup>80</sup>. Spring waters flow from the tops of rocky glaciers throughout the summer and winter. As they move further down, they become broader and turn to ponds. Flowing down the water is heated by the sun and when it reaches the plain it is warm. This water provides excellent conditions for growing many types of plants and flowers in summer and winter. The roots of the plants feed the black spotted fish called mountain forel. In the 1940s and -50s, because of the great number of fish, adults and children made nets out of their skirts and trousers. With these nets, they were able to catch fish as big as their legs. They either made soup, or fried them and were well fed. The wetness of the area allowed plants to grow as tall as a horses' knees. When a horse rider rode along the plain of Bel-Kara-Suu, the grass was so tall that the riders' clothes became wet.

During the last few years, the *jaiyloo* has become overpopulated, the increase in the number of animals and people has resulted in the loss of much of the natural wealth of the pasture. The land has not been taken care of and the grass of the Bel-Kara-Suu plain has largely disappeared, the area is gradually turning to desert. The fish, having been over-fished have totally disappeared.

Because Bel-Kara–Suu lies at an altitude of more than 3000 metres above sea level, winter arrives in October and spring does not come before May. Winter is very cold with strong winds that blow for many days. The cold is similar to that of northern Siberia and there can be snow storms that last five days. The summer period is cool and pleasant

Since ancient times, the Kyrgyz people have loved the land and they named the places where they lived by their natural features. They knew where to spend the spring, summer, autumn and winter and they could move to the best place for each season. The people respected the land and lived according to its laws. But things changed in Soviet times.

During the war in the 1940's, 40-50 bushels of hay collected in Bel-Kara-Suu could feed 300-400 cows during winter. But later on the Soviet system introduced intensive farming and there was a great increase in animal husbandry. Whereas before about one thousand animals grazed on the pastures, the Soviet farming system increased the herds, for example the Mayak kolhoz had an estimated four and a half thousand cows, horses and other animals. The pastures began to disappear because this overexploitation of the land lasted for more than 20 years. Today the grass doesn't grow anymore and the land is exhausted. The Tulpar-Tash is one of the most interesting features of Bel-Kara-Suu. It is about 5 to 6 metres long and 6 metres high. The legend of the stone goes back to ancient times, more than a thousand years ago, the Oiyrot people [q.v.] or maybe some people of a different tribe climbed up the stone and made what looks like two saddles on it. In order to climb up onto the stone to play, they had to cut several small foot holes leading from the bottom of the rock to the saddles. Thanks to the footholes we can now climb up the stone and sit in these ancient saddles.

At full moon the young people would gather round the Tulpar-Tash stone to sing songs and chase each other round the stone. Ever since the olden days, Kyrgyz people spending their summers in the jaiyloo Bel-Kara-Suu have praised the beauty of Tulpar-Tash with the following song:

Bel-Kara-Suu, Tulpar-Tash  
Our villages are joined together.  
If you have true heart,  
Not wasting life which is so short  
Spend your life with play and laughter.

There are several ancient pictographs engraved into the stone. Petroglyphs can be found not only around the Ysyk-Köl lake but also throughout the whole Kyrgyz land. Chokan Valihanov introduced the world to Tulpar-Tash and Bel-Kara-Suu jaiyloo in his historical research in the 19th century. He was the first scientist who visited the Kyrgyz land and he lived among the people for many years. He met with the manap of the Bugu tribe Borombay<sup>81</sup> and described the life of the Kyrgyz people. The fact that Chokan Valihanov asked “Manas” story tellers, *manaschys* to recite and put the epic into writing, started a much wider interest in the Kyrgyz culture, Kyrgyz people and their land.

It was these written reflections on the beauty of the wildlife and on the lifestyles of the Kyrgyz people that awoke the interest of the government of the Russian Tsar and this in turn incited the Russian people to settle in Kyrgyz land. There is no doubt that Bel-Kara-Suu and the Tulpar-Tash *jaiyloo* is one of the most beautiful and astonishing places in the Kyrgyz lands.

<sup>75</sup> *Baatyr* [Turkic] - A hero, great or strong man [ed.].

<sup>76</sup> 1916 id the year of *Ürkün* [q.v.].

<sup>77</sup> Word for word translation. Original from *Kyrgyz poeziasynyn antologiasy*. Vol. 1, Bishkek: Soros-Kyrgyzstan, 1999, pg. 621.

<sup>78</sup> *Emgek Kyzyl Tuu Ordeni* [Kyrgyz] - The Order of the Red Flag of Labour [ed.].

<sup>79</sup> *Köndöiydün syry* [Kyrgyz] - The Secret of the land [ed.].

<sup>80</sup> *Bel-Kara-Suu* [Kyrgyz] - Belt of Black Water [ed.].

## THE ELDEST AMONG AKES IS KARGA AKE

### Asanaliiev Üsönbek

*Usönbek was born in 1932 in the village of Darkan of the Jeti-Ögüz raiyon. He graduated from the Institute of Pedagogy in Karakol in 1950 and from the Department of Kyrgyz Philology of the Kyrgyz State University, in 1956. He worked as a teacher at the Darkan secondary school (1956-1959), as a researcher in the Institute of Language and Literature of the Kyrgyz SSR Academy of Science (1959-1968). He was the chief editor of the Kyrgyz Soviet*

*Encyclopedia (1968-1971) and was senior instructor, associate professor and later chair of the Kyrgyz Language Department of Philology of the Kyrgyz National University.*

*Between 1993 and 2001 he worked in the town of Karakol at the Tynystanov Ysyk-Köl State University as an associate professor and member of the board. In 2001, he was awarded the title "Honorary Professor". Since 2001, he has been working as an Advisor to the Rector of the Kyrgyz State University, and holds the title of Professor of the Department of the Kyrgyz Language.*

*He was awarded for "Excellency in Teaching of the Kyrgyz Republic" (1985) and "Great Contribution to the Education System of the Kyrgyz Republic" (1999). He is a Doctor of Philological Sciences and a Professor. Since 2002, he is an honorary citizen for his special contribution in the country.*

*He is the author of a number of academic texts and literary works, a poet, a komuzchu<sup>82</sup>. He is a member of the Union of Writers and Journalists of the Kyrgyz Republic. He is an author of the following works: "Söz-söölöt" (1999), "Oy-oomat" (2002), "Kep-kerben" (2002), "Arzuu" (2003), "Jakshy söz – jan azygy" (2008), "Sap sanat" and other literary works. He is an author of the following translations: "Ak söz arybaiyt" (1971), "Hakas el jomoktoru" (1975), "Chygysh elderinin makal-lakaptary" (1980), "Orus el jomoktoru" and "Belorus el jomoktoru" (1987)<sup>83</sup>.*

Since Kyrgyzstan gained independence there has been a lively interest in the history of the nation and with it an interest has arisen in the akes of the Ysyk-Köl region.

Karga ake was a wise man from the Jelden, a tribe of the Bugu clan. He lived for one hundred and ten years, from 1718 to 1828 and fathered ten sons. He lived more than a century and faced the deadly attacks of the Kalmaks and Jungars. He was a man of great eloquence and he had a way with words, it is said that many of our Kyrgyz sayings were his. He could be charming and he would get straight to the point. He called for his people to be careful of their enemies. He would say: "May God save us from the Jungar's and may He save us from great troubles." and "Among the Oirot people there are mischievous men, among child-play there are games that lead to trouble". He would talk of the Kalmaks, who lived among the hills of the suffering they cause his people, of how they had caught us in a trap "The Kalmaks do not want to be your guests and be served your fresh cream, they want to take your land."

From fear of repression under the late political regime even his great-grand children were afraid of talking and writing of him. They did not tell of their great ancestors and the name of Karga Ata was almost totally forgotten.

Luckily there were some who told his tale. Thanks to Sadyk Aksakal, a famous *sanjyrachy* and the gifted elders Kurmanaaly Ata and Supataiy Ata who told Karga Ata's story and Abdylda, the teacher, Supataiy Ata's son, who put these stories on paper, we know Karga Ata's words. Later Karga Ake's wise words were repeated and respected by his contemporaries, wise men such as Sart Ake, Tilekmat Ake and Borombaiy. His sayings that taught many people and touched many hearts make him deserving of the title *ake*.

In the middle of the XVIIIth century, Kyrgyz tribes were fighting a strong enemy. These were the Jungars (*Kalmaks*) [q.v.] who, with the help of the Chinese, had moved to the west of their homeland and conquered Kyrgyz lands. The Kyrgyz people fought hard for their land and victory came at last. When the Kalmaks were at last driven out and the Kyrgyz returned to Juuku, Karga ake said to his people: "Is there any land more beautiful than Juuku? The water of Juuku tastes like cream and the fish are like butter, they melt in your mouth. This land is our paradise. Its mountains are a home for our horses. Its *syrt*<sup>84</sup> is a wonderful *Taragaiy*<sup>85</sup> without *karagaiy*<sup>86</sup>. This is a wonderful world given by our Creator. Let this be our land forever, on which we will live for generations to come, may it be their homeland which they will love, care for and protect."

Karga Ake was a just man, honored for his wisdom and foresight, he was a wise speaker, and gave good counsel. He cared for his people and wished them wealth, health and a good life. He talked of good governance "People do not need a *biiy* [q.v.] whose decisions are unjust." And he taught the Kyrgyz people that strength lies in unity "from cultivating the land comes bread but from fighting against one another, comes death", he would say "let the Kyrgyz people be united in happiness and in sorrow, this is the way to be strong as a stone". He taught "where there is an enemy there is a war and where there is no mutual respect there is disorder."

It is by his wise words that we know an *ake* and the thoughts of this wise man who experienced war, the hatred of the enemy and rivalry for wealth and power are of special value. He would talk, with pain in his heart, of the suffering of his people, of enemies' deadly attacks, of the black deeds of the Oirots and Kalmaks. "The sun that rises has now set, and there is death instead of life. I lived in a time that became old because the people lost the peace in

their hearts. The Kalmaks have expelled my people and we have no home. They are like black butterflies. When they invade, they raise black dust. We have seen the enemies' deeds and their deadly violation. Our enemies do take not pity and age is of no difference to them. A weak man is an undignified man and if an enemy is stronger than you are, you will run away and suffer. This does not pass over the head of a man".

Karga Ake prayed for his people "May the Kalmaks' *kamchy*<sup>87</sup> stay away from our land so that my people do not lose their lake". And he thanked God for hearing his prayers, that the Kalmak enemies found their bad fortune from their bad will. The lake is a gift from God but "if you are not honest, you will lose what you have". Karga Ake would say "Let us unite like stones that are pressed make a rock. Let us come together in a powerful union on this land, given to us for being happy. Life without peace and unity is not worth living. If we are separated, not united, we will be conquered and troubled. If we are not whole, we will be broken and bow before the enemy".

In the times of Karga Ake there were many *biys*, and a *biiy* [q.v.] of the whole of the Ysyk-Köl, a strong, wise and insightful man, capable of leading all the Kyrgyz people had to be chosen. The choice was difficult so Karga Ake, as the wisest of the elders was called "Let us listen to the just words of Karga Ake".

Karga Ake said, "I will share my thoughts with you. A man learns even from suffering. The dark enemies made many of us suffer and so they have taught us a lesson. The enemy can destroy a people who are not united and who are separated from each other. Although each one of us different, let us have similar aspirations. The fact that we have minor governors is our weakness. We should obey one man, the lake needs a single governor. This must be a man who has authority and is pure in his behavior, with a good heart, he must be respected by his people and make a just decision. He should treat rich and poor people equally. He must be able to unite all the tribes into one and be able to make them one people who look upon each other as kin. He must be able to foresee the future, be able to differentiate the truth from a lie, he must be just and not hypocritical, he must be a rational thinker and come from a good family. He should look like a sultan, that is he must have a handsome and attractive appearance. Let us have a sultan like that of the Kazakhs.

Let us choose our head very carefully in order not to be disappointed. If we make a mistake in choosing our head governor, then we will have made the biggest mistake and that will bring trouble on us all. He must not be egoistic, egoism is worse than fire. An egoist is revengeful and that destroys a community. People will gradually lose their friendly relationships with others. Let us choose a pure man. As far as I know, there is nobody better than Boronbaiy. I do not see anyone who could serve us better than Boronbaiy. If people agree, I think it will be right to have Boronbaiy as sultan of the lake. Let his *ordo*<sup>88</sup> be in Juuku. I have been thinking of Boronbaiy for many years"

The *biiy*'s of the lake approved Karga Ake's proposal and elected Boronbaiy as sultan.

After Boronbaiy came to power dignified Karga Ake presented him with a light grey horse and gave his blessing with the following words:

Ee, Sultan Boronbaiy!  
Strength lies in unity,  
Without it we can be easily separated,  
Having rescued us from the Kalmaks.  
You became a leader of our way,  
You became the guardian of our *jurt* (people).  
Please unite the people of different tribes. Be just.  
Don't favour the majority  
Because of its' number.  
Don't let the minority  
Become slaves of the majority.  
Do not let people overrun others,  
Do not let them use violence towards one another  
Look further, count equally.  
Do not let even one word of yours  
Not be heard,  
May your wings be never tired.  
May your heart never fear,

May your mind be always here.  
You are our roof, we are the walls,  
Sometimes we are warm,  
Sometimes are cold.  
You may know right and left,  
And keep them in your mind,  
May the land on which you walk  
Stay safe from the enemy.  
May those who want to have your land  
Not reach their aim  
Unless the snow melts  
No landslide occurs,  
Without being gathered  
No people could be.  
Unless a governor is wise,  
His people are weak.  
If a king has a bad temper,  
It means death to the people,  
It is burying oneself alive.  
If a king is mistaken,  
He will lose his people's respect,  
If his people suffer,  
They will lose their patience.  
Be fair to your close kin,  
Be just to the whole people.  
Have your wings close to wings of Kazakhs,  
Have your lessons together with lessons of Russians.  
Let the lake, not the people, raise their waves,  
May they live in peace without fear.  
Protect your people and land,  
Respond your people's hope!  
Know your people until your death,  
Take this white-grey horse  
And ride on it.

Faisulla Nogaev was a Russian spy of Tatar origin, a knowledgeable, experienced and well-educated man<sup>89</sup>. He became friends with Karga *biy*, he told him much of Russian power, he told him the Russian people were just and good and that the country was more developed than the Kyrgyz lands. His words convinced Karga Ake, who knew that the Kyrgyz people needed support. He compared what he knew of Russia from the Tatar, to what he had heard of the Kokand Kingdom and China and he decided it would be better to join with Russia. Justifying his decision he said "If we join Kokand, we will suffer humiliation, if we join China, we will suffer violation. If we join with Russia, we might be better off and live in peace". Faisulla Nogaev became Karga Ake's devoted friend. It was Faisulla who communicated with the *biys*, acted as an interpreter, who translated the information from Russian and who did much to connect the Kyrgyz to Russia.

Karga Ake worked to bring the Kyrgyz and the Russian people together, he got the approval of the *biys*. Faisulla also met with the *biys* several times. In 1824 the *biys* asked Faisulla to write a letter in their name, offering the Russian Tsar their alliance. On this historical document we can also see the signature of Karga Mendegulov.

Karga ake was known as a just and foresightful man. He said, "If only the Russians were allies not only of the lake Kyrgyz, but of all the Kyrgyz people we might then be strong. But we have no choice and, this will cause us much headache." This decision was a question of much debate and quarrel among the lake biys. Karga ake visited Boronbaiy and told him of the problems of the people and the need for alliance and it was Boronbaiy who made the

final decision. Uniting with Russia was not simple choice and it was brought with suffering. But (from the perspective of time) the decision was a wise one.

Karga *biiy* lived in difficult times, the Kalmak's invasion and the exodus of the Kyrgyz people, destroyed and separated. He lived through the Kyrgyz struggle to regain their land around the Ysyk-Köl, the defeat and then unification of his people, the difficult times of looking for allies and debates on joining forces with Russia, concern for his people's future was constantly part of Karga Ake's life.

He was a great wise thinker. His guiding principle was that of the unity of people. The fact that so much information about Karga Ake, who was born at the beginning of 18th century has reached us is testimony of his hard work with and for the people. It is his wisdom that lets us remember his words:

May no enemy stand on your path,  
May you have no troubles in your head,  
May your sons obey you,  
And your words be listened to!  
May your roof never fall in,  
And your kin cherish you,  
May your luck never be exhausted,  
Let your walls stand strong,  
And your words – not be wrong.  
May your son be given strength,  
And your daughter-in-law know shame.  
May you grow to a respected age,  
And have a happy and wealthy youth.  
May your there always be food in your house.  
May your job be successful.  
May you have lots of sheep,  
And new sheep be born to replace those you sacrifice,  
May God only give you sickness from which you can recover.  
May your sheep give you more sheep,  
And your people be added by more people.  
May your food be eaten by men of good will.  
May bad men eat only from their own dishes.

<sup>81</sup> Borombaiy Menmurat uulu (date of birth is not known – 1858) – leader and sultan of Bugu tribe; attended at the process of joining Bugu tribe to Russian Empire [ed.].

<sup>82</sup> *Komuzchu* [Kyrgyz] - player of the Kyrgyz national musical instrument the *komuz* [ed.].

<sup>83</sup> *Söz - söölöt* [Kyrgyz] - Word is value; *Oiy-oomat* [Kyrgyz] - Thought is luck; *Kep-kerben* [Kyrgyz] - Words are caravans; *Arzuu* [Kyrgyz] - Inspiration; *Jakshy söz – jan azygy* [Kyrgyz] - Good words are food for the soul; *San- sanat* [Kyrgyz] - Song lines dreams; *Ak söz arybaiyt* [Kyrgyz] - True word never disappears; *Hakas el jomoktoru* [Kyrgyz] - Hakas fairy tales; *Chygysh elderunin makal-lakaptary* [Kyrgyz] - Proverbs of eastern peoples; *Orus el jomoktoru* [Kyrgyz] - Russian fairy tales; *Belorus el homoktoru* [Kyrgyz] - Bielorussian fairy tales [ed.].

<sup>84</sup> *Syrt* [Kyrgyz] - summer pasture [ed.].

<sup>85</sup> *Taragaiy* [Kyrgyz] - the name of a place, a heavenly place [ed.].

<sup>86</sup> *Karagaiy* [Kyrgyz] - fir trees [ed.].

<sup>87</sup> *Kamchy* [Kyrgyz] - whip [ed.].

<sup>88</sup> *Ordo* [Kyrgyz] - headquarters [ed.].

<sup>89</sup> Faisulla Nogaev was indeed a secret agent of the Russian empire, who was sent by to the Ysyk-Köl region in 1853 in order to “prepare the grounds for the treaty of alliance between the Bugu clan representatives and the Russian Empire” [from [www.panasia.ru/main/194/2.html](http://www.panasia.ru/main/194/2.html) checked on 11.09.2009].

## THE LAKE THAT CLEANSSES...

### **Berejnoy Sergeiy**

*He was born in 1977. In 1999 he graduated from the Kyrgyz State Medical Academy in 1999 and worked as a head of the course for manual therapy of the Department of Oriental Medicine for five years. Between 2002 and 2003*

*he was in China where he completed the training courses for acupuncture therapy and the Tai-Chi-Chuan Oriental system. Presently he works at a private medical center.*

Since childhood, I have been trying to understand the meaning of life and the nature of man, when I was at school I composed a system for studying religions and spiritual culture of different peoples.

When I was a student of the Medical Academy, I learnt methods of acupuncture, manual therapy, massage and the Chinese Ch'i Kung system. Between 2002 and 2003, I was in the People's Republic of China and practiced acupuncture therapy. I also studied oriental Tai-Chi-Chuan fighting methods. At present, I work as a private osteopathic doctor and at the same time I use my spiritual experience and practice Chinese therapy.

I would like to tell about my spiritual experience at the miraculous lake Ysyk-Köl. It happened in July and August in 2004. I was invited to a *boz-üiy*<sup>90</sup> village organized in Tosor on the southern coast of Ysyk-Köl. This was a meeting of the Tai-Chi-Chuan Federation and I was invited as a doctor. I was eager to meet and spend time with people who strive to know themselves, to perfect their abilities and test their limits. The camp schedule lived up to my expectations. The timetable was measured and allowed for practice of Ch'i Kung as well as time for relaxation and self-enlightenment. The menu was vegetarian and I felt this helped purify my mind.

Thanks to the atmosphere, I awoke on one of these sunny august days with a sense of inner calmness and satisfaction, glad to feel my thoughts are in order. At the time, I had no idea of the inner turmoil that would break my peace later that night.

In the afternoon, I felt strangely depressed, I found it difficult to breathe and I thought maybe it was low blood pressure. I took a swim in the lake, but it didn't help. People's laughter annoyed me. I started to do the routine exercises of Tai-Chi-Chuan, which build inner harmony. Usually, when I do Ch'i Kung, I achieve the state where I see reality only as an image, I feel I can distance myself from the world. However, that day everything was different.

After the first movement called "Uniting the sky and the earth" I suddenly felt myself falling into infinite space and doubt crept onto me. I felt as if I did not really exist, as if my existence was an illusion. I suddenly felt that I was not the man I had known all my life, but I did not know who I was. This feeling caused me great anxiety and I began to cry. I wanted to share my emotions with somebody, but nobody took me seriously.

I found consolation only in the lake. I spent the evening by the shore and felt that I was sharing my feelings with the great expanse of water. Gradually I began to feel peace and calmness in my heart. The placidity that came to me from the lake surprised me a little because it seemed like a blue space opened inside me and absorbed everything. I felt a complete sense of indifference and relaxation. The very secret of being was being revealed to me, but I could not understand it thinking rationally and it was not necessary to understand. For many days, I remained indifferent to the world. Later on my feelings were explained to me. I was told that this infinite space, which had been revealed to me, was the origin of our world, and that its manifestation to me was one of the steps of my inner development.

This spiritual experience which took place on the shores of Ysyk-Köl helped me to reach new heights in the improvement of my spiritual life.

<sup>90</sup> *Boz-üiy* [Kyrgyz] lit.tr. grey house - traditional felt tents of Central Asian nomadic peoples, called yurt in Russian and English [ed.]

## SARTKALMAKS

### **Mansurov Bektur**

*He was born in 1948 in the village of Chelpek in the Ak-Suu raiyon. He graduated from the Musical College of the Chaikovsky Moscow State Conservatory, as an opera singer and voice teacher. In 1975 he worked as an opera singer in the chorus of the Opera Theatre of the Television and Radio Committee. From 1976-77 he headed the "Autoklub" of the Ysyk-Köl office of culture. He taught at the Przhhevsky State Musical College from 1977 to 1981. His career advanced as he became the executive secretary of the Ysyk-Köl Regional Society for the Protection of Heritage and History of Culture in 1981; the director of the Karakol Municipal House of Culture in 1982; the head administrator; and then the deputy director of the Jantoshev Kyrgyz Drama Theatre in 1984. He was then made the head of the department of culture of the Karakol Municipal Administration in 1991; and the deputy director of the Kyrgyz Drama Theatre also in 1991.*

*He pilgrimaged to Mecca in 2005. He is the author of the books “Insandar döölötü”<sup>91</sup>, “Ömürü örnök insandar”<sup>92</sup>. He is an honorary citizen of Chelpek village.*

In the east of Kyrgyzstan in the Ak-Suu raiyon of the Ysyk-Köl province, stand the villages of Chelpek, Tash-Kyya, Burma-Suu and Böru-Bash. They are home to an ethnic group calling themselves Sartkalmaks. The Sartkalmaks come from twelve Kyrgyz tribes and their language belongs to the Mongol group, their religion is Muslim and their traditions are Kyrgyz. According to the hypotheses of scholars K.Karasaev, A.B.Burdukov, V.V.Bartold, S.M.Abramzon, K.Bakeev, and *sanjyrachy* Sh.Egemberdiev and Sh.Osmonov the Sartkalmaks appeared as a separate ethnic group living on these lands, two to two and a half centuries ago. Between the years 1865 and 1884 the Sartkalmaks returned to the land of their ancestors in spite of difficulties and obstacles they met on their way. They returned to their historical motherland from Tekes in China and Western Mongolia. The local authorities decided to grant them the land between Karakol and the Yrdyk River.

The Sartkalmak people lived off agriculture and animal husbandry. In the spring, they pastured their animals around the Böru-Bash hill and Kara-Suu Mountain. In the summer the animals were taken to the *jaiyloo* of Kashka-Suu, Chong-Tash, Sary-Küngöiy, Kök-Tüz, Orus-Ortok, Karch-Kyya, At-Jaiyloo, Kalmak-Jon, Arpa-Tektir, Kök-Taiypak, Acha-Bulak, Zyndan. In autumn and winter months the animals were kept in the village.

In the lands of the Sartkalmaks, there were three *mazars* that are still known to us today. These are the *mazar* of Akbash-Ata located on the northern side of the village Böru-Bash, the *mazar* of Maiy-Bulak located at the base of the Karakol Mountain where the villagers of Tash-Kyya used to live and the *mazar* of Chelpek located at the edge of an ancient cemetery standing on the bank of the Chelpek River that flows around the villages of Chelpek and Burma-Suu.

When the Sartkalmaks arrived in the Ysyk-Köl lands they followed the rules of the Islamic faith. Proof of this stands in the village of Chelpek, where there is one of the greatest mosques in Kyrgyzstan, completed in 1889. It is not known exactly why they continued the tradition of worshipping *mazars*, but it seems to be a miracle that they were settled so close to these three *mazars*. Among the Sartkalmaks both the young and old visited the sacred sites, about half a century ago people crossing the river that joins the villages of Chelpek and Burma-Suu would say prayers and bless God. The villagers would remind the youth not to break branches of the *mazar* trees.

In the past 20 to 30 years due to Soviet ideology and the glorification of atheism little attention was paid to the Chelpek *mazar* and it was not spoken of. Sometimes a few people would visit the Maiy-Bulak and Akbash-Ata *mazars* and pray there. Nowadays these practices are no longer forbidden and people visit the *mazars*, the pilgrims pray for relief from their troubles, for success in business deals, they pray to God for fortune and they read the Qur'an, to give their apologies to Allah and praise God.

The tradition of worship at *mazars*, is one that has stayed with the people Kyrgyz people from the times before Islam was established. These paganist rituals preserve the need to worship nature that is for the Kyrgyz people the foundation of the spiritual experience. The difference between their ancestors and contemporary pilgrims is that the latter read the Qur'an and ask God for the protection of their ancestors spirits. Pilgrims tie votive rags to the branches of the trees at the *mazars*. These have been prohibited in Maiy-Bulak and Akbash-Ata *mazars* as it hampers the growth of the trees. I think the stories of these *mazars* Chelpek, Maiy-Bulak and Akbash are ones that should be well researched as these are places that have been visited for centuries and as places of worship have survived to see our times.

## HOW I DIED AND THEN RETURNED TO LIFE...

### **Nestereva Natalya**

*She was born in 1966 in the town of Prjevalsk (current Karakol). In 1988 she graduated from The Kirov School of Forestry in Leningrad (current Saint-Petersburg) and then from a tailoring school in 1989. Since 1992, she has been working with people as a clairvoyant and healer.*

I want to begin my story by asking the question: were any of my ancestors healers and how is it that I began to heal? Everything began in 1989 when I had an operation and I lived through clinical death and re-birth. This experience made me feel the need for change, I felt I needed to work with the way I am and with the way the world is and as they say, “If you wish to change the world you should start by changing yourself.” Four years later, I was operated on again and again

I died and was revived. The operation took place in 2003, when I was in Karelia. But because I had already experienced this before I knew what was going to happen with me and on the seventh day after the operation I asked a friend to stay with me and watch me, because I could feel that my death was to take place on that day.

And when it happened my friend felt me slipping away and quickly called the nurse. The doctors managed to revive me. After this second time I spent two years as the apprentice of Sergeiy Lazarev and his student Sasha from Ostrogor. He had natural extrasensual clairvoyance abilities and he started to direct me. He told me that I would be a healer but that my knowledge was not yet sufficient. He taught me to recognize the changes that were occurring in me and how I could use them. Thanks to his teachings I passed three levels of FEID.

FEID is “Further Energetic and Informational Development” a school opened by Vereshagin. The school has a worldwide network of teachers and practitioners. They teach how to work with energy and there is a lot of useful knowledge that can be learnt from these schools. However they manipulate their students and want them to be under their full command. As soon as we understand this, we moved away from the organization.

What do I mean by manipulation? It is turning a person into a marionette, blocking their energy, conducting negative programming and in the end completely reinventing them. In another words, it is destroying and degrading someones’ personality. A *mayatnik*<sup>93</sup> that I has had for a long time helped me to understand what was happening to me. I had been exposed to this kind of power before because in Soviet society the *mayatnik* diagnosis was widely used. It is very useful in measuring aura and the biofield status, for searching for the origin of the *köz tiyüü*<sup>94</sup> and curses. We used this method and it saved us. Afterwards it was necessary to purify all those whom we had worked with while studying at the FEID. They didn’t want to let us go. The opposition was very strong and we felt the pressure of their energy used against us. It was a real armageddon.

I heal with my hands, this way I can extract a person’s illness. I use beewax and *propolis*<sup>95</sup>. I also heal with water, I read sacred words to the water and give it to my patients to drink, each person must have a specially prepared flask. Since 1999, my relatives and I haven’t had any medication at home, even analginum or aspirin. I also work with herbs. Based on my knowledge of herbal properties, I boil juice from them and use them for healing. I apply the medicine to the sick places on soaked cloths.

I visit *mazars* when I feel the need to, but I think every person has their own energy source, a place where they get their strength from. I get power from the fir forest that is in Ak-Suu mountains. In the Tong raiyon there is a village called Kadji-Saiy and if you turn there and take the road into the mountains, you will reach a spring called a *Jeti-Chöiychök-Bulak*<sup>96</sup>. The springs do not let everybody drink from them, some people get headaches, some get to weak to walk and not everybody can reach the seventh spring. When I tried the first time I could only reach the third spring. Gradually, after several visits, I was able to drink from all the seven springs. I think there may be at least twelve springs there but I call it the seven cups spring for I know only this number. The number of springs you can drink from: this shows the level of your spiritual growth.

Each person is influenced differently by a place and everyone must find their own mazar.

<sup>93</sup> *Mayatnik* [Russian] - pendulum [ed.].

<sup>94</sup> *Köz tiyüü* [Kyrgyz] - effect of evil eye [ed.].

## THE YSYK-KÖL IS CALLED THE THIRD EYE OF THE WORLD

### **Parhuta Yuliya**

*Yuliya is 25 years old, she works in a private medical clinic where she cures spiritual and health maladies. She has had extrasensory powers since childhood and she has worked to develop her skills in parapsychology and ancient spiritual sciences. Her spiritual name is Leiy-Lu.*

I have had a unique ability to feel, with an extra-sense since I was a baby, I have always been able to see another world and its inhabitants. When I was three with the help of my supporters and teachers I started to use my abilities. Along with my teachers from this world, I also have masters who most people wouldn’t believe in. They have opened before me the secrets of great esoteric knowledge of such ancient cultures as Atlantis, Maya, and that of the druids. These help me to understand nature, life and human beings.

Ysyk-Köl is associated with a number of ancient legends and miracles. I first experienced one of these miracles when was a child, during one of my voyages into a parallel world. This phenomenon takes place once a year, exactly on October the 31st. On this day, at a certain time, the energy that comes out of the center of Ysyk-Köl joins with the energy

of the entirety of space that surrounds it. As a result a visual image appears, an aura, which has the geometrical shape of a reversed conus. It is made up of seven energetical circles of different colours. The row of colours of these energies corresponds to the colour spectrum. The circles are in the following order:

- Red, its width approximately 50cm, located approx. 1m below the surface of the water.
- Orange, width approx. 1m, located 10cm. above the surface of the water.
- Yellow, located at 1,2m above the orange circle.

The following circles, in the colour spectrum, are 1,2m above the previous ones.

This reverse lying conus finishes on the largest indigo circle. This colourful aura is in constant motion, flowing up and down and this creates energetic power. All the circles move on their diametre clockwise or anticlockwise.

This energetical phenomenon lasts up to four earthly hours. This must happen every year as it balances and harmonizes the energy of lake with the space that is around it. The importance of this energetical renewal has grown over the last few years because the lake has become more and more inhabited. If the holiness of the Ysyk-Köl is not honoured and more buildings are to be constructed, there is the danger of the development of negative and non-reversible processes. It is possible that the lake will not have sufficient power to withstand the destructive forces of modern civilization. If this happens the conus could fall back into itself and turn upwards causing an ecological catastrophe.

But returning to the phenomenon that takes place each year, if at the *moment* when the arches appear on the surface you are standing watching the lakes water, you can observe the spirits and beings of the thinner world. Inside the red, yellow and orange circles, you can see the beings of the water world. The green, blue and violet circles are connected with the beings that are live on the earth. The indigo layer relates to the beings of the universe. A person who witnesses this phenomenon undergoes a spiritual and energetical transformation and this experience is also good for a person's health.

This colourful conus is by many accepted as the energy center of the whole Ysyk-Köl province and is called the sixth chakra of the earth. The sixth chakra is also called the eye of the universe or the third eye of the planet Earth. According to the information that I receive from my cosmic teachers, the lake itself is a gate or more accurately a portal, through which energy passes into the world. The center of this energy is not in the lake itself, but on its south side, not far from the shore. There are other tales of the lake that I want to tell of.

Firstly I want to talk of my experiences with ancient celebrations that are originally connected with the cultures of Atlantis and the druids. They are not held on a fixed day because each year the date of the holy day is recalculated according to ancient esoteric methods. One of the most important holy days is "The Beginning of all the Beginnings" of the druid tradition. With it the four elements; earth, water, fire and air are united.

In the year 2007, the date of the holy day was June the 25th. I celebrated this holy day with my friends on the shore of the lake, our celebration took 12 hours from noon to midnight. First we had to find a special place where nobody would disturb us and where we could do the celebration rituals. These were a series of movements related to earth, air, water and fire in which strict discipline is necessary. A steady rhythm of breathing and loud chanting of special words helped us join with the air. The fact that we were barefoot helped us to join with the earth. The connection with the two great elements allowed us to open the blockages that held our bodies. Performing ritualized movements in the water of the lake reminded us of some forms of Chinese Tsi-Gun; they helped us relax in the water. When the night came, we built an energetical circle of colourful candles in it we built a fire, talked and ate together.

Without going into further detail I want to describe the kind of understanding we experienced and our emotions. At the end of our holy day, we confronted our hidden fears, angers, offenses and disappointments. One of us had experienced a disappointment that he could not forget and overcome. As a result he could not find his way on the spiritual path and could not advance further. Disappointment comes to everyone, because we all expect miracles but they don't always come and this can make us depressed.

I also faced my hidden resentments and remembering my past sufferings was not pleasant. And through the night our conversation turned very unfriendly. We dragged out each others wrongs and all our reproaches. In the beginning we felt that we had done something wrong and that we had somehow spoiled the holy day. Only later, the true meaning of our meeting was revealed to us. We saw that the holy day, the activities and later the arguments by the fire brought out our qualities that we have to work on in order to improve ourselves. Everything we talked of, was what we have to change. Thanks to the power of the elements we may avoid false qualities that are used in society. I think that

the more masks people wear to fit into the social norm, the more they feel the need to protect themselves. They often feel fright, anger or aggression. However, in order to move forward it is necessary to face these “inner demons”, the druids considered this spiritual progress important and that is why their many holidays focus on the change of a person’s inner world, of their consciousness. This kind of experience is very difficult but this event influenced my life significantly.

<sup>95</sup> *Propolis* [Latin] - bee glue [ed.].

<sup>96</sup> *Jeti-Chöiychök-Bulak* [Kyrgyz] - seven cups spring [ed.]

## THE JOURNEY THROUGH THE UNIVERSE STARTS AT MAZARS

### **Sarmanbetov Aiydarbek**

*He was born in 1953 in the village of Kara-Oiy previously called Dolinka in the Ysyk-Köl raiyon. He is a Journalism graduate of the Kyrgyz State University. He is the author of the following books: “Kymcha Bel”(1991) and “Jükö Balban”(2007). His works has been translated into Russian, Kazakh and Turkmen and were included in the Turkmen anthology “Ala-Too güldöru”<sup>97</sup>.*

*At present he is executive secretary of the Kyrgyz National Journalists Union and deputy editor of the newspaper “Kyrgyz Adabiyaty” [Kyrgyz literature].*

All around the world in whatever direction you go you will find sacred sites. These are places where there is an accumulation of power that flows around the universe. Among these places of mysterious concentration of power are the Shambala, the Bermuda Triangle, the pyramids of Egypt whose builders are unknown, the Mayan ruins in America, the Aztec pyramids, Stonehenge in Southampton and there are many others.

Everywhere in our land there are sacred *mazars*. We also have our own *mazar* in the village of Kara-Oiy in the Ysyk-Köl raiyon. This mysterious power is concentrated in the Kara-Oiy mazar that is situated at the foot of the hills amongst a thicket of trees. The *mazar* is well known not only by the people of our village, but by people from the whole raiyon and oblast. Pilgrims come from all over Kyrgyzstan, from remote places such as Naryn and even from the south of the country, foreigners know of it as well. However it is mostly elder people who visit of this *mazar*. The youth, as yet, are not very interested in these sites.

### **Remnants of ancient times**

Once, when I was visiting my uncle who lives in Kara-Oiy, I went to Cholpon-Ata, which is not far from the village. For many years, I had dreamt of visiting the Cholpon-Ata *Saimaluu-Tash*<sup>98</sup> historical site and at last I managed to visit it with my brother Jeenbaiy and my son Nurdamir. I was so astonished to see the sacred symbols and pictures engraved thousands of years ago on stones of different sizes that are spread over the foot of the hills located to the northeastern part of the town. These are miraculous pictures, images carved onto stones by the hands of men in ancient times, perhaps in the Stone Age. The stones and signs have been placed in circles and specially placed to create a concentration of power.

Our guide, a Russian who spoke perfect Kyrgyz told us of his research: “Having investigated the stones which that have been placed in rows and after studying them, I came to a conclusion that they may be an ancient observatory, perhaps a sun-moon calendar. Consider that this was built thousands years ago! This pattern may have been made by the Usuns, the Scythians or by some other unknown civilizations or tribes. People observed the movement of stars and planets in different seasons and they recorded their observations by specific placement of the stones. Reading the stones, people knew when to move from one place to another, they knew when to go hunting and begin the harvest. They may even have been predicting the weather. People long ago performed their sacrificial rituals within these stone circles. But my most important discovery is that there is energy, an intensity of force, concentrated inside the circles of stones”. When our guide was speaking he held a electronic device in his hands, this device measured the energy levels. At the time of our conversation the indicator was moving rapidly up and down the scale, indicating a powerful source of energy nearby. This interpretation is supported by archeological discoveries. How did people long ago know of the powerful energy inside these circles and how they use them?

If only I had the knowledge to investigate this mystery! Why don’t our scientists research these fantastic secrets! said our guide. Together we studied the stones for many hours and did not want to leave this place of stones.

### **A sudden discovery!**

Wandering among the stones that are spread around and placed in spiral rows one can see engraved pictures of *teke*<sup>99</sup> with large vertical horns and hunters with bows and arrows. There are pictures of deer with horns that grow like trees symbolizing life and men with lions and tigers, these kind of petroglyphs cannot be seen anywhere but in Egypt, symbols of cosmic circles, unknown stars, ornaments and contemporary “art” signed “Tanya” or “Kolya”. Making my way through the stones I suddenly found myself not far from the town at the foot of the Opol Mountain that was just like Karool-Choku in Talas. I was standing opposite the Kara-Oiy *mazar*! This was a great discovery for me, because I realised that the stones are a strong energy source, the sacred Opol-Too<sup>100</sup> and the mysterious *mazar* – all these three sites are equally secret and of great importance and they are located very close to one another. This could not be chance, there must be some connection between them. People in ancient times knew about this but we modern people, who imagine ourselves the masters of the universe, do not know!

We have separated ourselves from natural wonders and have lost the secret keys to understanding them. It should be obvious to us, that *mazars* stand together and that these are natural places, sometimes as small as a camel’s eye, sometimes a warm spring, a small hill beside a group of sour apple trees. These powerful energy sources are together and they have healing effects on their visitors. Energy is the key to the *mazar*’s miracle!

After I had made this great discovery I decided to walk around the Opol-Too in the direction of the *mazar*.

### **Where is abundance hidden?**

Already from a distance, I could see several people standing at the edges of the *mazar*. I wondered who it might be at such a late hour, but I also knew this was proof that people have not forgotten their *mazar*! The familiar sight of pilgrims was pleasant to see, I was happy and quickened my pace. I reached the site very quickly.

Two men, one young with large black moustaches and the other about fifty years old were finishing setting up their tent under a broad tree that had votive rags tied to its branches. A large lady was cleaning the intestines of a sacrificed sheep and a younger slim woman was making a fire and preparing tea.

I drank tea with them and after a few cups a curious conversation started. They told me, “We are from Cholpon-Ata. We came here today to pray to God to give us a child. Four years have passed and my daughter-in-law cannot bear a child.

I remembered Mamajan’s words to “give good blessings” and I blessed them as follows, “May the *mazar* help you and may your prayers be heard”. They thanked me and feeling time was short I asked them the question that was bothering me “I am a journalist who is interested in the miracles of nature. Could you please tell me, do you really believe in the power of the *mazar*...?”

“How could we not believe?” The man replied “We lived it ourselves. My wife experienced the power of this *mazar*, Many years ago, my wife could not bear a child and only after visiting this Mazar, she bore three sons and two daughters. How could we not believe after that? There are a lot of people like us.”

“Was there any other sign? Did you notice any other special things?” I asked

The man replied, “No, we haven’t noticed any” but his wife broke in and admitted slightly ashamed, “I would become sweaty during the nights. On the third night, I had a dream that I was nursing my child. My father-in-law, hearing of this from my mother-in-law, said, “Ah! God has gifted us! If He wills it to be, you will have a child. Then my husband took us home and organized *tülöö* [q.v.]. Within a year, we had a son.”

Yes and he started to tell me other people’s tales that he had seen or heard of. He soon noticed that my attention was being drawn away from the conversation and that I was frequently looking over at an old man and young women who were doing something not far from us and he said, “They come from the village of Chong-Örükto. They have had many troubles and incidents, which is why they are come to say the Qur’an, to pray to God and plead with the spirits to save from their troubles.”

I decided not to approach these people, sometimes it is not good to be inquisitive of other peoples troubles. But I knew that I would visit this place again. When I was a child an old man, called the mysterious Mamajan lived here, but now there was no sign of what was once his small *tepe*<sup>101</sup>. Time has destroyed and changed everything. Only the sour apples trees, whose fruits still made my teeth ache were still there. It seems the trees didn’t get any bigger or any smaller, they were the same as I remembered from my childhood. To the north of the thicket of apple trees I could still

hear the quiet melody of the warm spring; the water trickles out without stopping from underneath fine sand. I said the words our fathers had taught us for centuries “byssmylda”<sup>102</sup>, then washed my face three times, scooped some water into my hands and slowly swallowed it. The water was bitter. As in my childhood, it was warm and made my head turn slightly. The smell and taste was familiar. It also had not changed. Only I was now sixty, no longer young and I felt that with my mature perspective I could now understand the power of the *mazars*. I felt that only at that moment had I become sure of my strong belief in the sacredness of these places.

### **The journey through the universe starts at mazars**

Since that day of realisation, the sacred *mazars* in Kara-Oiy, Opol-Too, Saiymaluu-Tash have not left my mind. These are places that are sacred and powerful sources of energy, they are located on earth but are in cohesion with the entire Universe. It seems the energy and the power of faith that comes from human beings can unite and influence each other, this is where the power of the pilgrimage comes from. It is important to come to these places with good thoughts and to ask for good wishes, because this force can see the good and bad sides of a person and sometimes satisfy prayers, but also sometimes destroy them.

This force has been spoken of in many ancient philosophies and sciences, those of India, China and the Native American peoples. These ancient theories are also found in our numerous Kyrgyz epic tales, in legends of Tibet, Australia and Africa. All of them recognize and worship the greatness of Nature, of the Universe and its incomparable power.

We have lost the power to see many of the miracles of nature, we do not pay enough attention to them and they have been lost to our memories. It appears that ancient people who lived side by side with nature knew the secrets of the universe and felt they belonged to it, as one of its branches. We people of modern times, complain so much of civilization, globalization, technology, but we have alienated ourselves from nature, moreover by distancing ourselves we have been unretrievably lost this connection and now we are destroying nature.

But *mazars* are still very important for people and it is necessary to keep this belief strong, we shouldn't look on them as remnants of past religious traditions of shamanism or ancient mysticism but they should be considered as part of a broader, universal frame of faith. The time has come for this perspective because the XXIst century man has completely separated himself from nature, has been deprived himself of stability and has lost his way. Nature does not forgive this. Every man should treat his motherland, the place where he was born and grew up, as his sacred *mazar* and he should love and cherish it. His duty is to protect it and to care for it. This is because each man is a part of the land where he was born and is connected with as if by an umbilical cord. And love for your country and caring for the land starts from these sacred *mazars* and springs. The idea of worshipping *mazars* is a part of our immeasurable heritage, passed down to us through the ages by our ancestors and is the foundation of our love for the motherland. This is the key to our national ideology!

There are a lot of sacred *mazars* spread throughout our land, located at the edge of villages or standing forgotten in the mountains. The most powerful sacred sites are Karool-Choku, Tashrabat, Jety-Ögüz, Opol-Too, Ysyk-Ata, Song-Köl, Chatyr-Köl, the walnut forest of Arslanbob, the Batken natural apricot gardens, the gold deposits of Kumtor and Makmal are also sources of powerful energy. Their powerful sacred properties flow like rivers from different places and join with great energy in places like the great Ysyk-Köl, Sulaiyman-Too and Ala-Too. All this energy knots together, mingles with the power of the universe, and can pass through a person when they find themselves in a certain place, take their wishes to the sky, give them energy and make them unable to ignore the needs of their motherland and care for their land until the end of their days.

Incomparable and irreplaceable love for the motherland lies, I believe, in the respect for the sacred sites! If we knew them better and cared for them, they could be even more powerful and they could influence us with the power to love and open the way to high power. I also believe that if the doors to great power of the universe are at sacred *mazars* then historical monuments are doors to remembrance and they bring us close to the spirits of our great ancestors.

### **Surprising history**

I have already mentioned the fact that the field of Saimaluu-Tash, between Cholpon-Ata and Kara-Oiy, that spreads from the glaciers up to the foot of Opol-Too is a great historical monument, revealing our ancestors' secrets

and surprising history is not being thoroughly researched. I find it disappointing that not only simple people but also scientists have not reached an understanding of the importance of our ancient history. It was only ten years ago the field was given a name: “The Cholpon-Ata Open-Air Archeological and Historical museum.”

If a person is not interested, he can neither understand nor truly evaluate these sacred sites at which people worshipped and these stone “galleries” engraved some several thousands of years ago. He will look at the field and see only an accumulation of black stones.

The Ysyk-Köl region was first inhabited by people in Paleolithic era, 300 thousand years ago. This is stated by historians e.g. Vladimir Ploskih in his work “*Kirgizi i ih predki. Vzglyad vne istorii*” [Kyrgyz people and their ancestors. View beyond of history - ed.] published in Bishkek in 1994 and 1999, and in “*Suverennyi Kirgizstan – polojenie i problemy obshestva*” [Independent Kyrgyzstan - positions and problems of society - ed.] Bishkek 1999. It is thought that the oldest historical monument is Salamat-Bulak situated on the southwestern side of the lake. An archeological discovery of stone tools was made there, it is now in a museum. There were also stone artifacts of the Mustier<sup>103</sup> epoch found in the Bosteri valleys.

The Cholpon-Ata picture gallery is thought to have been created by Andron tribes (about 2000 B.C.E.). The Scythian tribes continued it and they had a specific and wonderful style of engraving animals. The last artists were the Turkic people who wandered the Ysyk-Köl in 6th to 9th centuries C.E. Among the engraved pictures, some more than four thousand years old, there are also stones standing vertically or horizontally placed in “miraculous” circles. Archeologists suppose that people in ancient times used these places located on the western part of Cholpon-Ata, as religious sites for performing rituals. These sites show that they worshiped animal totems, the sky and fire. They further suggest that the stones, big and small, placed in circles, were used as an observatory for studying the movement of planets in the sky. The engravements on some of the stones are said to be ancient natural phenomenon. It is said that the stones have an abnormal geomagnetic earth and energy concentration and that is why they served this sacred function for tribes and families. French researches who visited the site, told me they could imagine our half-naked ancestors, sitting around the fire, having long talks about the wonders of the universe, maybe praying to Kökö–Tengir to save them from hunger and war. Or maybe they would be praying for a rich harvest and fruitful hunting, dancing around the fire, making sacrifices to the sky and fire, performing different rituals in the day and in the night.

The history of those times was engraved on those stones. However they have not been properly explored yet.

### **Cholpon-Ata or Egypt?!**

The most incredible and valuable feature of the stone pictures is that we can see that the makers had the knowledge and technology necessary to make the surface of stones round and the edges exact, and to engrave the images of the animals, for example in the style of the Scythian-Saka. These look so realistic and are real masterpieces. Some of pictures are more than one metre large which is rare for artifacts such as this.

Among the pictures of hundreds perhaps thousands of mountain goats, the sun or stars with sprayed rays, miraculous circles perhaps orbits of planets, the earth or the moon are men on horseback or on foot, deer with horns symbolizing the tree of life and hunting dogs. Also there is a central petroglyph that is of incomparably value as a historical monument. There is no known picture in the world like it.

This is a picture of very large mountain goats, maybe the animals themselves were also miraculous, they have been engraved in the Scythian animal style and they are depicted in a row, running one after the other. The motion is impressive! Facing them on the other side, beside the human figures of hunters, there are leopards. The world does not know of any other fact like this when leopards were trained to be used in hunting wild goats! It is known that only in Ancient Egypt they were trained to hunt gazelles.

Moreover, there are also pictures with leopards moving in different directions are engraved on stones. They are also found in the “Cholpon-Ata museum under the sky”. There are no other known petroglyphs like this in the world. Is it possible that our ancestors living in the Ysyk-Köl area had contact with the people of Ancient Egypt? Perhaps they traded and the living here people gave them very rare, did our ancestors also train leopards or did we learn this from the Egyptian people? Was it a gift from the pharaohs or maybe leopards lived in our lands in ancient times? Otherwise, how would it be possible for them to be engraved on the stones? This is a point for scientists’ investigation, perhaps a theme for your doctorate research.

### **The threads of the Silk Road**

The stone pictures do not depict half-naked people, frightened of sudden dangers that may come from the sky and earth, suffering from natural disasters and scared that they will become food for wild animals. They do not show wars, when the arrows of other tribes threatened them. *Mazars* seem to have served a different purpose of satisfying one's ambitions and demonstrating hopes. But they also show much more, they represent a great faith in the miraculous wonders of the universe. The everyday life of the people, tales of greatness and wishes for prosperity are here. The stone pictures present the complexity of history, this is chronology written and passed down to us by our ancestors!

At the *mazar* located next to the mountains, there is a stone with a petroglyph of a man hunting a goat. Another picture shows archers hunting beside trained leopards. 2800 to 1500 years ago the Silk Road passed along the shore of the Ysyk-Köl. Reminders of this can be found on the stones of Kara-Oiy, Chong-Koiy-Suu and Chok-Tal, there are engravings of caravans on their way to and from India, China and as far as Byzantine and Rome. These allow us to assume that people of ancient times inhabiting the Ysyk-Köl, had close trade relations with the great civilizations of the ancient world. Further proof of this can be found in on the stones, where there are engravings in Tibetan, Syrian, Arabic and other languages enscripted on the stones located in the foot of the mountains in front of villages of Chong-Ak-Suu, Chong-Sary-Oiy, Kara-Oiy, Toru-Aiygyr, Bosteri that are on the shore of the Ysyk-Köl lake. There have long been sacred places, cities in which the arts and culture thrived and tribes that have united and fought together in the Ysyk-Köl valleys.

### **Stories left in deserts**

In the village of Kara-Oiy, situated near the northern shore of Ysyk-Köl close to the *mazar* and the stone pictures there is a limitless number of ancient sacred sites and memorials. Even now in front of villages of Korumdu, Bosteri, Kara-Oiy, Dolonotu, Koiy-Suu, Temir, Toru-Aiygyr there are *korgons*<sup>104</sup> that are 10m high and 60 to 100m wide. Their secrets have yet to be discovered. There are the treasures of the Scythians that were discovered in 1954 among the findings of the bronze age, valuebles buried in the III and II centuries B.C. These are known as the Kamenka and Kyrchyn treasures and they can be seen in "History Museum" in Moscow and the "State Hermitage Museum" in Saint Petersburg.

1400 to 800 years ago groups of Turkic language speakers took the place of the Scythian and Usun tribes. What is now the territory of Kyrgyzstan used to belong to the Turkic *khaganate*<sup>105</sup>. Petroglyphs, balbal stones, *korgons* located around the villages of Sögötu, Kara-Oiy, Temir, Semenovka, and Cholpon-Ata are proof of this.

From the 6th to 12th centuries along with the development of the trade routes larger cities and inhabited settlements appeared here. The ruins can be seen to this day, there are the remnants of Baiysoorun, a village of Karool-Dö bö, with four houses and the city walls still visible. The city of Karashaar was great in its day and today amongst the ruins one can see the city's complicated irrigation system and baths. This was a city that prospered, here tradesmanship and artistic metallurgy developed. Chingiz Khan destroyed the city in the 13th century. The citizens, hearing of the terrors of the Mongolian invasion ran away into the mountains

According to one of legends there are treasures of Chingiz Khan hidden on one of the islands of the Ysyk-Köl. Two years ago a group of scientists from America, interested in this legend, started the search for these treasures and I heard they found some confirmation of the historical tales.

It is true that there are cities under the water of Ysyk-Köl. Already the historians Ibn-Arab-Shah, Myrza Haiydar and others from the XIXth century write of these medieval remnants. The towns drowned in the lake are found on the opposite side of Koiy-Suu, Kara-Oiy, Cholpon-Ata, Toru-Aiygyr, Tüp, Barskoon, Balykchy. There is a fortress standing in the middle of the lake that is of special interest, Arab-Shah wrote that it was built by Aksak Temir<sup>106</sup>. Mohammed Myrza-Haidar wrote of the fortress of Hakberdi Bekichek in which he hid his family from his enemies, on the island near Koiy-Suu. Later, he writes, this island was joined to the big land. There many such discoveries, histories and legends that scientists have not yet investigated.

I think the conclusion of my story is that people have to have respect towards these sacred places that have been the witnesses of so much of history of nature's wonders and people's doings.

### **The tears of sacred sites**

This field of painted stones that lies between Cholpon-Ata and Kara-Oiy is just one of the pages written by history at the Ysyk-Köl on the ancient sacred *mazars*, stones and sand. There is more history still on the stones that are

hidden under the waves or spread over the mountains and valleys. Kyrgyz history and secrets are can be found close to *mazars* and clearly written on stone. It is not possible to tell in a few words or in one article the entire ancient spiritual and historical heritage left unprotected under the sky, lying in different places. The problem that this history, having survived thousands of hard years is now being ignored by the state. The stones do not receive necessary care and protection. The sacred sites are suffering the same fate. They are protected only by the work of some local patriots. Some of the stones and petroglyphs have been stolen and then sold. Will they ever return to their people? How many of these sites have yet to be discovered? And how many of them are in danger of disappearing forever because we have not taken the care to discover and protect them?

<sup>97</sup> *Kymcha Bel* [Kyrgyz] -beautiful waist; *Jiikö Balban* [Kyrgyz] - Hero Jükö; *Ala-Too güldöru* [Kyrgyz] - flowers of Ala-Too [ed.].

<sup>98</sup> *Saimaluu-Tash* [Kyrgyz] - lit.tr. embroiedered stone [ed.].

<sup>99</sup> *Teke* [Kyrgyz] - mountain goat [ed.].

<sup>100</sup> *Opol-Too* [Kyrgyz] - great mountain [ed.].

<sup>101</sup> *Tepe* [Kyrgyz] - shelter [ed.].

<sup>102</sup> *Byssmylda* is the Kyrgyz pronounciation of the Arabic “Bismillah” which means “In the name of God” [ed.].

<sup>103</sup> The Mustier epoch is the third part of the Paleolithic era.[ed.]

<sup>104</sup> *Korgon* [Kyrgyz] - in the Kyrgyz language the word *korgon* is used for the ruins of sites such as cemeteries, cemetery walls, but also for the ruins of fortresses and moats [ed.].

<sup>105</sup> *Khaganate* [Turkic] - kingdom [ed.].

<sup>106</sup> Aksak Temir [Kyrgyz] - meaning the lame Temir. The ruler of the Chagataiy turks, lived 1336-1405 and founder of the Timurind empire and dynasty, commonly known as Tamerlane which is derived from the Persian Temir-i-lang which means Temir the lame. [ed.]

## HORNESS – THE SACRED POWER OF THE YSYK-KÖL

### **Seiydahmatova Chynara**

*Chynara was born in 1955 in Tiüp village of the Ysyk-Köl oblast. She is a graduate of the Department of Economics at Kyrgyz National State University (1977). Presently she works as an executive director of the civic organization “Congress of Business Associations”.*

I have inherited the traditions of my family and a trait that was particularly strong on my father’s side, that is I am a captive of logic. I am a very rational and analytical person. I was brought up far from superstitions, from our religious practices and I did not see any sense in Kyrgyz traditions. I had a rigid and intolerant reaction to all of these “old wives tales” (as they seemed to me then) that was intensified by my city upbringing and by Soviet education.

I was lucky to have a wonderful *taene*<sup>107</sup> who would drum all kinds of unexplainable taboos into me such as “don’t pull your feet”, “don’t sweep the floor after sunset”, “don’t jump over a stream in the wrong places”, “don’t shake water off your hands”, “don’t throw out hair and nail clips in the wrong place” and thousands of the like. My grandmother did not have any logical answers to all of my “whys?” she only affectionately persuaded me not to do because otherwise bad things may happen “*jaman bolot*”<sup>108</sup> she would say and there were no other explanations.

*Taiylarym* my maternal relatives were different from my father’s side of the family. They had great faith in superstitions, rituals and traditions, especially in their dreams. Their belief was so strong that it also influenced me. For some reason since my childhood I have believed in dreams. The first confirmation of this belief was after a dream I had when I was 25 years old. On the day and in the hour when my *chong ata*<sup>109</sup> was dying, I dreamt that one of my molar teeth fell out. Because I knew that this kind of dream signified the death of a close relative, I felt that something could happen to my grandfather. When I woke up I sat down to write a him a letter, in which I asked him to wait for me to come back home for the summer holidays because I was far away studying in Leningrad. Later, according to my relatives in Kürmöntü, our home village, it turned out that as I was writing my grandfather a letter at that time that he was dying. Then, in my youth, I did not draw any significance to this occurrence and simply accepted it as a coincidence. The fact that I myself interpreted the dream and that I felt that I knew of my grandfather’s death was something I would not admit to myself. For another 17 years, I remained a militant rationalist who ridiculed superstition and esoteric knowledge.

It is probably because of my “stubbornness” and persistant belief in logic that the process of my spiritual awakening was very difficult and led to an emotional crisis that I experienced when I was arrested and jailed for 40

days. There was no juridical foundation for my arrest but never the less it happened. At the time I would never have associated it with any spiritual reasons.

On, I think, the 20th day of my arrest, in November, I had a dream. In my dream I saw my deceased mother who comforted me and reassured me saying, “Don’t worry; you will leave this place on the 6th of December and you will celebrate New Year’s at home.” After I awoke I did not believe my dream, and did not draw any significance to it. But I was released from prison on the 6th of December. I am sure that even this would not have impressed me if not another event that had happened to me six months before in February of the same year.

It was the time when my business was still flourishing, I went by chance, as a companion, at a friend’s request, to a clairvoyant, because he didn’t want to go there by himself. He was asking about a burglary that had occurred at his office. The lady drew out his office plan and told him exactly what had been stolen from the office and by whom. Out of curiosity I asked to have my fortune told. I was taken aback by how accurately the lady described all of my past and current events but I laughed when she told me that by the end of the year I would be jailed and that I would be released by the New Year.

According to the laws of logic, the civil code and our relationship with our business partners that was all very clearly defined by the civil code, it was completely impossible for me to fall a victim of the criminal law. The prediction of the clairvoyant made me laugh and very soon I forgot about this visit. But I remembered it on the day when I was released from jail, on the 6th of December, after my prophetic dream saying that I would spend the New Year at home. The phrase repeated both by mother in my dream and by the clairvoyant “You will celebrate the New Year at home” did not give me peace for a long time. From this moment on, my search began, though I had yet no understanding of what I was searching for.

In the year 1999, I began to read a lot of religious and spiritual literature until I began to understand the difference between Religion and the True Spirit. All through my spiritual transformation and my realization of God and of the Spirit as a being of energy or in other words as information collected in a Unified Area, I was assisted by my grandmothers’ tales. I would try to interpret these quaint prohibitions. I told myself; if clairvoyants and prophetic dreams exist then there should be some logical explanation to it. But logic is hard to find in holy books, they must be accepted by faith, without analysis, like dogma, without thinking. It is exactly for the reason that supernatural phenomena are difficult to explain that they have been rejected and there are so many taboos in the holy scriptures that prohibit clairvoyance and prophecies. For this reason women who had prophetic gifts (it appears that women have these kind of gifts more often than men) were burned in fires by the leaders of all religions, at all times and everywhere. Religions forbid “these phenomena” to this day. Very rarely does one meet a Kyrgyz who simultaneously believes in God and in *közü achyk*<sup>110</sup>. For those that do believe in both, nothing can deprive them of the possibility and the ability to live in two parallel worlds.

An ordinary Kyrgyz who is not, so to say, spiritually advanced does not know that he lives in two worlds, but he does. If he honours the spirit of the ancestors and their traditions at least in some things, he knows on what day of the week spiritual energy is closest to the earth (that is why there is *jyt chygaruu* [q.v.] on Thursdays), he peacefully accepts *albarsty* [q.v.] and perceives his own dreams as the continuation of reality or its forewarning. Almost all Kyrgyz people have at least once in their lives visited a *mazar* and feel the world of the parallel energies.

I also had to go to *mazars* a lot before I experienced a vision in Manjyly- Ata at the Bugu Ene *mazar*. There I saw the same deer that I had been seeing in my dreams only this time she was female in appearance. I recognized the doe by her penetrating glance only this time she was real and she beckoned to me just as she did in my dream. At the *mazars* all kinds of wonderful things happen that are hard to believe. For example, once in Talas, at the Chat *mazar*, a big star kept moving towards our group, as if almost insisting on some communication and then would suddenly withdraw into the sky if one of the women in our group got frightened. But as soon as I called it back, it would come closer. I still cannot explain this extraordinary seeing, but I have learned to accept phenomena that are hard to explain.

It took me a long time to understand the existence of energies and the relation between energy and every thing and being, like the energy of the Cosmos, of human beings, water and stone. I understood why my grandmother used to say “*jany bar*”: everything has a soul. I understand why during earthquakes she would forbid us to get up, she didn’t let us panic and told us not to be scared. Perhaps she knew that the energy of a person’s fear and panic could strengthen the earthquake.

Today rational knowledge has advanced so much that it seems easy to explain many things, though not everything yet. Geophysicists can explain the influence of different places on people's state of health by differences of the magnetic field: that is to say the differences of tectonic layering of the earth which causes the difference in the magnetic power, or simply, the earth's energy. Kyrgyzstan, especially Ysyk-Köl and other places where Kyrgyz people dwell, like Altai, are most probably very interesting from this point of view, but unfortunately they are not well researched by geophysicists. Ysyk-Köl undoubtedly possesses a great force of attraction and had Feminine Beginnings which have been in slumber until recently.

In 2003 on a business trip to Ysyk-Köl I suddenly felt a very strong, physical shock as soon as we entered the place from which the lake was visible. When I saw it, my heart hurt and I was frightened of this pain. I became very sad that I live so far from this place and that I don't come to visit very often. I started to feel very nostalgic as if I had lived here before and had had to leave my native land. But even my father, after he was 16 years old, had not lived at Ysyk-Köl, much less me. I had lived at my grandfathers' house in Kurmöntu in the summers, but only for about a month every year, and that was only during school years. I have never been a sentimental person but at that moment tears came to my eyes even though I did not understand what was happening to me.

That night in my dream I saw a doe. Her gaze was human, penetrating and froze the blood in my veins, but at the same time it was inviting. When she left, the doe kept looking back, calling me to follow her. I need to point out that I see dreams very rarely, not more than once in six months. Usually I know what they mean. This time I did not interpret the dream but I felt a slight anxiety from the feeling that my sub-consciousness did not want to accept something. At the time, I had not yet started to understand genealogy and did not pay attention to it. So this vision did not carry any meaning to me.

My father and mother are both Kyrgyz from the Bugu tribe, a fact that I learned only four years ago. Only now have I understood what this means and only now I understand the importance of the Bugu legend that I heard from my grandmother. When I turned eighteen years old, she started a serious conversation with me. She forewarned me by admonishing me not to laugh and to believe in everything she would tell me. After that she told me a legend about her great-grandmother who had little horns on her head which were 3-4 centimetres long. My grandmother herself touched those horns when she was a little girl. She was six years old and she was helping her old great-grandmother to wash her head. Having horns was a family secret of which it was inappropriate to talk aloud. No grown-up relative was ever shown the horns. The honorary right to serve the horned grandmother was given to the eldest granddaughter or great-granddaughter. The presence of horned grandmothers in the the family meant that the women in the family were gifted with a special talent and had special abilities and wisdom. People from this line should serve their people and in return for the service receive a continuation of the blessed talent "*kasietin kötörüp, kyzmat kylysh kerek*"<sup>111</sup>. They must work for others, otherwise they would not be able to stand the abundance of energy and it will crush them. The reason my grandmother trusted me with the family secret was because I was the eldest among the girls in my generation and I had to learn to serve my people and I had to reconcile myself with my destiny. She also said that if any of my daughters or granddaughters or great-granddaughters would have horns I should not be afraid. At the time I did not laugh only because I loved my taiene and her moving faith in her own tales. Until recently this legend remained a fairytale to me.

My understanding is that the leading peculiarity of the Ysyk-Köl territory is the "hornness" and how it affects generations and tribes that have existed in the lake area from ancient times. It is important to mention that hornness or *müüyüzdüü kasiet*<sup>112</sup> is a wide spread phenomenon at Ysyk-Köl. Usually I ask all the women I know from the Bugu tribe about this sign. They all know about this legend, but not all that many had it happen in their clan. In other words this hornness is not just an exceptional quality that gives one power it is also an obligation of service for the people. At the Ysyk-Köl the hornness is synonymous with wisdom and service. It is the responsibility of a wise person is to lead the way and to show people the meaning of wisdom.

Horns as a sign of wisdom are present not only in our culture. For example there is an anthropomorphic legend in Greek mythology where man originates from a goat and inherits goat's wisdom. I don't want either to simplify or accept these legends unconditionally but I want to show that hornness has been part of our mythology for centuries. There are ancient rock drawings that depict humans with horns or "antennas" on their heads. If we interpret these drawings as symbols we can suppose some kind of a "Feminine Beginning". Maybe we can see what women looked like long ago, the "Feminine Beginning". It is possible that it women had horns or maybe we should call them

extensions that allowed for the development of wisdom or a spiritual mind, or maybe the divine intellect. I think that our women had exactly these kinds of appendages for receiving the information from above. There is logic in that hornness and service are womanly qualities and a woman's obligations. Maybe that is the reason why *elechek*<sup>113</sup> is important headwear because it hid the secret of a Kyrgyz woman.

In 2002 the clairvoyant Damira Ömürbekova was given instructions by the higher powers whom she had contact with to take the *elechek* to Mecca and to sanctify it there. Of course, on a global level, our *elechek* did not need Mecca (maybe Mecca needed it) but because Damira is a strong practitioner of the Islamic faith, maybe in this way she was being made to think about the significance of *elechek*. She spoke of how some representatives of African tribes ran to her and kissed the edge of her dress and expressed deep reverence while continually pointing to the *elechek*. Even now she recalls it with surprise, not understanding what could have caused such amazement and delight.

Gradually I grew to understand that the most important question of my life was about the meaning, the place, the role and the responsibility of the creative "Feminine Beginning", and especially of the Kyrgyz woman. This question arose as a result of analyzing information that comes from the Kyrgyz sources of the past and modern days. Much later I looked up some internet sites that deal with esoteric knowledge and was surprised how long and how seriously humanity has been preoccupied in searching for the secrets of womankind. Unfortunately in most cases the story of the "Feminine Beginning" is presented in opposition to the popular version of the "Masculine Beginning", and this shows the earthly weakness of humans who misinterpret information received from above. It is impossible to give priority to the "Feminine Beginning" or to female energy. This is because the "Feminine Beginning" is the creative, inclusive, sympathetic, compassionate, peaceful and uniting energy of Love and Charity and it is not in its nature to oppose and conflict. It is time to bring the notions of Love and Charity that we humans limit to an emotional level and perceive in the contexts of male and female relationships and mother-child relationships, to a higher level of human consciousness. It is time to rethink these categories in their energetical-informational degree. Such notions as better and worse, negative and positive, useful and dysfunctional, good and bad don't exist, instead we have to see that there is a constant and universal interaction and fluidity of energies. Different energies must be balanced and in harmony which is impossible to achieve without the uniting, magnetic force of the "Feminine Beginning" that holds them together. For a short historical period of time our task will have to be to prioritize feminine energy and feminine senses in order to balance them out with the masculine and to bring harmony.

My opponents often tell me that I contradict myself when I single out and divide the masculine and feminine senses, they say that there are only universal human senses. If "Man" and "Woman" exist, as a plus and minus, it also means that their priorities and purposes differ. Let me explain my argumentation. There is a difference between the role that the man and woman have in a family and in the tribe, and this difference is also in the energy that they possess. The male, in order to fulfil his mission of procreation, must be chosen by a woman, which means that the main law that guides him is competition. A man's main goal is to be the first, to be the best, to be on the top of the pyramid. In this, he is guided by the energy of leadership. He must stand out in the crowd and be noticed, that is how man is under the influence of the dividing energy. His aim is to be able to catch the female prey. However he must also protect his family and the other side of the same function is to guard his own from other hunters. In order not to become the prey himself, he has to kill. It is here that man develops the warring energy of aggression with the correlated senses.

A woman, in order to fulfill her mission has no need to compete or kill – her tasks are different. She has to preserve the life of her child, and to do this she has to work, to guarantee warmth and comfort and the absence of hunger to her offspring. Women have to help build the relationship between a man and a child. The bigger the family is the more diverse her tasks become in building communication. In fulfilling this task, woman is assisted by the creative energy of attraction. A woman serves her man and her child, at least in the family.

When human beings live in a primitive, harsh environment man and woman are partners, their energies don't contradict each other but fulfil one another, they can't survive without each other. But human society has abused the natural balance of the energies. Nowadays wealth accumulation suggests that man is a worthy warrior and his woman has a new role – to be part of his capital, to be the prey and to reflect the level of man's riches. This is the way humankind has progressed and it is the way today. This imbalance is observed in all spheres of human life: in government systems, in financial systems, in world business, in education, and even in art. This can be noticed especially in religion: God is always male, he is the Father.

This isn't bad or good. It is simply a step in human development that is the realisation of the programme. If we compare human development to the growing up of a child, it will be easy to understand; first it was necessary for the bones and muscles to develop, later the child can focus on gaining knowledge and skills and only after these comes the time for spirituality. Consequently, humanity has created the material base (let's say it's physical body), has developed science and information technologies (these are the knowledge and skills) for this masculine strength and reasoning were essential. It has now come to the last stage of humanities development; the time of spiritual maturity, which is impossible without feminine strength and the energy of charity.

Ignoring the significance of womankind might have been deliberate from the side of the religious leaders of the world, because society has not matured yet to the answer the question, "Who gave birth to the children to Cain?" Don't you find this an interesting question? The supposition inevitably arises that Eve gave birth to several generations of her sons and in this her significance undoubtedly rises. For the question posed above, the Holy books don't provide an answer. We are left to guess until scientists-geneticists make the great discovery of what are the origins of humanity. I will dare to present my own non-scientific hypothesis. Perhaps, our great-grandmother had horns which facilitated her contact with the cosmic powers and maybe these powers allowed her to give birth to her own grandchildren? Hence, if horned women existed in the past, perhaps the genetic schemes of the first woman differed from that of the present day woman? What does it mean that she was cloned from Adam's rib? Are people today ready to deal with these kinds of questions? When we will be ready to think more in this direction then the earthly realization of feminine energy will be able to begin.

I myself saw proof that the feminine energy is becoming stronger and becoming a priority in heaven. A *ziyyarat* [q.v.] was conducted in Talas in 2007 on the 17th of November and its goal was to bring about the concentration and unity of cosmic energy with the earthly Feminine Beginning. Around a hundred of us gathered and at sunrise we conducted the ritual. It was a deeply sacred act, at the end of which all the participants asked for visual proof that our efforts were not in vain. Suddenly we all saw a marvellous movement in the heavens, two strange balls of lights appeared from nowhere and rapidly shot off in opposite directions and in the middle of the sky one star absorbed a smaller star and started to shine more brightly, somebody said that it was Venus strengthening her female energy (because I know little of astronomy, I don't really know whether it was Venus). The phenomenon that we saw was like a sign for us and we were all satisfied. My intuition was telling me that what happened was the grounding of the cosmic feminine energy, where it united with earthly energy by means of a human beings. Working with this energy in our daily life is our responsibility, and from my own experience of the last few years, I know how the heavenly power of Love awakens callous hearts. Feminine energy is the energy of Service; it is the power without which it is impossible to fulfil the mission of creating the new, especially in the spiritual world.

The spiritual tradition of serving is most prominently expressed in the worldview of the nomads. Everyday taboos and norms of the Kyrgyz people and of their cultural and spiritual life are, in my opinion, due to the peculiarities of the territories where they live. Kyrgyz people had to survive extreme conditions where human beings had to be at one with nature. When man was a nomad, he was a part of nature, not it's master, and human beings had to live according to natures' laws, which means knowing and reverring the parallel world of energies.

My grandmother knew a lot about parallel worlds but it does not mean that she was unique in this. Millions of Kyrgyz people simply and naturally live with the parallel worlds of their spirits, called *koldoochu* and *arbaktar* [q.v.], and their dreams. In their daily lives they use the sacred knowledge of their ancestors that are perpetuated in old wives tales; norms, taboos, rituals and traditions. What I like about it is that people don't even suspect how important and sacred this knowledge is. For them it is simply an inseparable part of their worldview, in which they store a great deal of knowledge and many mysteries. We know a lot but do not realize it and we don't use this knowledge. The "higher service", that is in our blood, has been diminished to promoting close relatives in different spheres regardless of their abilities, and the notion of a "higher mission" lies dormant in our consciousnesses. These ideas remain inactive in our blood.

In this way we come to the mission of a human being, of a tribe, of kinship, of the nation, and of a country. As soon as we touch the question of the nation's mission, we immediately fall into the stereotype and talk of being chosen, anointed and fall as low as fascism. It is understandable that this kind of reasoning is thrust on us by the hierarchical, materialistic system of thinking and people are required to deal with it in the world of consumerism, in the times of the lordship of power and golden calfs.

I want to ask you to detach yourself from today's reality and to picture the nomadic tribes of our ancestors. They were minimalists in everything: in food, in clothes, in the way of life, in equipment, even in livestock that the tribe had to keep in order to feed themselves. They had as little material goods as possible to make it easier to travel through the high mountain passes. They lived in extreme conditions moving through the high mountains where the weather can change with the speed of lightning. When you have to carry your children over a precipice on a narrow path how can you think or talk about gold? A Kyrgyz could not even allow himself one extra blanket. Gold did not have much worth because it was too heavy a load. Our ancestors were hyper-rational when concerning the material environment.

On a steep slope, a stone can slip out from under the hoof of any horse, even the horse of a leader and a chief. How important, dear and indispensable it is that someone reaches out to help, even at the risk of their own life! The ability to reach out to others on a personal level can be seen in the way people serve their whole nation. In given conditions of ecological, physical and material asceticism, of physical and emotional extremes, without the ability to give sincere and sober service to each other, the Kyrgyz race would not exist today and Kyrgyz people would not continue as an ethnic group. This ability to look after ourselves and others is one that keeps us strong I am proud that we have not lost it yet.

In the Kyrgyz way of thinking there is the notion of "mission" but it is necessary to note that the mission is first of all "Service". If you are chosen to have spiritual abilities, *a kasiet* [q.v.] your blessing should be given back to the people by serving them. For this reason these ideas are so strongly incorporated into the everyday, working lives of Kyrgyz people. Perhaps I am idealizing the image of the Kyrgyz, but then again there should be some ideal picture to which we should strive, life will correct it in the making.

I think that those few fascist nationalists who speak about us being a nation chosen by God are lost people, whose search for true "Kyrgyzness" will be fruitless. They are the people who have lost their identity, who at the end will fall to the call of blood. They look at the world from the point of view of the old system of values, the materialistic, consumer worldview that is built on the hierarchical, vertical, dividing way of thinking. It is the male competitive system, where someone is always higher than the other, someone is lower, someone is clean whereas the other is not, someone is the stronger the other weak, where the world belongs to those who are successful. Therefore the world belongs to those who are rich and strong. The old stereotypes say that the nation is chosen by God, that is there is a cleanliness of genealogy. In this case the mission is reduced only to physiology. These theories were formulated in the West on the foundation of material ideologies. There was a concept of being "Aryan" but this has nothing to do with what the Kyrgyz call aryanism. *Aruuluk* in the Kyrgyz worldview is a spiritual cleanliness and from this quality flows the existence of extrasensory abilities. These abilities are given to people so that they could more effectively serve and fulfil their mission.

Every person can receive information from above, almost every Kyrgyz person who desires it strongly enough can receive it. There is no explanation for this phenomenon yet, but I feel that with time science will bring a simple and logical explanation. Perhaps it is not due to our genealogy but, perhaps it is the land we live on, or maybe both. Maybe this is why the Kyrgyz remember the seven names of their fathers and the land on which their fathers lived.

Even my rational and logical consciousness, that was boiling from my determination not to understand my mission, received an answer in a dream when I really needed for it. When I started to desire information, I was given it: I was told my place and my role. The most important is not to exaggerate the importance and the meaning of this place but to understand it as a small part of the mechanism in the working global process. Most people, once they receive information about their mission through the dreams or other sources immediately interpret it as something unique and as a sign that they should have a significant social status. Very often they feel inspired to take up leading positions in the country. I have often had to face this kind of error and I understand why it happens. The information we receive reflects our reality in a universal way and communicates in such high categories that our hierarchical, primitive consciousness needs to simplify it. It is easy to see oneself at once on the top of the pyramid of the reality (since human beings use the vertical way of thinking). Today our simple minds perceive the presidential chair at the head of society. For this reason there are many people in our country, men and women, who aspire for presidency regardless of their status, education and level of culture. I think this is a misinterpretation of information.

Now I know for certain that we are managed and directed by some power; for some it happens in dreams, for some through visions, for others through voices that talk to them, for yet others it comes through real events. The most

important thing is to be able to interpret these symbols and to learn to read all the signs and symbols of destiny and to match them to our possibilities, potentials and correspondingly to our place in real life.

In connection with the preceding statement, I need to talk about a person's place. It is surprising how some people underestimate their own abilities and their own place and as a result they make the same mistake as the people mentioned previously who overestimate their value. Each of us can influence the world and bring it change even if we are lesser than the president. Everything depends on our goals. If we aim to achieve the privatization of the energy system then, yes, we would probably have to hold the position of the president. However, if we aim to achieve our spiritual creation, then an ordinary man has more opportunities than the leader of a country, because here it is important to trust in competency and have faith in one's sincerity. It is harder to prove sincerity when one is superior to others. A person's place should be the spiritual creation of the individual in a global picture of the world. But it is important to clarify here how much more important the position of a country is in the world picture in comparison with the position of an individual and his family. Will the position of a country be defined in the world picture and will the mission of a country be accomplished without the creative role of an individual in each given country?

From my point of view, the role, the place and the responsibility of each *kasiettiüü*<sup>114</sup> or gifted individual is in waking the Kyrgyz people from laziness and drunkenness. *Kasiettiüü*, as I understand, are not only people with extra abilities but also educated people, competent and professional. And the question for them is: are they willing to contribute their powers to the process of the spiritual awakening of the country?

In last few years, our clairvoyants (we may say prophets) received a large amount of information about the mission of the Kyrgyz people and of Kyrgyzstan in saving the world and these are being discussed in some circles. This information is being distorted by radical nationalists who have their own interpretation. However if we approach this question from the position of true Kyrgyz principles that were identified earlier, everything can be explained very simply. If the Kyrgyz people have been chosen to do something, this is Service. The question is whom and what we are to serve; and this is what we must find out ourselves and be careful not to misinterpret our mission.

What we may call the mission of the Kyrgyz people we should carry out peacefully and systematically without feeling the need to prove anything to anyone. We are not worse than anyone nor are we better than others – we are self-sufficient. We have our own significant role and place in the world picture, like any other nation. It is simply that the time has come for our part of the puzzle that the Creator has composed, it is the time in which our values and principles will have more priority for a certain period of time. It is because we have preserved some very useful knowledge on the art of surviving in ecologic and economic extremes, which the world seems to have to live through. We also preserved the skills of acquiring and preserving the divine gift, the *kasiet* and sacred power. Power and *kasiet* came to us from our ancestors but we continue to develop it and add to it. If our knowledge and skills will help someone, it will be because we have given it with Love and we have not compared ourselves to anyone else.

In order for the western world to use our knowledge they will have to develop the worldview of collective thinking and give up the cult of individualism and capitalism, because the energy of Love does not function in those old values. Anyone who wants to survive in this new era will have to accept the new worldview that is based on the energy of Love, the collective spirit of *passionarnost*<sup>115</sup>, ascetic existence and the development of *kasiet*.

<sup>107</sup> *Taene* [Kyrgyz] - maternal grandmother [ed.].

<sup>108</sup> *Jaman bolot* [Kyrgyz] - means: It will be wrong [ed.].

<sup>109</sup> *Chong ata* [Kyrgyz] - paternal grandfather [ed.].

<sup>110</sup> *Közü achyk* [Kyrgyz] - a seer, clairvoyant, literally: open eyes [ed.].

<sup>111</sup> *Kasietin kötörüp, kyzmat kilysh kerek* [Kyrgyz] - menas: you must support your *Kasiet* [q.v.].

<sup>112</sup> *Müiyüzdüü kasiet* [Kyrgyz] - holy blessing giving supernatural abilities that can be seen by the horns.

<sup>113</sup> *Elechek* [Kyrgyz] - traditional headwear of a married woman [ed.].

<sup>114</sup> *Kasiettiüü* [Kyrgyz] - meaning chosen or anointed, a person holding *Kasiet* [q.v.] [ed.].

<sup>115</sup> A term developed from the philosophy of Lev Gumiliev with origins in the latin «passio», indicating the potential for social transformation through sacrifice; the possibility of transcendental change.

## CHAPTER 4

### **KUT: ABUNDANCE OF THE LAND AND TALENT**

## OF THE PEOPLE

*This chapter is dedicated to the loving memory of Maiyra Kerim kzy*

### INTRODUCTION

The Kyrgyz talk of the *kut* of the land, this means it's blessing; the abundance of the land. The *kut* of the land of the Ysyk-Köl province is seen as connected with the Ysyk-Köl lake itself. Several rivers: the Tüp, Jyrgalang, Karakol, Kyzyl-Suu, Juuku, Jeti-Ögüz, Barskoon, Tuura-Suu, and Tong flow into the lake, but no river flows out. So the lake collects all their waters that come from underground mountain springs.

If among the sons and daughters of a town or village there are many talented people, the Kyrgyz say that "*ichken suulary bir emespi*" meaning: they have drunk the same water. When introducing themselves, Kyrgyz people will mention the name of a famous person who came from their home town or region and say "*balanacha ichken suudan ichkem*": I drank the same water that this person did. The founders of Kyrgyz literature Tugölbaiy Sydykbekov and Mukaiy Elebaev also spoke of the holy water of the lake country that they drank.

Another well-known Kyrgyz saying is "*akkan suuda aram jok*": there is no evil in running water. This saying was a rule of traditional lifestyle. People used the water flowing from sources, streams and rivers to drink, to prepare their meals and other necessities. Kyrgyz people never doubted in the purity of running water and they took care to keep it clean. They called the water sacred. Over time this rule of life turned into what it is now, just a saying. This is not because people have stopped needing water, but because they have polluted it and now even running water may be dirty and dangerous for the health.

However there are places where the water remains clean, people care for the springs and consider them a sacred source of life, energy and powers. These are sacred sites. There is also the Ysyk-Köl itself, despite the fact that the river water flowing into the lake is sometimes polluted it does not lose its clarity and depth and greatness. Kyrgyz elders say that the dirty waters that flow into the Ysyk-Köl are cleansed by the lake, this is the power of the lake and of the many underground springs that flow into it.

The *aksakal* also repeat the old sayings that knowledge, talent and blessings are given not to a person, but to a place, maybe a valley in which the person was born and brought up. To this day when talking of a person's talent Kyrgyz people say "*ichken suusunan, topuragynan*": the talent of his water and his land.

So it is that water has its power and the land also has its power. If the well-known writer Tugolbaiy Sydykbekov was raised not in the village of Keng-Suu by the shores of the lake, but in his father's land of Jumgal, would his talent have developed to such heights? This question arises when reading his autobiography in which he writes "...my heart flutters like the traces of my bare footsteps on my home land. This land is in the valley of Keng-Suu, with its passes, valley and plains. I can see the mountains covered with wild berries. The valley is full of snowdrops of different colours and the pure spring waters shining. I remember how I would run like a young mountain goat, stooping only to pick rhubarb, sweating but not stopping. Here I drank the spring water, that was for me like the water of life"<sup>116</sup>.

Another famous Kyrgyz poet, Alykul Osmonov also wrote of the *kut* [q.v.] of the Ysyk-Köl and he spoke of this land as of a friend: "Among all of my friends, you Ysyk-Köl, are the nearest and most loyal". Chyngyz Aitmatov, Kyrgyzstan's great author of prose, yearning after his homeland wrote the poem "To the Ysyk-Köl". And all the wisdom that Kalygul the elder wanted to pass down to his descendents he summed up in one phrase "Do not leave the Ysyk-Köl lake, my children!".

Today, Kalygul, Alykul, Tügölbaiy and Chyngyz are no longer with us. But the world of great poets and writers is represented in this chapter by the master of modern Kyrgyz proze Kazat Akmatov. He also says of the lake "the Ysyk-Köl is depicted in all of my works, without it there would be no creativity."

The "Manas" epic, which we consider a limitless source of traditional knowledge about our customs and ourselves also talks of the Ysyk-Köl it should be noted that the lake region is the motherland of Manas tellers. Many of the epics episodes take place by the shores of the lake; there is the episode of in which Manas is first struck by the beauty of the lake<sup>117</sup>, the episode when Aiychürök, Manas's daughter-in-law lands on the smooth surface of the lake in the enchanted into the form of swan and there she performs the *ok attoo*<sup>118</sup> ritual on the banks of the Jyrgalang river.

According to ancient Kyrgyz traditions if a loyal wife steps over the body of her wounded husband, then the bullet will fall out of his body. The story of how Aiychürök saved her husband's life when he was dying by the shores of the lake, by performing the ritual of stepping over the bullet, are in the "Semeteiy" epic. This story is mentioned in three versions of the "Manas"; Sayakbaiy Karalaev's version of the "Semeteiy" clearly states that the story took place along the banks of the river of Jyrgalang<sup>119</sup>. This river and how it got its name are also described in the "Manas" epic in Sagynbaiy Orozbekov's version and in Shaabaibiy Azizov's version<sup>120</sup>. The fact that one and the same story, connected to the Ysyk-Köl lake, was told by different *manaschy* shows that this is one of the main stories in the epic.

This inspiration can also be connected to the water and land. The following words of the writer Choyun Ömüräliev are proof of this: "Ysyk-Köl is the motherland of good spirits". It is a spring of talents that were given to poets, writers, komuz players and painters. The lake and the *mazars* located on its shores continue to exert their magical influence on people. In this chapter Akylbek Murataliev, the well-known Kyrgyz actor shares his experiences of pilgrimages to sacred sites, he talks of how these have influenced his perception on life and changed his life.

Tashkul Kereksizov, the statesman and activist considers the Ysyk-Köl to be the *jerdin karegi*: the eye pupil of the planet earth. He is currently building a grand complex called *Aalam-Ordo*<sup>121</sup> on the lakes' southern shore and firmly believes that his center will raise future Nobel prize winners.

In the second chapter of our book the Ysyk-Köl lake is spoken of as the land of the *manaschy*. But it is also the land of many other talented artists and musicians. Arstanbek Buiylash uulu, was one of the children of the lake, a famous *komuzchu* from the XIXth century. His successors from the XXth century were Karamoldo Orozov, Ybyraiy Tumanov, Asanaaly Kyshtoobaev, Chalagyz Imankulov, Chalagyz Isabaev and contemporary artists Asan Kaiybyldaev, Tölön Kasabolotov, Namazbek Uraliev and Anara Esengulova who all continue to develop the traditional music. In this chapter, Namazbek Uraliev talks of his decision to walk the path of traditional healing and faith, he talks of the way his ancestors have influenced his life. This man, who can be called a representative of the "village intellectuals"<sup>122</sup> plays folk melodies, teaches the art of *komuz* playing to numerous students and is a master craftsman of the *komuz* and other traditional musical instruments.

We had the luck to hear Maiyra Kerim kyzy speak of her close spiritual connections with the Ysyk-Köl and of her childhood wishes to see the magical lake that she had heard so much of from her mother's tales. The gifted poet and musician-improviser died this year, on the 18th of August 2009. In the days before she died, she complained not of the pain that her illness was causing, not of regret to be leaving the world before her time, but of her longing to see the lake one last time. Maiyra was a master of words, they seemed to spring to her lips in rhythm and rhyme whenever she wished them to. She helped us with our work on this book, when we were lost for words, looking for the title for our second chapter, she stopped by the office and inspired us. She said in a poetical twang "*Ysyk-Köl - manaschylardyn mekeni*", this means "Ysyk-Köl is the land of the *manaschys*".

Thank you, Maira. *Jatkan jeringiz jaiyluu bolsun*<sup>123</sup>.

<sup>116</sup> Sydykbekov Tügölbaiy, "*Bel beles*", Bishkek, 1996, pg. xx.

<sup>117</sup> See the introduction of the second chapter of this book "Secrets of Ysyk-Köl and *manaschylyk*" and the story of Tilek Asanov.

<sup>118</sup> *Ok attoo* [Kyrgyz] - stepping over the bullet.

<sup>119</sup> By the version of Sayakbaiy Karalaev (1894-1971).

<sup>120</sup> Bakchiev, T. 'The role of sacred site in Manas telling (on the basis of personal observation).' In: *Mazar Worship in Kyrgyzstan: Rituals and Practitioners in Talas*. B., 2007, pgs. 183-184.

<sup>121</sup> *Aalam-Ordo* [Kyrgyz] - the center of the universe.

<sup>122</sup> See footnote 5 from the Foreword [ed.].

<sup>123</sup> *Jatkan jeringiz jaiyluu bolsun* [Kyrgyz] - May the land of your resting place be in peace.

## THE YSYK-KÖL LAKE IS DEPICTED IN ALL OF MY WORKS

### **Akmatov Kazat**

*The writer, playwright; was born in 1941 in Bozteri village of Ysyk-Köl raiyon. Since 1974 he has been a member of the USSR Writers Union.*

*He is the author of more than 20 novels, plays, and screenplays. He has been awarded for his work, with the Toktogul State Award of the Kyrgyz Republic, Michael Lomonosov "Golden Medal" of the Russian Federation, the Nikolai Ostrovskii Union Literature Award and the International "Ruhaniat"<sup>124</sup> Award.*

*Kazat Akmatov works as a specialist on emergency and social issues for the Academy for Security and Co-operation of the Russian Federation.*

I will tell you a story. One of my relatives from Ysyk-Köl went on a pilgrimage to Mecca. There he prayed before the black stone, Kaaba. Afterwards, walking through the streets of Mecca he was stopped by a rich khalif. The khalif was sitting in front of his house and he had an interpreter, it seems rich khalifs have interpreters who speak many languages. My relative was stopped as a curiosity; he was wearing his white kalpak even though it was a very hot day.

- Come over here, traveller, where are you from? – said the khalif.

- From Kyrgyzstan.

- Where is that? We have not heard of that place.

- It is in Central Asia, – said my relative and proceeded to explain where our country lies.

- What do you have in Kyrgyzstan? – asked the khalif. - What kind of place is it?

- Well, we have everything.

- Do you have water?

- Yes water is everywhere in our land. We have so much water that there are places where horses and cars cannot pass even though we have bridges. We have hundreds, thousands of valleys and there is water in all of them. We have a big lake called Ysyk-Köl which is like the sea. Rivers and streams flow into that lake.

- Do you have grass?

- Yes, in our country grass can grow so tall that sometimes even horses cannot pass through the grass, on foot we stumble and fall. Thousands of kinds of grass grow in our summer pastures and they bloom until autumn.

- Do you have fruits and vegetables?

- We grow a lot of fruits and vegetables. When it is time to harvest fruits we cannot even pick all of them. They fall of the trees and rot.

- How can this be so, you must be lying. Do you have grapes?

- Yes, and there are so many that when they ripen the vine branches bend from the weight of the grapes. We sell them on the street and then make wine, which we cannot finish.

- What about melons and watermelons? Do you also have them?

- Melons and watermelons are piled on the streets, there are so many and not enough people to buy them.

- Then, why have you left such a wonderful place? - asked the khalif.

When he returned home my relative told us how surprised he was by the questions that the khalif asked. Thanks to him he realised the abundance of our land!

I recently finished writing a novel and I titled it “Arhat”. In all my works such as “Mezgil”(Season) and “Kündü aiyangan jyldar” (Days going around the Sun), the Ysyk-Köl is always mentioned. I cannot write anything without mentioning the Ysyk-Köl because it is alive in me. I have tried to describe it in it’s many moods and moments: its waves, sounds, soul, its character, during storms, in windy and rainy days.

In “Arhat” I wanted to describe the beauty of Khan-Tengri. I talk of our mountains and Khan-Tengri in the part where Barlas and Anjela are running away. The peak has only belonged to us for a few years. Less than 10, before it was in China. When we offered China Üzöngü-Kuush, they gave us Khan-Tengri. And with Khan-Tengri alone, we could get rich, but we haven’t started to use our potential yet. There are five tall peaks in the Ysyk-Köl province, such as Khan-Tengri, Ala-Too, Jenish, Gorkii and Dostuk. We should be able to attract alpinists to our mountains, we can use these five mountains. Provided we have good infrastructure for the climbers, the income from alpine tourism could feed our whole country.

I have visited all the monuments of Buddha around the Ysyk-Köl. There are three of them. Before writing “Arhat”, I stayed at the Ysyk-Ata sanatorium and there the image of Buddha is carved onto the face of a big rock. Buddhist monks visited the Ysyk-Köl area somewhere between the 9th and 11th centuries. Many monks came from China along the Silk Road. Buddhist and also Christian monks lived on the lake’s shores. There is an old monastery in Tüp, it is the church of the Holy Trinity and Heraclius. The church is now being thoroughly researched by archaeologists and there are lots of excavations. Thank God, Kyrgyzstan is at last becoming the focus of research. It’s history is also being studied. Our history is sometimes unclear and there are dark patches, unknown areas which deserve the attention of historians.

At the international “Biblio-image-2007” festival held in Moscow, our delegation performed the “Manas”. A piece of the epos was performed by youth from the theatre group “Seiytek”. Afterwards I told the “Manas”. The representatives of other countries presented their written classics, but we brought with us our unique masterpiece that is our oral heritage. This was special and it turned out to be so popular, that after the festival there was a continuation, a celebration of the “Manas” was organized.

We say “Ysyk-Köl is the beauty of our land” or “Ysyk-Köl is the pearl of the Ala-Too”. Cosmonauts say that “Ysyk-Köl is the eye of the Earth”, because when you look at the shape of the lake from above, in space, it looks like an eye. Öktöm Kalyeva wrote a monograph about my works, its title is “Ysyk-Köl in the works of Kazat Akmatov”. It is a study of my descriptions of the Ysyk-Köl.

In the Soviet era we learnt of the great discoveries of the traveller Prejevalsky and his studies of the Ysyk-Köl, he was seen as quite a famous academic. Now we can talk of him as a Russian spy. But after Prejevalsky, Chokan Valihanov came to Ysyk-Köl as a researcher. He was also a well-educated officer of the Russian Army and he also met with Borombay. But his research was different, when he came to Ysyk-Köl he became interested in the “Manas” and studied the epos. He was the first foreigner to write down the “Manas”. He was interested not only in Buddhist and Islamic traditions but also in the Christian, Catholic and Orthodox history of the area.

Even though I am not a religious person, I’m not a mullah and I do not read the Qur’an, some things are sacred for me: the spirits of *Ak-Taiylak*<sup>125</sup>, of springs, trees, houses, lakes and mountains. These are things that have not been sufficiently studied and in my opinion this is a secret world. There is a belief that a person does not die but exists in three stages of life. We live our first life when we are still in our mothers’ womb, the second is our current life in which we are already dead to the womb. However when we die we go to the third world, which is the world of eternity. This is a belief held in Tibetan Buddhism. Occultism, *tengriism* [q.v.], shamanism – all these are in our traditional culture and we should keep them strong. These enrich our spiritual life and our imaginations and have made it possible for our people to distinguish themselves from others.

<sup>124</sup> *Ruhaniyat* [Kyrgyz] - heritage [ed.].

<sup>125</sup> *Ak-Taiylak* [Kyrgyz] - a white colt [ed.].

## AALAM-ORDO IS THE CENTER OF SPIRITUALITY AND SCIENCE

### **Kereksizov Tashkul**

*Tahskul was born in 1948 in the town of Balykchy in the Ysyk-Köl province. In 1972 he graduated from Kyrgyz State University, where he specialized in professional commodity dealing. Since graduation he worked in important positions in his specialization. After that he became the head of the Administration of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic (1993), the chairman of the Cooperative Association of the Kyrgyz Republic (1996), the governor of the State Administration of Talas province (1996-97), the director of the Customs Inspection Department under the Ministry of Finance of the Kyrgyz Republic (1998-99), the chairman of the State Property Fund of the Kyrgyz Republic (1999-2000), the chairman of the State Committee of Privatisation and Material reserves under the government of the Kyrgyz Republic (2001-2003). In 2005 he was elected as a deputy of the Jogorku Kengesh of the third convocation. He is also an academic of the International Art Academy and the winner of the “Manas” order of the third degree.*

### **Ysyk-Köl is the pupil of the Earth**

The earth is alive. The Earth, like any human being, has reason, feelings, lungs....the pupil of the Earth is Ysyk-Köl. Why do we call Ysyk-Köl the pupil of the Earth? If we look at it from the scientific point of view we can state the following reasons:

Ysyk-Köl is like a pupil of the Earth for a very interesting reason. The lake is situated on the planet Earth in the same place where a person's eye is situated in the human body. We scientists, have proved this as a mathematical fact. First we found out that the Ysyk-Köl occupies an area equal to one hundred thousandth of the whole Earth (specifically  $1.215 \cdot 10^5$ ). This result comes from the calculation of the square metricity of the lake, which is 6,2 thousand km<sup>2</sup>, compared to the square of the Earth, which is 510 million km<sup>2</sup>.

Now let's look at the proportion of the pupil of the eye to the whole body of a person. As it is known in medicine, the diameter of the pupil changes from 1 to 8 mm according to the amount of light it must let in. The average diameter will be 4,5 mm. The average square metricity of the whole body of a person is 1,3 m<sup>2</sup> Therefore the proportion of these two also equals one to a hundred thousand, more precisely 1.215\*10<sup>5</sup>!

According to these measurements the Ysyk-Köl can be seen exactly as a pupil of the eye on the surface of the planet.

### **Adam was created by God, the prophet was born from a woman**

The Milky Way has 400 billion planets and the possibility of life on another planet has not been proved or disproved. From what we know, there is life only on the planet Earth. Thus we can assume that the Earth is the mother of all planets of the Milky Way. From ancient times there has been a belief that Umai Ene<sup>126</sup> is our God. The meaning of the mother has always been connected to the Universe...This is a very strong philosophy.

The Earth is alive, and life exists on it, people live on it. The difference between Adam and the prophets is that Adam was created by God whereas Iesus<sup>127</sup> prophet, Buddha, and Mohammed were born by a woman. The name of the first human being, created by God, was Adam. As for prophets, they were born by women, who came from Adam.

### **The ornaments on the Kyrgyz *shyrdaks* – the Milky Way**

Our mothers dyed felt in different colours, made different ornaments and prepared wonderful *shyrdaks*<sup>128</sup>. If we look at the photographs of the cosmos, taken by advanced technologies, then one can see the similarities between these pictures and Kyrgyz ornaments, totems. They are also connected.

### **Aalam Ordo is the center of spirituality and science**

There is nothing equal to the Aalam Ordo that is being built along the southern shore of the Ysyk-Köl lake. There are ashrams in India and there are research centers in America and Russia. But there has not yet been a education center in the world that unites both spirituality and science.

In Aalam Ordo 365 young people will live in 365 yurts. There will be wise elders living in 36 yurts for about 2-3 months of the year. The elders will not give lectures to the young people, there will be no curriculum and no lesson plan. In the 2-3 months that the elders and youth will spend together on the lake shore they will take part in discussions and there will be a lively exchange of ideas. In the end of September of each year we will publish an on-line journal, presenting the yearly activities of Aalam Ordo, this will be available to everybody through the internet. Here, nobody would steal anyone else's ideas and work. That is, if a young person argues with an elder and if his idea is a great innovation, nobody but the author will be able to lay claim to that idea. Aalam Ordo will defend the work of that young person. In Scientific Research Centers, there is often a system of hierarchy and the superiors can steal the idea's and words of their staff. There will no such thing in Aalam Ordo. I hope that these yurts will bring us noble prize winners.

Ysyk-Köl will open the door to the future for many young people and their ideas may well reach far away lands like America and China...

<sup>126</sup> *Umai Ene* [Kyrgyz] - the mother Umai [ed.].

<sup>127</sup> *Iesus*, here the Russian spelling and pronunciation of Jesus [ed.].

<sup>128</sup> *Shyrdak* [Kyrgyz] - traditional patterned felt carpet [ed.].

## **YSYK-KÖL IS A LIFE-GIVING CHALICE**

### **Kerim kyzy Maiyra**

*Maiyra was born in 1962 in Jyly-Saiy village in the Kegen rayon of Alma-Ata oblast, Kazakhstan. She is the daughter of a Kazakh father and Kyrgyz mother and the daughter-in-law of Kyrgyz people. She came to Kyrgyzstan in 1992. Before that she participated in Akyns [q.v.] competitions in Kazakhstan. She was accepted by the Kyrgyz people in 1992 when she first recited in front of a Kyrgyz audience.*

*She studied accountancy in Kazakhstan. Later in 2000 she graduated from K. Tynystanov Ysyk-Köl State University from the department of Kyrgyz philology. She is the author and composer of 54 songs. In 2003 her first*

collection of songs “Egiz tildegi ergüülör” was published. At the moment two collections of her songs “Aitysh - Alla belegi” and “Biiyiktik”<sup>129</sup> are going to be published.

Maiyra Kerim kzy participated in and won several national and international competitions of oral poetry. In 2008 she won the main prize at the international festival “Aitytysh” and became a winner of the Estebes Tursunaliyev Award.

I have written a song called “The lake and my mother”. Another of my songs “Praise of the Ysyk-Köl” is directly connected to the lake and my fate. I wrote the verses “Ysyk-Köl is the motherland of the *manaschy*, and *manaschylyk* is the master of improvisation”. Manas tellers do not just read a text, every time they recite they create the epos anew, they improvise.

Any human being, any piece of nature, stone and mountain has life and is destined to a certain fate. You may not want it but everything will disappear, during an earthquake, the earth can crack and something you thought was immobile will be swallowed up by the earth, over the ages mountains will weather down. But the soul and its disposition never dies!

I call the Song-Köl “The lake of life”, because it’s water is drinkable. You cannot drink the salty water of the Ysyk-Köl, but this is the lake of the soul. Everything in the world has a soul and moods, conditions. For example if the pasture is good this makes the livestock happy, and if a farmer uses his land wisely, then the land is happy. We say the Ysyk-Köl is the center of tourism, people from other countries like America and Russia visit the Ysyk-Köl. They come because the lake has a good soul, it is happy and peaceful. They come not because they don’t have beautiful lakes in their lands. People are attracted to the Ysyk-Köl as soon as they see it and once they have seen it they cannot forget it. They begin to understand the capabilities of the lake, how it improves health, how it brings good moods, they understand its power and its beauty. When I look at the lake I see a powerful chalice full of water surrounded by snow-topped mountains. This image always comes back to me.

When I was little girl, my mother brought me here to Kyrgyzstan from Kazakhstan when she came to look for her relatives. We went in the winter months in 1968-69, I think. At the time I was about five or six years old. I still remember the sign of the village “Tüp”. I don’t remember most of the villages we visited and most of the homes we were hosted in, but there was one meeting that I remember, when my mother had a very long conversation with one old lady.

I was not brought up by my mother, I was raised in another family. I have one grievance about my fate. I enjoyed my mother while being in her womb, but I was not given the chance to enjoy being brought up by her. Whenever I visited my mother she would ask about the Ysyk-Köl and say “My Ysyk-Köl must be shining with its beauty”. It was her great wish to see the lake before she died, but she didn’t get her wish, she died without seeing her lake. When she was sick she would always mention the Ysyk- Köl. I sing about this in my song to my mother.

I came to Kyrgyzstan in the 1990s and only then I saw the lake and its magnificence for the first time. My husband showed me the lake in Balykchy and here we waded for the first time in its clear waters. On my way from Bishkek to Karakol, or from Karakol to Bishkek I would always sit on the side of the car which looked to the lake. I would just sit and think, I do not remember what I thought about, but I know that I really enjoyed the rides. I would gaze at the lake until my eyes hurt and my neck would be tired. I would think of writing a song which about my mother and the lake. And in 1998 I did. That year the lake was “wounded” by an accidental toxic spill and cyanide was poured into the lake. Ermek Jumataev, the Kazakh poet, was invited to the *Kadyr Tün*<sup>130</sup> celebrations at the Ysyk-Köl. He recited one of his poems and it was about the accident: “A drop of poison has been spilled into the lake, will we return home safely?” he asked and turned to me, I replied: “Not a drop, but a whole tonne was poured into the lake!” At the time I myself felt wounded by that accident.

Ysyk-Köl, my sacred mother,  
I have come here, even without knowing whether you  
would accept me.  
As if choosing the kinship of the history.  
Your waves wash the shore of the lake.  
Like a beautiful blue dress, like my mother's,  
She was a daughter of yours,

Before dying my mother said,  
“It is such a pity that I have not seen my lake last time!”

I cannot say that I will reach the peak of my talent, nor can I think of any particular peak of my success. I am simply an improviser. This is my hobby. It seems to me that I am still in the search of myself. By profession I am an accountant. When I am inspired melodies seem to create themselves in my mind even when I'm walking. I create melodies, when I feel that I am ready to create one.

Once I had met a talented composer, he was musically educated and he knew sheet music very well. He could play different instruments and wrote symphonies for the orchestra. I told him: “It is such a pity that I do not know sheet music. Maybe my life would be different if I knew it.” He replied: “Those who know sheet music always worry about whether their melody is as good as those written by others. We can see that there is a passage similar to somebody else's work, so we should create something different. Our melodies are created like this, and sometimes they still turn out to be like others. As for you, Maira, you have your own path. You go to the mountains whenever you feel like creating, and how can I copy you there?”

After that conversation I gave myself fully to my inspiration. Everything else seems to be a needless concern. My real life is when I am creating and this happens when I am in a trance. When I go to the stage at competitions of oral poetry and compete with my *kaiyni*<sup>131</sup>, the theme of the competition is the same, the rivalisation between *kaiyni* and *jenge*<sup>132</sup>. In such cases sometimes I cannot improvise and I repeat the words which I sung ten years ago. I always go up to the stage in the hope that something new will come to me, some new lines to a song will come to my mind. When nothing comes I feel as if I am living in dead days; those days in which we waste time just sleeping.

Even before seeing the lake, I had a good imagination of it from my mother's words. There are also big lakes in Kazakhstan, we used to live by the shore of Balkash lake. But even the words Ysyk-Köl sounded differently for me. The name of the means “warm lake” and we used to imagine it never gets cold there. After my mother's death, I liked to listen to people talk about Ysyk-Köl. I would spend hours listening to the songs of brother Zamirbek or aksakal Estebes on the radio, these would lull me.

My belief is that people and the earth are closely connected, this is explained by physics and gravity. In the spring the earth wakes up and the grass begins to grow. Early in the morning you can see the earth stemming in the first rays of the sun, seeing that my father would say “The womb of the earth is filled with life”. And my ties with the Ysyk-Köl were also decided when I was in the womb.

My skills developed while I was in Kazakhstan. I participated only in two competitions there, once in a competition on a national level. God directed my fate and I became the wife of a Kyrgyz man. I always used to say that I would become a daughter-in-law of Manas. Once, while we were still in Kazakhstan, my husband said: “You must be ready for everything. What would you say if somebody asks you how their *küch-küyöö*<sup>133</sup>, is doing?” I didn't know what to say. There is a saying that those who stumble on their feet will stand up, but those who stumble in their words will not, we decided to move to Kyrgyzstan. When we came I wondered how the Kyrgyz people would accept me with my *dombra*<sup>134</sup> and my songs, would they understand me as my Kazakh compatriots did. My husband tried to comfort me saying: “Do you think that the Kyrgyz people are blind and deaf? They will understand, you will see, everything will be fine”. My first year was a very difficult in Tong and Ak-Sai. It was because I could not get used to the peaceful life in the village. I was a restless daughter-in-law and I did not want to stay in one place, I felt I needed to create.

Skills come to a person. But they can also leave that person for a long time. There is such a thing like luck and happiness. There is a saying “wisdom can be learnt by listening to the wise and happiness can be gained by following the happy”. But there are things that can be learnt only from God. It is like in the example of a person who reads the Qur'an and starts to call himself a *moldo*. A person may be a Muslim, reading *namaz* from the Qur'an but still not understanding the words of God. There are people who can speak many different foreign languages, but they still cannot understand the words of the Qur'an. This is because to understand and to be a *moldo* you have to be given this talent by God.

Why could my skills develop in Kyrgyzstan but not in Kazakhstan? In Kazakhstan nobody understood me and my talent. Moreover, I should say that I did not have significant skills that time, I was working as an accountant at a state company. But one day, when *Nooruz*<sup>135</sup> came and people were livened up by the approaching holiday, something

happened to me. I woke up in the morning, put on my dark red dress, my traditional hat, which I had decorated with feathers the night before, took my *dombra* and went to go to up the hill in Teskeleng-Topor and sing. While I was getting ready my friend came by and asked: “Where are you going? Why are you dressed like this?”. I said: “I want to go to the hill and sing a song. Can you accompany me? I will sing, if people come, that's good, if not, then you will watch and be my judge”. She did not approve of the idea and she told me: “Are you insane?”; she shouted and she took off the hat from my head: “Take off those clothes, people will say that you are mad. You already have enough problems<sup>136</sup>, you also want to go to the hill and sing?!” and she stopped me.

It was a time when nobody understood me. I think I would have gone out on that hill if I had the wisdom that I have now. I also felt inspired in those times, but I learnt to ignore it, I did not see the butterflies of talent that would land on me. I could not explain to people what I was feeling.

But as I look at my past experiences I can say I am happy with my life, I do not regret what I have lived through. I will always pray for my people and my lake to be safe.

<sup>129</sup> *Egiz tildegi ergüülör* [Kyrgyz] - Inspiration in two brother tongues; *Aitysh* - *Alla belegi* [Kyrgyz] - *Aitysh* [competition of improvisers] – the gift of Allah; *Büiyiktik* [Kyrgyz] - Altitude [ed.].

<sup>130</sup> *Kadyr tün* [Kyrgyz] - sacred night [ed.].

<sup>131</sup> *Kaiyni* [Kyrgyz] - kin term for the younger brother of the husband [ed.].

<sup>132</sup> *Jenge* [Kyrgyz] - kin term for the wife of the older brother In Kyrgyz culture it is custom to use familiar titles when addressing the compatriots of the husband or mother or father in law. This also has a special meaning at *Aitysh* [q.v.] as these titles are used as slogans around which the competitors improvise, every title of the family hierarchy has its own attributes used in improvisations. [ed.].

<sup>133</sup> *Küch-küyöö* [Kyrgyz] - a man who lives in his wife's home, in her village or on her land. Among the Kyrgyz people this is considered shameful and this address is an insult. In the past this word was used when talking of a husband working for his wife's father, and who did not have own possessions and could not support his own family, who after marriage in many cases had to live with his in-laws [ed.].

<sup>134</sup> *Dombra* [Kazakh] - Kazakh national instrument [ed.].

<sup>135</sup> Nooruz – the traditional New Year, celebrated on the 21st of March by the peoples of Persian and Turkic tradition [ed.].

<sup>136</sup> The problems the friend was referring to were Maiyra's illness that for some time disfigured her face and the divorce with her first husband [ed.].

MANKIND SHOULD NOT BE DIVIDED BY RELIGION  
INSTEAD SHOULD BE UNITED BY THE INTERNAL  
FAITH OF HUMANITY

**Murataliev Akylbek**

*Akylbek was born in 1957 in the Ang-Östön village of Jeti-Ögüz raiyon. In 1979 he graduated from the M.S. Shepkin Theatrical Institute in Moscow. He is a famous actor of the Kyrgyz Republic. Besides acting, he is currently working with the powers of spirituality.*

In my opinion and according to my observations, a new era in science is coming – one that reaches the roots of time, to when the first people came into being. This is teleportation and telekinesis<sup>137</sup> and traditional methods of healing and arts like falcon training - knowledge that is now being forgotten, but will return. If we do not safeguard these ancient rituals humankind might disappear altogether.

Nowadays we constantly talk of how we are breaking the laws of nature and destroying God's perfect creation. I think there must be harmony in nature. Just as Michelangelo found the ideal proportions of the human body and called then the “golden ratio”. He drew the ideal distance between the forehead and the eyes and between all the parts of the body. These are God's sacred measurements and if the proportion changes too much the person looks different. Strange and ugly human beings may be born. Now the proportions in nature are being destroyed and with them ecological harmony.

In the bulletin “Global ecological overview” (GEO-4) there is an article by Achim Steiners, the UN Environmental Programme Executive Director under the United Nations Under-Secretary General. In his article he gives the proportions of the golden harmony as 61/8, 38/2. These are also the proportions given for the human body. Two thirds of the human body are made up of of water and only one third of the Earth is land, the rest is water. So harmony is the same in both these bodies and we have a saying that “Mankind and the Earth are siblings” and we also say “Until mankind repents the world won't change”.

Everything is connected to nature. According to statistics only an eighth of earth's nature is left uncontaminated and in good condition. If this is destroyed chaos will reign because nature's harmony will have been irreversibly destroyed. That is why we have to go back to what we have forgotten, in order to rescue the Earth. We must find our forgotten resources, powers, human capabilities and we should return to the fundamentals of science. People should all live together as equals, because as equals they can live in harmony with nature and will once again have the ability to learn nature's secrets.

How is it that the Kyrgyz nomadic people have managed to safeguard their spirituality? Before I took up this path I always used to wonder "how is it that our grandparents were the keepers of such great knowledge. By looking at a person they could predict their future, by looking at a pregnant woman they would predict if she would give birth to a girl or a boy. They would say what kind of person the baby would become and they would know of future events. How is it that these abilities of the Kyrgyz people, this healing, shamanism, prophesising, have survived? What makes them go on?"

There is a Kyrgyz saying "*akkan aryktan suu agat*"<sup>138</sup>, it is like the flowing of the Kyrgyz people. Our ancestors passed their *kasiet* [q.v.] on to their children and their grandchildren. They in turn would pass it down to their children. If they did not have grandchildren from the son's side, they would pass it to their grandchildren from their daughter's side; they taught the boys, if there were no boys, they taught their girls. This knowledge flows down a chain, it is continued and passed down from generation to generation.

You may ask why is this knowledge still needed? Modern technology allows us to fly to the Moon, we have mobile phones, television, electricity, but life is not only about these things. There may come a time when we find ourselves up a blind alley, where all this technology can not take us any further. And then we will have to turn around, back to this ancient knowledge, and this is when these traditions and the *kasiet* kept by the Kyrgyz people will save the world.

For example our *jaiychys* [q.v.] could evoke rain, they could stop floods and talk with fire. Our healers would heat iron tongs and place them on their tongues without burning themselves and this would heal people. A toothless old woman would go out and sigh in calm weather, and with this sigh she would raise a wind – these are the powers of the Kyrgyz people and we cannot deny them. We should take them seriously as they have been given to us from above.

Everything is nature, from the very beginning nature and human beings lived in harmony, people understood nature's laws and followed them, they paid heed to its examples, took care of the earth and honoured it. All our proverbs are connected to nature, for example the proverb "be humble no matter how high you are" can be seen in nature, let's take an apple tree, the more fruit it has, the more it bends down. There are many Kyrgyz proverbs about white and black, day and night, life and death, joy and sadness, and they are all taken from observations of nature. From this side nature has given everything to human beings.

What is in my opinion a threat to mankind's existence? There are four dangerous things: fire, water, wind, and stone. People can survive wars and escape bombs, but nobody can escape the four elements. These four elements are now showing their anger at the doings of human beings. How have we angered them? Today, people no longer live in harmony with nature and are ruining it. We say "nature is alive" and now nature is saying "Humans, we have given you all you have, and if you do not improve the way you treat the earth, we will take back everything that we have given to you." Now is the time to realise this.

We are now experiencing the process of rebirth. With the blessings of God, energies are descending to the sacred sites, the *mazars*. Sacred places are places where all the forgotten capabilities of people are opened, revealed. When all of these capabilities will be revealed, there will come a moment when we will be able to control the elements, fire, water, wind and stone. It will come soon. Without those abilities human beings will not be able control anything and will be destroyed.

If we think for a while we understand that we cannot understand this phenomenon rationally. Today's technological development and rationalism is consuming everything until the last drop, we are witnessing deforestation, the excavation of the land, pollution of the water and air. Do you think it will stop? I think not it is easier to destroy than to create. People keep repeating "Let's keep our environment clean, let's stop the destruction of plants and the pollution from factories". But nobody will stop them. In the end we are looking at the destruction of nature. If everything is destroyed, then what was the point of God's creating a human being? Did he create a human being to destroy things? And if so, why haven't humans managed to destroy it before? The first human did not destroy

the earth in the beginning of creation. If this is not our destiny then we have a huge task to fulfill. That task was not given to everybody. In my opinion, the realisation of this task, which is to save human beings, has been given to Kyrgyz people.

The Kyrgyz people are not a nation. Being Kyrgyz holds a great energy of creating, recreating, fixing, putting things in order and equality. One can notice it in the way the Kyrgyz people behave, talk, in their wisdom, hospitality, in their knightly qualities. With such qualities the Kyrgyz can bring back harmony, balance the powers of white and black.

Since when have I been on my way of searching for the way to work on our great task? My mother died in the beginning of the year 1997. 40 days later my brother died. Because of the great suffering I started to search for myself. I started to go to the Maharishi school in Bishkek. One day I saw my grandfather from my mother's side in my dream. He used to be a great mullah, he lived in Kyzyl-Dyikan, that is today Alkym village, in the Jeti-Ögüz raiyon.

For the first couple of days after my mother's death, they would both come to me in my dreams. I thought that they wanted me to read the Qur'an and I did, but it did not work. So I decided to leave town and go to my house in the countryside. There every 15 minutes my grandfather's image came in front of my eyes. Then I started to ask myself: "What does this mean?" Whatever I did, preparing a meal, working or whatever else I was doing, he would appear before me, not the whole image of a person, just his torso, no hands, no legs. I went to the village where his sons lived and visited his grave, where we sacrificed a lamb in his honor. But still it did not work. One of the things that I inherited from my grandfather is a rosary and I took it and began to say my prayers frequently. Only when I had fully learned to say *Namaz* and read it correctly, his image came in full, in sharp contrast, silvery in colour, as if he was real, he had a stick in one hand, his clothes blowing about like in a film. He came to me like that and since then he has not come again. Sometimes I wish to see him again, but he does not come to me. My grandfather taught me my prayers and to accept Islam in this way. Before that I had also tried Christianity, I was looking for myself. After the death of my mother and brother I sought help in Islam, Christianity and Buddhism.

In 1997-98 I got acquainted with people who pilgrimage to sacred sites in Ysyk-Köl. They told me that their belief was liberal. Religions have certain rules that should be followed and are often very dogmatic, some of these rules I find difficult to accept. You convert to another religion in order to be free from the current rules that bind you, but when you convert you feel that you are once again tied. I decided to go with those men to sacred sites. We pilgrimaged to the sacred site of Kalygul, which is in Dolinka, today it is called Kara-Oiy. We also visited the sacred site in Cholpon-Ata hollow and the final resting places of several great people: Balbaiy Ata, Ak Baka, Shapak Baatyr, Sart Ake, Tilekmat Ake. I myself am a descendant of Sart Ake, I am from the Döölös. We also went to Manjly-Ata and on our way we visited Altyn-Bulak in Ak-Terek. There we met with a clairvoyant.

I would always ask clairvoyants about my mother and my brother. I had met a few before and had heard the following: I was told that my brother was lying in a hole. I was reaching out to him to help him out, but he would take my hand. I told him "Come on, go out" and he said he wouldn't. I would ask "Why don't you want to come out, where are you?" He would reply "Don't you see me?" I was told my mother is in another place, that they are both in separate places and they seem to call each other, but they cannot be together.

When I was on the pilgrimage at the sacred sites and I asked the same question of the clairvoyant. She said that my grandmother, mother and brother are all together. I was so happy, I was pleased and it felt like I had done something good. I felt that I could also do something good for somebody. I was thankful to my grandfather who had shown me the right way. After I started visiting sacred sites my mother and my brother got together. I was pleased to hear that they were sitting together with my grandmother in her white yurt and my grandmother was serving them either milk or *kymyz*, a white drink in white bowls. I felt so relieved, as if I have done something good and as if I had fulfilled one task.

Starting from 2000 I visited all the sacred places in Kyrgyzstan. From the Ysyk-Köl I went to the hollow of Ysyk-Ata valley, from there I visited and spent the night in the cave of Tashtar-Ata, I visited the sacred places in Talas. There is a process of cleansing when visiting sacred sites; I was supposed to fulfill a certain mission and learn a certain lesson. That if you get hit on one cheek you should turn the other cheek: be hardy, patient; if somebody is saying something bad about it you, try to see his or her good sides as she or he is not to blame. I asked God to forgive my sins and those of my parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, siblings, relatives and neighbours. I understand this to be my task.

If I were to look from another perspective, I could ask myself, what is it that I am lacking? I have a car, a family, I am well-off, I have a shop and a job. But I feel the need to visit sacred sites. None of my friends understand me. I have quarrelled with my family. When I visit sacred places I go there with old ladies, old men, people who are suffering, who are ill and those who lack material wealth. As for me, I am healthy and have everything. So I ask myself “Why do you need to visit these sacred sites?” but still I feel their pull and I keep visiting them. This is because when you visit sacred sites your feelings and visions are different, totally different.

In those days, up to about the year 2002, I would read *namaz* 5 times a day, but I started to feel that I did not want to read *namaz*. I met an old lady whom I knew from my pilgrimages, she lived in the 12th microraiyon of Bishkek and I asked her: “Mother, I do not want to read *namaz*. Does it mean that I am confused, what is happening to me? Why is this, I chose it myself and now I do not want to read *namaz*?” She said: “My son, you can read it only two times a day, it is possible”. Then I said my prayers only two times, *bagymdat* [q.v.] and *kuptan* [q.v.]. Then I stopped reading *bagymdat* too. I would start with the words “*kul huvallohu ahad*” but no other words would not come to my mouth. My memory was like a white sheet of paper. I wanted to read it, but I could not remember anything. During *namaz* time my family, relatives, friends would sit quietly, in order to not disturb me. As for me, I would sit and sit without remembering the words. And at the end I would just say “Oomiyin”<sup>139</sup> and stand up. This would repeat itself, when I was outside or doing something different I could remember the words of the prayers, I knew that I remember all of them very well. But when I started reading *namaz* everything was lost again. I asked myself: “Why is this happening?” And I started suffering again, as if something that was good had stopped.

Then in 2004 I started working in Osh. There I met Mamarasul and Zulfia<sup>140</sup> from Alai, from whom I learned that visiting sacred site brings great knowledge and that there is a higher stage of it. So I continued with my pilgrimages. I had been to Osh two-three times before. I had visited the sacred sites Kojokeleng, Apshyr-Ata, Idiris-Paiygambar, and of course Sulaiman-Too. Two of the times, I had been with our small group by bus. We would call our trips *Ak Jol*<sup>141</sup>, that is those who were in looking for themselves would visit such places together.

On one of my trips to sacred places I went to Ysyk-Köl and stopped by my father’s house to visit him. My father was the only son of my grandparents. My grandmother gave birth to 17 children, but all of them, save my father, died as infants. My father was the last child to be born. During our conversation I mentioned that I had visited Manjly-Ata and he smiled. My father was an intelligent and educated man, he used to be a teacher, the team leader of our sovhoz, he was also a livestock inspector.

“It is good that you went to that sacred place. Your grandparents asked for me at Manjly-Ata” he told me.

“Why didn’t you tell me before? I have been visiting sacred places for a long time.”

“I know that you visit sacred places. It is good that you went to Manjly.”

This conversation was in 2003. The next year my father died. I feel a deep sense of gratitude to Manjly-Ata for letting my father see the world, on my pilgrimages to Manjly I bow and show my gratitude the *mazar* for creating my father, for bringing me to this world through my father, for giving me my path on this Earth as a human being.

With time I also became a healer and I was supported in this by the spirit of my grandfather, whose image I would see when I started to heal people. There were only nine of us, healers and often we would have a lot of patients waiting to be treated, mostly children. By helping sick people I myself felt cured and free. I sometimes ask God: “I studied in Moscow and was taught by the best of artists, I am a well-known actor. Did you make me study in Moscow for this? Will I always hold a whip and rosary from now on? I do not need this. Give me a different gift”, and in one of these moments of doubt I suddenly heard a voice say “You will write” and I saw volumes of books before my eyes. “I will not write. I didn’t even written a single letter to my mother when I studied in Moscow for five years. I feel sleepy whenever I hold a pen” I said. I refused to accept this new gift and I felt that there is something different that is waiting for me. Now my soul is not calm. I believe that there will be something else, a person should always be in search of new things right until the end of his or her life, there should be no limit for the search. We know that and we are always looking for something.

Now I do not read *namaz*. I was not allowed to read it. “Why am I not allowed to read?” I ask myself a lot. The influence of religions, that I honoured one after the other, along with my spiritual development, give a person *great* power, that keeps him or her on the right path but they also do not allow a person to put rational thinking aside. And there is a science, which is even greater than the religions. That is the science of knowing the language of the nature, equality. If we look there are many religions in the world. Even within Islam and Christianity there are many trends,

there are about a thousand trends in Buddhism alone. All of them claim that there is one God, but all of them try to show that their religion is the best. It is because there are great economic, political, geopolitical interests behind them. They have forgotten about God. Now none of the great religions want to unite people. Even if we wait another hundred years, Christianity and Islam will never get together, so there must be something further than that. That is our Great Belief.

This Great Belief does not only belong to us, it belongs to everybody and it belongs to God. I may be Kyrgyz, but according to my observation, my directions, and my worldview, all nations are equal, all religions are good. I have passed through all of them, I have picked up all the necessary aspects from each one of them. But now there is only one thing, belief. In reality, if a great calamity occurs, the claims “I am from this or that nationality” will disappear. For example, in Nura there was an earthquake<sup>142</sup>. There, the people were divided into different tribes and they were in conflict, but in the face of tragedy they united at once. For that reason God gave them such an ordeal so that today they live in peace. But that was just a warning, a temporary thing. For Kyrgyz people earthquakes are a warning sign, reminding us that we should live in peace.

What I am saying is that nature is alive. When one does bad things, or in other cases, when great energy comes out of a person in the form of gritudes, curses, wishes or blessings, these create invisible positive influences of energy; these are Torsion Fields<sup>143</sup>, according to the laws of physics. Such fields were used by the Americans in Iraq. These waves and energies are used to direct people’s consciousness.

I will give an example of the good use of this energy: Kyrgyz people used to not have prisons. Those who had behaved badly would be sat in front of three elders, who would bless that person by saying: “Capable children can improve with the help of blessings”, after these words the culprit would froth at the mouth, tears would come to his or her eyes and sometimes they would fall into a stupor. This was the effect of the blessing and this is how Kyrgyz people raised their children with blessings. This shows that words contain great energy and that the Kyrgyz people could control that. Kyrgyz people hold the belief of *kyrgyzchylyk*. Along with that they have two beliefs: *tengriism* and *shamanism*. Those who hold shamanism can work with the invisible energies. If a child has diarrhoea, they treat it by massaging the muscles of the stomach, if a child has a sore throat, they can “kick” it out with their heels and there are many other methods for curing sicknesses.

There is also *tengriism*. *Tengriism* is in our life, it is the harmony and need of balance in life. It says: “Things are equal, there is white and black, sour and sweet, and you should always take these two sides together”. Kyrgyz people used to be like this. They never praised only the good, and they never pushed away those who were bad. They always thought carefully before making a decision. Kyrgyz people say: “There is a hundred sheep, together with the lame ones.” Why do they say this? Because they always took everybody, they never left anyone behind. The Spartans in Greece, for example, would throw the hunchbacks or handicapped children over the cliffs, in order to “keep the blood pure”. It was never like that among the Kyrgyz, we know that good things can come from genetic defects, the Kyrgyz would take everybody together, both the strong ones and weak ones. We say that “the eagle of the Khan” can fly over even the weakest shepherd herding the weakest sheep and that he may lead his people to victory. We find this in our history and tales. Kyrgyz people have always known this and Kyrgyz people have such kind of wonders that are given by God.

Even today I see people and treat them, I am developing my clairvoyant abilities. When you visit sacred sites, you get cleansed. Moreover, the door for eternity starts to open in front of you. My ability to predict, and other skills mentioned, I cannot speak much of as these are not yet fully developed. But I have noticed that what I say about things, which I have a feeling about, turn out to be true. For example the weather. There are times when I can just see future events, suddenly some things come to my mind and even I don’t notice it. And what I am saying is being heard by another Akylbek from inside me, as if I am observing myself.

I already mentioned that in *kyrgyzchylyk* there are elements in common with all the religions, I used to study religions with great interest, but now I am leaving religions behind and moving towards *kyrgyzchylyk*. I compare religions to the ideas of great scientists and make conclusions. I think I can see in what direction people are going and I want to work on this. If today I was to shout “People! Listen to me: let’s move together down the path of reality. A new era, a new time is coming!” somebody might listen, but others will ignore me. That is why the voices calling to the people, should be those of scientists and science. That is what people believe in nowadays. In order to tell people

how we can change the world and about the existence of great waves and energies, we have to use the language of science in order for to be understood and believed.

Doctor Alekseyi Dmitriev<sup>144</sup> professor at the Geology and Mineralogy Institute of the Russian Academy of Science, studies tornadoes. According to his research, during a tornado, electric currents of high voltage, magnetic attraction and torsion fields appear. He noticed that during this natural occurrence, two different pieces of coal can attract each other with such power that they merge and become one piece, a bird can fly through a glass pane, straw can be pushed through glass and when the tornado passes will stick in the glass, so that one part is on one side of the glass and the other part on the other side.

He writes that under high voltage, a thing can lose its quality and turn into something else. This high voltage comes from the Sun. There is also a belief that when energies come from the cosmos they create such a high voltage which can bring changes in people and the nature. Also according to the laws of physics, when things like particles come together with anti-particles, objects with anti-objects, an occurrence happens called annihilation; the disappearance of those two things. This can also happen in life, for example, how is it that some Kyrgyz people can become invisible or disappear? It is because here, in this world, they have one body, and in the other world they have another astral body. These two bodies can meet and when they get together, they become friends, and a third body appears. When all three meet the law of annihilation works, this is a law of physics.

Lu Huan Chijin in his book “Djuan'-Djuan” writes of an image of a person found carved on a rock in a cave. The person is wearing a hat, holding binoculars, wearing trousers like jeans and boots. The image was studied and it was found that the picture of a man was carved 30 thousand years ago. According to Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution, human beings became similar to us only 20 thousand years ago. There are things behind this, maybe human beings existed much earlier. These kinds of examples should be talked of, by mentioning these kinds of things, we are attempting to explain to the scientists and the intelligentsia that we have come to the moment of changes in humankind and civilization and that global development has reached its limits. As yet they do not understand. They think that we have always lived like this and that it will be like this in future too.

Kyrgyz people are very patient, when asked “How are you?” they will always answer “Good” even if they are suffering or having troubles. They are never in a hurry, they never run, they work in the field under the Sun, talk with nature, enjoy themselves and in the evening return home. All of these are connected to their being reliable, patient and wise. They always take as much as they need, not more. When they pick up a spade to work, they can dig from sunrise to sunset. They work, have some food, then work again until it is so dark that they cannot see their spades.

There is a Kyrgyz proverb “It is not he who runs the fastest that will win the prize, but he whose destiny it was to win it”. What does this mean? Kyrgyz people believe in fate, they believe that there is something waiting for them, which is given them, and that is why they are calm. They are grateful to God for what they have today, and they believe that God will also give to them tomorrow. They say: “A slave wants to eat good food, but it is up to God to give it to him”. They always connect things to their fate. According to the Kyrgyz worldview nobody can take any wealth with them when they die. Our great Manas used to say: “There is no livestock that should be kept, there is nobody from whom I would spare anything”. What does this mean? We can interpret this with the sayings of Jengijok<sup>145</sup>, such as: “Let not livestock, but blessings be inherited from the father”, “One's light does not fall on another one”, or “Every person's happiness is born with him and dies with him”. “You say that you have livestock, but that is like a bird in the forest, you say that you have a house, but that is also like a straw in the forest”. This phrase is a very old phrase, it was used even before Jengijok’s times. Kyrgyz people use such phrases in their everyday lives. They talk with the sky, with stars. They say: “If it is meant to be, then it will be so, if not, I will accept that too”.

Since the times that Kyrgyz people have led sedentary lives peoples’ consciousness have been spoiled. They have started using the words “It is mine”. Before that a Kyrgyz would not use such words like “mine” and “yours”. When they set their yurts they did not ruin nature but took care of it. The cooked food on a dung and brushwood fire and moved from one place to another. They knew that the nature is alive. Why do we talk about that greatness of nomadism of the Kyrgyz people? There are many great things in the hearts of man that are connected to nature. As soon as we settled down we started to destroy. Being sedentary has spoiled people. Nowadays there is a branch in psychology that glorifies the individual. There the word “mine” is used. But the Sun shines on everybody equally. How can you say that it or anything else in the world is yours?

In the nomad world of Kyrgyz people there was no religion, nature was their belief and their worldview. Where do religions exist? Religions exist in places where people forgot about God. This seems to be a paradox but let me explain: religion is the system that reminds us of God. I believe that Kyrgyz Ata was the first to come to this Earth. In the hope that there would be equality and that Sun would shine on everybody equally, he planted a tree. The seeds were *tengriism*. The tree grew many branches. One of them is Buddhism. It says: "Do not forget about me, where would you go without me". Then leaves appeared on the tree. These are Christianity. They whisper: "Without us, the branches, would be ugly". Then the tree gave fruits. Its fruits are Islam. The tree says: "Look, this is the last stage". All of these, the branch, the leaves and the fruits have forgotten the stem and the roots. Everything has reached the last stage now, the apogee. Consciousness, knowledge, any progress of a person, seems to have reached the top of the tree. The tree cannot grow further. The time is coming when we should look back down to the roots. As for the roots, this is a simple conversation of a person with nature, equality is in the roots, the equality of all nations.

One should be a patriot, but not a nationalist. Muratbek Imanaliev<sup>146</sup> likes to say: "One should be a romantic nationalist". Now there is only one big task in front of the people – it is to be united. Without this people will be destroyed. As scientists have said 1/8 of nature remains intact, we can see how our land is being destroyed. The natural disasters are the Earth's reaction to our doings: fires and floods in which about 200 thousand people are taken by the ocean, earthquakes and storms. They are not happening in vain.

The film "Fifth element" was created by the French and the screenplay was consulted with people with supernatural abilities. It is not a secret that the FBI, CIA, and Soviet KGB, all of them, consult psychics to help with their work. Psychics were used in the time of Stalin, Hitler and Tsarist period. The film mentioned is about the power of the elements, fire, water, wind and earth and they need a being in the middle, this being symbolises the fact that humans brought development. Human beings bring progress, they invented the bicycle, keys, locks, steamships, planes, cars, and techniques flying to the cosmos but then they forgot to work with the four elements and created a divide between themselves and nature. Now nature is frightening us by saying: "You have forgotten about us, we will show you!"

Five million people live in Kyrgyzstan, three and a half million of them are Kyrgyz. Among the Kyrgyz about 100 thousand people have supernatural abilities. If they were all to sit at the same time in one room and say: "Let's stop the ocean, it is flooding" and pray together, the flood would stop. We are going to achieve that little by little. This will happen with the help of powers from above. They are raising us. The meetings of powerful people, the intersections of their roads are all in conformity with the law of destiny.

According to scientists and great clairvoyants, there will be a change and transformation in the consciousness of human beings. Kyrgyz people say "The Sun that rises should set." The Sun that sets will rise again, but on another level. It will never disappear. For example if a match burns out, there will be ash left after it. But ash will not become a match again. In order for it to become part of a tree again, much time and effort is needed. The same is true with human beings. People have to start to develop on a higher level because there is no way back. Otherwise we will be destroyed. Or stay behind in the Stone Age. There are only two ways, I know of no other.

Kyrgyz people were content with their nomadic lives for many thousands of years. Kyrgyz never put things aside and they were always ready for things in front of them. Often we look at a person's disposition, we should do that. We give advice "that is a good way" or "as for this, it is not as good" and we think that the next one will be even better. A person's disposition plays a big role, it helps us to compare and select people. We should choose that way, which is better for us and human beings in general.

Who do I think I am? Even now I cannot answer this question. I am an actor, I play in films. But on the other hand, I have the possibility to be employed in other jobs as well. But when I started working my ancestors came and created some obstacles, so that I could not continue. I tried many different jobs but they didn't allow me to work. I think I am a researcher of the science of my own spiritual world. I never have enough of being in the spiritual world, I do not know what it is to be satisfied. I am always in search of it. Now I try to explain to people about ways to live their lives, how to work with other people, helping them to find their own way.

As an actor I also had my dream. When I was working at the theatre I dreamt of playing Hamlet. Now I have found myself in a state without these kinds of dreams, I am resigned to what I have and I accept what was not given to me. I realise I have a different role to play. I try not to express happiness and sadness. I feel that I have found a way in-between, my golden mean.

Manas himself is the golden mean. Besides being strong and wise, a great leader, he was also crazy and disrespectful. He united all these things and was a great man. Kyrgyz people talk of the “*ala jip*”: crossing the line between the white and black thread. The white and black thread is a strong tradition of the Kyrgyz people. It is mostly connected to marriage, in which to keep the peace one should not step over the thread set by the other half of the couple. This law has been shown in our traditional art, the edges of our carpets are decorated in white and black, while the center can be of any colour, red or green and others. The white and black threads are a sign of great justice and prudence and they show that the day and night do not show the truth. Only the short time between the shift of day and night show the truth. Only in this time you can see a tiny piece of truth, which is as thin as a thread. In the morning, in the month of Ramadan, our grandparents would put both white and black wool next to them and pray. During the day, you can see the wool is black (bitter) and white (good), but when the day turns into night, both the *black and white* wool become one colour, grey. This grey is the middle way, the golden mean. It unites the colours and so white has its own black truth and black has its own white truth.

<sup>135</sup> Nooruz – the traditional New Year, celebrated on the 21st of March by the peoples of Persian and Turkic tradition [ed.].

<sup>136</sup> The problems the friend was referring to were Maiyra’s illness that for some time disfigured her face and the divorce with her first husband [ed.].

<sup>137</sup> Telekinesis and teleportation is a capability of a person to move a thing in a space without mechanical influence, but with the help of psychokinetic energy. In other words, when the physical-spiritual worlds reach the maximum voltage, certain powers and psychic energy can influence particles and objects. This is called telekinesis. For example, there were cases when people, by concentrating their thoughts in one place and directing it, they could move object or change their order. Teleportation is an action of putting objects or oneself from one point to another without any movement. From: <http://meta-nauka.ru/tele.php> [ed.].

<sup>138</sup> *Akkan aryktan suu agat* [Kyrgyz] - lit. tr. water does not flow in every river bed. This can be compared to the saying “Like father, like son” meaning that good children are raised by good parents [ed.].

<sup>139</sup> *Oomiin* [Kyrgyz] - way of finishing the prayers that comes from the word *Amin* used in Muslim praying.

<sup>140</sup> Tajiev Mamyrasul and Ibraim kyzy Zulfira are practitioners of *tengriism*. They are a married couple, they live in Alai in the Osh rayion of the Kyrgyz Republic and are well known amongst traditional practitioners [ed.].

<sup>141</sup> *Ak Jol* [Kyrgyz] - lit.tr. white, shining way. In this context it means the holy way, similar to *Ak kiyüü* [q.v.] [ed.].

<sup>142</sup> Talk is of the earthquake that happened on the 5th of October, 2008 in Nura village of the Osh province [ed.].

<sup>143</sup> The Torsion fields theory claims that spin-spin interaction (a quantum phenomenon) can be transmitted through space just like electromagnetic waves, but does not carry any mass or energy, only information, and does so at speeds up to 109 times the speed of light. The Torsion Field Theory was hailed as the explanation for homeopathy, telepathy, levitation, clairvoyance, and other paranormal phenomena to include ESP. The proponent of the theory are Soviet scientists A. Akimov and G. Shipov, the probability of the theory is put under much doubt by many physicists. From: [www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com) 19.10.2009 [ed.].

<sup>144</sup> Dmitriev, A.N. is an author of the following works: *Technogeneous impact upon Geospace. The Problems of Global Ecology*. - Novosibirsk. 1993.; *Fiery recreating of the Earth climate*. - Novosibirsk – Tomsk: OOO “Tverdnyia”, 2002. - p.148.; *Cosmos-Earth relationships and UFO*. Novosibirsk: “Trina”, 1996. - p.176.; Dmitriev, A.N., Shitov, A.V. *Technogeneous impact upon the natural processes of the Earth. The Problems of Global Ecology*. - Novosibirsk: Publishing house “Manuscript”, 2003. - pg.140. [ed.].

<sup>145</sup> Jengijok (end of 19th - beg. of 20th century) was a Kyrgyz poet and improviser who lived in diaspora in China [ed.].

<sup>146</sup> Muratbek Imanaliev – Central Asian foreign affairs expert and consultant of the Institute of Social Politics, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic in the years 1991-1992 and 1997- 2002, Ambassador of the Kyrgyz Republic to China in 1993 -1996 [ed.].

## MY ANCESTORS TOLD ME TO ALWAYS CARRY

### MY KOMUZ WITH ME...

#### **Uraliev Namazbek**

*A komuzchu, and a composer. He was born in 1956 in the Kojoyar village of the Ysyk-Köl rayion. After leaving school he studied at the Beishenaliyeva Art Institute. After graduation he worked for several years in the Cholpon-Ata Soviet Town Performing Group. Since 1986 he has devoted himself to music and his komuz playing. Besides composing melodies, he makes komuz and teaches komuz playing. He is the winner of many national and international festivals.*

There have been many famous individuals among the Kojoyar people living in the Ysyk-Köl region. I think their talents have influenced me. My grandfather Uraaly was a horseman and lived his whole life in the mountains. In the 1930’s he was invited to play in the state philharmonia because he was also a *komuz* player. He and Karamoldo were comrades, when they were young they used to look after sheep together. They would go to Kum-Bel, Korumdu village

and there they played the *komuz* together. This was before *Ürkiin* [q.v.], before 1916. After *Ürkiin*, the Soviet government was established. But even then these people still lived a nomadic lifestyle. Many years later my grandfather was invited to go to the philharmonic together with Karamoldo. But certain circumstances prevented him from going, it turned out he was not allowed to go and he looked after horses in the kolhoz until the end of his days. He was a very hard-working and good person.

Whenever a philharmonic art group, all famous people, such as Karamoldo Orozov, Chalagyz Imankulov, Ybyraiy Tumanov, Sayakbaiy Karalaev and others, would come to our village for performances, they would not leave the village without coming to my grandfather's house. They would always be our guests. They came to celebrate my birth. Maybe their blessings, given to me when I was still in the cradle, or maybe their talents influenced me.

Ever since I was five years old, my grandfather taught me to play the *komuz*. It was thanks to him that I fell into the world of the *komuz*, from him that I learned the great skill of playing, he used to take me everywhere with him and talk to me of the *komuz*. Since my childhood I have had a broad understanding of what the *komuz* is. I would play *komuz* a lot at school and participated in many competitions. In 1977 while studying at the Art Institute I went to the town of Gagarin to work as a member of a building brigade. That summer, Dogdurbaiy Urmanbetov from Jeti-Ögüz, Kapar Kachaganov from Balykchy and I, the three of us were chosen to participate in a big concert in Moscow, where artists from the whole Soviet Union performed. There were about 40-50 children overall, from the 10 hero cities of the fifteen member states and I played the *komuz*.

The skill of *komuz* playing has its own secrets. When I was little, I would ride my grandfather's horse to graze in the fields. One day while grazing the horse I met an old man called Mombek mullah, who was our relative. He had very light skin and blue eyes, a blessed man. He had a long white beard. It was the sound of the *komuz* that had drawn my attention and when I looked for the source of the music I saw Mombek. He was sitting on his saddle blanket and there was a mare with a foal next to him. I greeted him, he welcomed me and asked whether I can play *komuz*. I said yes and I played some melodies that I played in those days. "Oh, you are a real *komuz*-player", he said and he blessed me.

This story is strange only because later I found out that Mombek did not play the *komuz* at all. I was sitting with my relatives and talking and I mentioned that I met Mombek Ata playing a *komuz*. But his children replied: "No, he does not play on a *komuz*". "How's that?" I asked "I saw him play on a *komuz* when I was in the fields grazing the horse. Moreover, he taught me how to play and blessed me by saying that I should keep playing the *komuz*". My father and the others seated at the table said: "That's impossible, don't tell this to anybody else. The person that you met was not him, but a *kzyr* [q.v.]". Since then I have not told this to anybody else, but I am telling it now. I think this kind of vision is not an easy thing, it has to be thought over carefully. I think I saw a vision, like Manas tellers do. In their dreams and sometimes in reality Manas tellers get visions where they see Manas, and his warriors.

I have visited many sacred sites. There are many of them on the southern shore of Ysyk-Köl. Every valley has its own sacred places. For example, our summer pasture Kyrchyn is a sacred place. In Soviet times, when all the presidents of the member states met in Kyrgyzstan, they would visit this place. Many treasures have been found there and it is a sign that since ancient times this place was witness to important events. Moreover, it is a place where our ancestors have been buried for more than 2000 years.

I was born and grew up in the Kyrchyn summer pasture. I have drunk the water of this place, I breathed the air of this place and was inspired. There is a place there called Sary-Oiy which is the village of Nurdöölöt Baatyr. The children of Bektemish Ata of the fifth generation live there: Jaiyl, Chulum and Cheribaiy. In 1982 I went to that village and lived there for 17 years. There is a sacred site at the foot of that mountain. That is an unusual place. There is also a sacred site called Manjly-Ata on the southern part of the lake. There is a sacred site Kochkor-Ata. I have visited these places. Not without reason they are called sacred sites, they have unusual inspiring energies and power. When you visit such places you cleanse your inner world.

A person can see many interesting things in his or her dreams. Sometimes one can have mysterious dreams, dreams that are visions. When I was working in the "Performing Group" in Cholpon-Ata, I had a dream where I was told to leave everything and devote myself to *komuz* playing. Maybe that was not a just a dream, maybe that was a vision. If I had continued working, maybe now I would not be able to play the *komuz* well, who knows. The advice was somehow close to my heart. I remember other people, my grandfather, my mother saying "Always play the

*komuz*, do not forget this art". They influenced me as much as what I saw in my dream. I decided to leave my job in order to fulfil what they had told me.

I quit my job and came home, when I told my wife what I had done she asked "Why? What have you done? How will we feed our children with your *komuz*? What will you find playing your *komuz*?" I comforted her and told her that I would also start making *komuz* and I did. My inner world was attracted to the world of *komuz*. It is my wish that the sacred *komuz* playing skills of Kyrgyz people should never die. I want the skills of my playing and craftsmanship to become an example for following generations. My aim is to contribute to the art of *komuz* playing in the hope that this ancient Kyrgyz skill will never be forgotten.

The know-how of making a *komuz* has been in our family for generations. My grandfather made *komuz*. He had kept all the tools, axes, addice, a smoothing plane, a shaving plane, and lenses. He made the *komuz* all his life, until he died at the age of 84 in 1968. He also made parts for the *komuz*. After my grandfather's death, when I was 12-13, I took some of the prepared and dried parts of a *komuz* from the shelf in his workshop. I knew that it was my grandfather's work and I decided to finish it. At the age of 13 I worked really hard and in the end I made a *komuz*. I can still play that *komuz* until today.

Seeing what I had done, my father Kelgenbaiy cut down a plum tree that was standing in the garden and said that now I can make *komuz* and he would help me. At the time he was working as a kolhoz team leader. I can still remember that day. If you are capable of something you can develop your talent, only if you are interested, have a desire to do it and put some effort into it.

The great craftsman Orozobaiy Kenchinbaev lived in our village. He used new methods to make *komuz*. I was his apprentice for half a year. Making *komuz* needs careful thought and a lot of skills. In order to make a *komuz* one cannot only carve the wood. A *komuz* must be made with your mind and you should give it all of your inner energy. It is equal to giving life to the instrument. Only then does a *komuz* talk and only then *komuz* will it have good sounds.

In order to make a *komuz* one needs a little and big axe, a saw, an addice, and a file. A *komuz* can be made from raw wood in one to two weeks, if one works intensively. But a *komuz* should not be made in that way. Its parts should be prepared first and they should dry out for 3 years. When it dries it gets tighter, and some places might crack, some places might bow. Only after that, one can take it and finish the rest of the work. Traditionally the wood of the plum tree is preferred. The *komuz* made of the wood of a plum tree gives a pleasant sound; it is easy to make a *komuz* out of this wood and is very durable. But, in my opinion, one can make a good *komuz* from other kinds of wood too and they will be not worse than the plum tree *komuz*. For example from the pear tree.

The sound of each *komuz* differs. If there are a hundred *komuz*, there will be a hundred different sounds. And the sound of a *komuz* gets better over time. For that it should be kept well, it should be respected. There are many musical instruments of Kyrgyz people, I can make several of them; the *kyl kyyak*, *temir komuz* or *ooz komuz*, *dobulbas* (drum) and *shaldyrak* (rattles).

If I remember all of the melodies that I have learnt to play since childhood, it may reach about hundred, even more. I have composed about ten melodies. I have not seen any *komuz* players of my age or younger, who play melodies like mine. However, thanks to the opportunity given by the Aga Khan Foundation and their teacher-student project, now I have five pupils. They are playing my melodies.

I also want to mention one person who made a great contribution to my career as a *komuz* player, a person who inspired me. In 1988 there was a competition in Osh, organized for the 125th anniversary of the *akyn* Toktogul Satylganov. Many *manaschy*, *komuzchu*, poets, singers and folk masters took part in this competition. Among the *komuz* players I took third place. My performance was noticed by Bolush Madazimov and he invited me to take part in his project, he took the *manaschy*, *komuzchu*, poets and singers, who won in the competition, to Uzbekistan, to give a concert for Kyrgyz people living in Uzbekistan. We were there for about ten days. On the way back to Bishkek I flew with Bolush Madazimov. I had not had the chance to get to know him closer during the chaos of the competition. It was a great honour for me to have the opportunity to get better acquainted with a famous person, whom I had heard a lot about.

When we arrived in Bishkek Bolush Madazimov asked me to drive him to the hotel and when we arrived he invited me to come the next day "we will play the *komuz* and talk". The following day I visited him at about nine o'clock. We played some melodies, talked about the stories of those melodies and had a long conversation. I heard him

play many melodies which I thought were forgotten. He taught me “Bekarstan” and “Thirty two Bekarstan”. He liked my playing and since then he would always mention me in his speeches.

In 1991 in Osh there was a competition of *komuzchu* on the national level, he was one of the judges and the *komuzchu* of Osh that no one among them could compare to me. And indeed, I won that competition.

Bolush Madazimov was a famous *komuzchu*. He had a unique way of playing the *komuz*, that belonged only to him. When he played, people listening were touched by the music. He knew many melodies and many of his performances have been recorded and can be found in the “Golden Collection” of the Kyrgyz radio. I am so grateful that I had the opportunity to be influenced by this great man.

## CHAPTER 5

### SACRED MANJYLY-ATA

#### INTRODUCTION

Manjyly-Ata is a large *mazar*, a sacred site that lies on the southern shore of the Ysyk-Köl. When asked about the *mazar* people often recall the words of words of Karga Ake, who lived in the 17th century: “*Joo kūsösön jongorgo chabaarsyn, bala kūsösön, Manjylyga baraarsyn*”, which means: “If you want enemies, you will go to the Jungars (China), if you want child, you will go to Manjyly”. As long ago as the 17th century Manjyly-Ata was already known as a sacred place and it is still considered so today.

There is known saying about the *mazar*: “*Bala surasang – Manjyly-Ataga, baiylyk surasang – Cholpon-Ataga, den sooluk surasang – Ysyk-Ataga, tak surasang – Kochkor-Ataga bar*”. This means: “If you want a child – go to Manjyly-Ata, if you want wealth – go to Cholpon-Ata, if you want health – go to Ysyk-Ata, if you want to be crowned – go to Kochkor-Ata”.

Manjyly-Ata is situated in the south of the Tong area of the Ysyk-Köl province between the town of Bokonbaevo and village Kaji-Saiy. The *mazar* is a complex of sacred places, hidden amongst the gentle clay hills there are holy trees, springs, old graves and a dilapidated mosque. The *mazar* has now acquired a more modern area where the pilgrims are hosted. There is an area for ritual sacrifice, for the preparation and arranging of food; a place for eating; a place where pilgrims can spend the night; and a room for those who guard the site. On the top of one of the hills a modern mosque was built in 1998 with the support of Dastan Sarygulov<sup>147</sup>.

The pilgrims visit the springs (of Umaiy-Ene, Kyrk-Chilten, hero Köböök, Ilim, Bala) the trees (Bugu-Ene), the grave of Muiyt ake and other graves. The waters of the springs of Manjyly-Ata each have a different flavour and according to the knowledge of the traditional practitioners they all have different healing abilities.

There are no exact explanations of how Manjyly-Ata came to be known as a sacred site. According to the famous *manaschy* Mambet Chokmorov, the future parents of the great hero Jakyp and Chyiyrdy came to Manjyly-Ata to ask for a child and were blessed with Manas. From this story comes the fame of the *mazar* as a place where people ask for children. The local people also tell another story about Manjyly-Ata. According to this version a person named Manjyly lived there. He was a greatly respected wise man, he had healing powers and was an enlightened person. When he died, he was buried in this place, at one of the sacred sites of the complex called Manjyly-Ata. When people got sick or when they needed advice, they would remember Manjyly and visit his grave to ask his help. Over time the grave and the springs around it became known as a holy place. Yet another story says that the hero Attila who conquered Europe with his sword in the fifth century was buried at Manjyly-Ata. There are many other legends about Manjyly-Ata.

The Altai people also use a word similar to *manjyly*. Their word *manjak* is used for a special sheepskin coat that only powerful shamans can wear. According to Danil Mamyev<sup>148</sup>, shamans wear the *manjak* coat when they hold a ritual called “going under the earth” or “going to the world of the dead”. The *manjak* coat helps the shamans in the difficult rituals, it helps them to go beneath the earth and then return.

It has long been custom among the Kyrgyz people to bury their fathers in the burial place of their forefathers. This tradition has always been strictly followed and was considered the right way of honouring ancestors. When Orozbek from the Ysyk-Köl Bugu clan, the father of five sons: Aryk, Myrzakul, Asan, Kara and Tokoch, was buried near Andijan, his sons and the Bugu people would take the bodies of their deceased south, close to Andijan, to bury

them where their ancestors lay. Then one day a wise man, one of the seven *ake* of the Ysyk-Köl: Moiyt ake, a son of Aldayar beseeched his last will to his people saying: “When I die, bury me at Manjly-Ata. When you dig a place for me you will find a copper *kazan*<sup>149</sup>, a ladle, and two bowls. After that, do not trouble yourself by taking the bodies of the deceased to Andijan. You will receive a sign at Manjly-Ata and you should submit to that sign. You must know that this is a very holy place.” Moiyt Ake lived to be one hundred and he died in the summer time in Tekes. The people of the Bugu tribe did not forget his last will and took his body between two camels and buried him at Manjly-Ata. As Moiyt ake had said, when they dug the hole to bury him they found the copper *kazan*, the ladle and the two bowls. When the mourners were leaving the site they saw a white colt run along the lake shore along to Manjly-Ata hollow and then it disappeared. Remembering the words of Moiyt ake about the sacredness of Manjly-Ata, they read this vision as a good sign confirming the words of Moiyt ake. From that time onwards the people of Ysyk-Köl no longer took their dead to be buried in the south, but rather buried them by the lake.

Manjly-Ata distinguishes itself from the other *mazars* of the region in that it has always had loyal guardians and protectors, who take care of the site. The guardians maintain the site, they keep it clean and welcome the pilgrims, they tell them the story and secrets of the site. There is a story passed down through the oral records concerning one of the guardians of the site, who lived around the end of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th century. He was a dervish, called Kobek. The story goes that it was Kobek, an educated man and a Muslim, who built the old mosque. Today it is still possible to see the ruins of that mosque; one can see the walls almost a metre high. After Kobek the guardians were Moiyt ake, Botokan, and Maiytyk dervish, who were also clairvoyants, after them the *manaschy*, Mambek Chokmorov.

Botokan was one of the richest people in the Tong area on the south shore of the lake. He took it upon himself to protect the *mazar* from his kinsmen, who wanted to settle here. He told people that the sacred place should not be touched, it should not be trampled upon and cattle should not graze here, nomadic yurts should not stand at Manjly-Ata. He took great care of the site. Before he died he told his children to bury him at Manjly-Ata next to Moiyt ake, and his last wish was fulfilled.

Maiytyk was a *dervish* [q.v.] - a wanderer who came from afar, stopped at Manjly-Ata and then became the guardian. According to legend Maiytyk cured people from emotional disorders, he would light great fires at Manjly and in this way cleanse the souls of the sick people. The elders say that Maiytyk guarded the site until the end of his days.

The *manaschy* Mambet Chokmorov was the guardian of Manjly-Ata during the Soviet period, during which the state fought to eliminate spiritual and religious values. That is why he conducted the pilgrimage and took his patients there only at night. He would only cure people after dark. People who undertook the pilgrimage with Mambet *manaschy* say there was nothing there at the time. There were no buildings; only the tombs and the great expanse of nature, there were also two stone hearths. The local *aksakals* also say that despite government prohibition, many people would visit the sacred sites at night<sup>150</sup>.

Today the guardian of Manjly-Ata *mazar* is Kadyrbek Jakypov. He has done much to improve the conditions at the site for the pilgrims who come from all parts of the country. A modern complex has been built, a four room house in which visitors can spend the night, and a kitchen area where food can be prepared and cooked. Everything necessary for pilgrimage is here including a place for ritual cleansing and ecological rubbish bins. These facilities have been built thanks to the organizational skills of the guardian.

In October 2008, Kadyrbek Jakypov took part in World Conservation Congress organized by the International Union for Conservation of Nature in Barcelona, Spain. His participation was nominated by Aigine Cultural Research Center and was supported by the Christensen Fund from the USA. At the congress, Kadyrbek Jakypov had the chance to tell an international audience of the ancient traditions of the Kyrgyz people, he talked of the sanctity, magic and power of sacred sites, particularly Manjly-Ata. This was a way to introduce people to the traditions of the Kyrgyz people.

The mosques that stood and are standing at this exceptional sacred site have already been mentioned. This is an important detail when considering religious diversity. On the one hand the mosque standing at Manjly-Ata can be a place of pilgrimage for hundreds of “official” Muslims strictly following the rules of the Shariat [q.v.], the mosque allows them to pray at this sacred site. On the other hand it is also a place of worship for hundreds of followers of

“folk” Islam. Whereas the adherents of other religions and directions of belief have at their disposal the incredible nature of the area, here they can pray amongst the peaceful and quiet lands not influenced by time and civilization.

In this chapter our contemporaries share their thoughts and experiences about pilgrimage to Manjyly-Ata and their understanding of the sacredness of the site.

<sup>147</sup> Dastan Sarygulov is a *Tengriism* practitioner, author of books on *Tengriism*. He is the former State Secretary of Kyrgyzstan, former deputy of the Parliament [ed.].

<sup>148</sup> Danil Mamyev is the founder and head of the natural park “Uch Enmek” in Karakol, Altai Republic of Russian Federation. He is also the leader of the organization “Tengri Spiritual-Ecological School” (1996). His nationality is Altai, from the Todosh tribe. He is a geologist, geographer, and mountaineer. His spiritual responsibility is to preserve sacred sites.

<sup>149</sup> Kazan [Turkic] - a kettle.

<sup>150</sup> For a description of the problems of visiting sacred sites during the Soviet period: see “The experience of sacred sites during the Soviet period” in *Mazar Worship in Kyrgyzstan: Rituals and Practitioners in Talas*, Bishkek, 2007, pgs.329-351.

## I HAVE SEEN THE MYSTERY OF MANJYLY-ATA MANY TIMES

### **Abdullaeva Tamara**

*She was born in 1949 in the town of Naryn where she also received her secondary education. When she was studying in the 8th grade, her family moved to Ysyk-Köl and in 1966 she got married. She is the mother of nine children. She now lives in Kichi-Jargylchak village of the Jeti-Ögüz raiyon.*

My grandfather and great-grandfathers were mullahs. My grandfather, who lived in the mountains of the Tong raiyon was a great mullah, he was from the Uyghur people. He rode around the villages on his grey donkey and treated children. I grew up in a family of mullahs, amongst spiritual people who do not drink alcohol. All of the mullahs of my family have now died. I myself left their land when I was went to Jargylchak and got married, I have had eight children and there were times when we were very poor.

In the village of Ak-Terek lived old lady. Her name was Kalipa and she could fly at night. My son, who was born in 1971 had epilepsy and she cured him with the ritual *köchürüü yrym* [q.v.], where the illness of person can be transferred onto another living creature. When my son had a fit his eyes widened, he would foam at the mouth and loose consciousness. At that time he was only six-months old. My son and another child were sick with this illness. Because we were poor and we did not have any money I could not go to the doctor and took my son to that old lady. She exchanged the saliva of my son and a hen. She demanded that the hen be a big white hen and she said: “From now on do not ever hit this hen, do not beat it and give it only clean food”. When my son's sickness was transferred to that hen, it started to have the fits my son used to have, it would fall down, it's legs sticking up into the sky, eyes wide open. These fits were frequent and the chicken suffered from them until the day she died. After the transfer my son was no longer ill and after the illness died with the chicken.

I have already mentioned that in our past generation people were mullahs, so we cannot use alcohol at all, it is categorically out of bounds for our family. My daughter married a man from Jargylchak but studied in a specialized school in Tong. After one of her visits home from school I went to see her of to the bus stop. In those days I used to drink alcohol. I had already started to visit sacred sites but did not fully believe in their power and I did not believe that alcohol was a problem. My daughter and I were standing at the bus stop in front of the shop, where I used to work. My colleagues locked the door of the shop and were drinking vodka as it was the eve of a national holiday. I really wanted to join them and drink 100 grams of vodka, my mouth was watering and somehow the bus wasn't coming. After a while the bus arrived and I said good-bye to my daughter and headed over to the shop for a drink. I tried to cross the road to the shop but somehow I couldn't as if my feet were nailed to the ground. I couldn't walk in the direction of the shop but somehow there was no problem in the direction of home. This frightened me and I thought “Oh God, something is happening, I should not go there, I should not drink, I have to go home”. When I got home my eldest daughter knew that I had wanted to go to the shop to have a drink even though I had not mentioned this before. “You wanted to go to the shop and drink, right? It's very good that you did not drink”, she immediately said.

Another time after work in the shop my colleagues said: “Have a drink, your daughter will not know about it. You are tired, let's have a hundred grams and afterwards you will wash the floors with more vigor”, they convinced me. After drinking I washed the floors and forgot that I drank. When I got and my daughter who was sitting in the yard

saw me, she lost consciousness. Seeing this I called the name of God and asked him for forgiveness. When my daughter regained consciousness, she said: “Why did you drink!” After that I realized that my children were more important than alcohol and I gave up drinking. “Dear God, you let me drink a lot, now please, give me a conscience” and said good-bye to alcohol. I was about 40 or 45 years old.

The first sacred site I visited was Manjly. At that time I did not have the intention to pilgrimage or to ask for health. Such blessings are given by God only to those whom he loves, if I drink vodka, how could God give to me. But God forgives even those who have committed many sins. He can show a person the right way.

And so life went on, I continued to stumble and pick myself up again. Then my daughter who was born in 1979 also got sick with epilepsy. At the time medical personnel from the Medical Academy came from Bishkek to our village to control the medical staff. I went to them with my daughter. When I said that my daughter shakes violently, a psychologist named Janna, examined my daughter and said that I have to take her to Bishkek immediately. On the way back home I remembered my grandmother's words: “Epilepsy is given to children chosen by God. If a person can handle it, then it is good, but if a person cannot handle it, then he will suffer in this perishable world”.

I remembered my grandmother's words and I thought maybe God is showing us he loves us. We have suffered a lot, maybe God pities us and that is why he has given us this. Thinking this I washed my child and went to Ak-Terek to a young female clairvoyant. She had not been able to understand and accept her gift and before she did learn she got crippled. I could not what she was saying, she did not speak very clearly. So her mother interpreted for us; “your daughter has a gift, you should do *dem saluu* [q.v.], do not go to hospital.”

So I took my daughter to a moldo named Aiytkurman who lived in Chychkan village and he worked for seven days to heal my daughter. Then I took her to Kadyrbek, the spiritual guardian of Manjly-Ata sacred site. Kadyrbek was working in the department of Kyrgyz medicine next to the medical clinic in Pokrovka. He also said that my daughter had power and that I should not take her to official hospitals. We returned home and afterwards my daughters' legs stopped working. So I took her to Ak-Terek, because I had heard of a clairvoyant lady had come to that village. She said that my daughter was bewitched and that the spells had to be lifted. When she lit a candle and started chanting the spells I began to cry uncontrollably and I felt as if my lungs were blown out. She turned to me and said “You can cure people, you have the gift have you used it before?” I said “No, I use some rituals, which I learned from my grandmother. I use them when my children are ill and the following day they usually feel better. I treat them without taking them to hospital.” My daughter and I stayed at the Ak-Terek *mazar* for 15 days. Then we stayed at Manjly-Ata for 3 months. My daughter would often get excited and run away to the lake, we would chase her and like that at last her illness disappeared.

While we were at Manjly-Ata, I saw a dream. In my dream I saw a white viper sliding out of a black bag. Its head was my daughter's head. I managed to chant *kelme* and thought to myself “my daughter is on the way to recovery, the curse is leaving her”. After that it seems my daughter's powers shifted to me. The spirits told me with the help of the spirits of the ancestors power will come to your feelings, so I should tell others what to feel. I began to heal, whenever I touched the heads of children who had a high temperature, they would get cured. The following day they would be healthy again. It is important to know a lot, I have tried but was not able to visit many sacred sites, also because my husband was against it and my children needed me for other things. This is also a test in life.

Of the *mazars* I like going to the Jetigen-Ata the most, whenever I go there, I feel better. I talk to the place and tell it all my problems. I also go to Manjly-Ata often, the power of the *mazar* is very great. It supports all people. Any wish, spoken at Manjly-Ata comes true.

Our spiritual master told us to go to Manjly. But he was a person who sometimes would not say things from the bottom of his heart and for this later he suffered. If something is given to you to tell others, you should do that and you should explain it to people correctly. But there are things that should not be told and I understand that our master did not explain such things to us. We obeyed our master and went to Manjly, he told us to stay there for seven days, but we were at Manjly more than that.

We went to Jeti-Ögüz and spent the night in the wood among the trees next to the health resort. There was a huge tree at the lake shore in Chyrak. That place is also believed to be sacred and that is why we spent another night there. When we lit a fire I could not see anything, but I know what the spirits told me.

Even though I do not see anything, I have strong feelings. For example, once when Ulan<sup>151</sup> was suffering his brother Myktybek called me. When I ran to his house and wanted to enter, I felt somebody push me back. I went out

and entered again bowing and I felt lights coming to that place. As I sat next to Ulan and said some spells, he started reciting Soltobaiy's<sup>152</sup> poem "*Jindi suu*"<sup>153</sup>. Then he spoke the words of the spirits: "Myktybek will take Ulan to this place, to that place". The spirits came and made him speak. I believe that spirits come to a person, take their soul out, enter the body, make the body talk and then leave and put the soul back into the body. When I was with Ulan, he was suffering badly. He was shouting: "Glasses, vodka, take all of them away!"

This is like our prophet who went to Mount Sinai and wrote down the Qur'an. It was dictated to him by a power he could not see. This is the same thing. A person cannot feel themselves and they suffer. When a person suffers like this, they even sometimes test themselves by walking along the edge of high crevices and cliffs. If the Qur'an is read to a suffering person sometimes this helps to calm them down.

Ulan suffered a lot in his childhood. He did not like places where alcohol was used and would get sick immediately. He preferred peace and quiet. His family would always excuse him and say that he was ill. I saw him when he started attending elementary school and said to his parents: "He is a boy with power; do not take him to hospital". But his parents did not listen to me. Moreover, they did not believe me. They kept taking him to hospital and the boy kept suffering. At that time, there was nobody who understood what was happening. Even I did not understand it all. Great powers come to us by themselves and they teach us. People under their power become taciturn and are not very sociable.

Because of my daughter's illness I visited many sacred sites. Once, when I was at Manjyly-Ata, a curious event happened. It was on a cloudless day, we saw a car coming on the road. We saw that it was a government car and we crossed to the other side of the road. It turned out they were coming to the *mazar* and they had a sheep and a box of vodka in the boot. My daughter and I were standing with another woman and her daughter, because of their affliction both the girls could not speak at the time. Seeing the car, before it had even pulled up, they both drew a picture of a vodka glass. It was what the car was bringing and they picked up some stones and sticks to throw at the car and chase it away. We, the mothers, struggled to contain them and suddenly from nowhere dark clouds appeared and it started to rain heavily. The people who had left the car and were heading for the sacred site, had to turn back. As soon as they left, the sky immediately brightened and the dark clouds disappeared as they had never been but we were all wet.

After that we made a fire and sat at the *mazar* praying until deep into the night. A moment came when both our girls lost consciousness. "Let's cover them with blankets and not wake them, they are at the madhrasa in Tashkent" said my companion. Both the girls were lying in different corners of the room and they did not even sigh in their sleep. When they woke up they both drew a picture of a mosque. The pictures were alike. I still keep that picture.

When we returned to our village, we conducted *ak chilten* [q.v. as *ak chiltenge oturuu*]. This is a ritual where through prayer one connects with spirits, and other supernatural powers. We hang white curtains in our windows. One day spirits appeared, they came from India. They spoke in Hindi and we did not understand them. They taught us a song of greeting. It seems that in the world there are three religions accepted as the great ones: Christianity, Buddhism and Islam. The representatives of these three religions came. We bowed and greeted them all. Then the daughter of the other lady started speaking in Hindi giving the spirits greetings from the Indian spirits. Then we were asked questions. We could not answer as we did not understand them all. That lady also did not understand. We just greeted them and that's all and we were not given translations.

During the *ak chilten* ritual which lasts for some time the participants should not sleep or leave their houses. They cannot work and they eat food prepared by their relatives. We were told that one person should do ablution first, then prepare food and bring it us; our daughter in Jargylchak volunteered to do this. The participants should pray and give their full attention to the ritual. We were on an *ak chilten* for three days. We would do ablution, sit in our house, eat, read Qur'an and pray. We did not sleep for these three days. There were five of us; my daughter, that lady, her daughter, a person from Darhan, and I.

There was a reason why we decided to do *ak chilten*: when we were sitting around the fire by the lake shore, the lady that was leading us said: "We are told to go on an *ak chilten*". That lady's name was Altyn, she was from Pokrovka. One of her daughters had been given a special gift, however she could not handle it and committed a suicide. Her other daughter, who was with us, had also been given this gift. At first she also could not handle it; in one of her fits she injured her class-mate's leg with a knife and it was decided that she had to take part in rituals which made her better.

I became acquainted with Altyn through the following circumstance: because my daughter's shaking did not stop, I took her to my sister-in-law Kalicha in Jargylchak who used to see children and treat them. She healed at the Ak-Terek sacred site and had a house built there for pilgrims. I went to her and said that my daughter is not getting better. She was not my sister-in-law at the time, only later one of my daughters became her daughter-in-law. She told me: "There is a lady named Altyn; she visits the Ak-Baiybiche sacred site. Prepare your *boorsok*<sup>154</sup> and go tomorrow early morning to that place". We prepared our bread and went to the *mazar*. When we reached it Altyn got off the bus along with other people. When we lit the candles at the *mazar* I started to cry. Then Altyn turned to me and said "You can heal people". Since then we have been visiting sacred places together.

We went to the Ak-Baiybiche sacred site because of my daughter. In her dreams she saw the place. She said that there were female ballet dancers there, I thought that she might be seeing not ballerinas, but angels. I asked Kalicha where the place from my daughters' dream could be and she told me where she thought the *mazar* was located. When we went there were two similar trees and springs. The spirit of one spring was a white colt and snakes were the spirits of the other spring. We stayed there for a long time. My daughter said that it was the place that she had seen in her dreams.

My daughter and I were told that we should stay overnight at different sacred sites. When we went to Manjly-Ata, we said some spells and read Qur'an, there were big white frogs in one of the springs and it seems they were spirits. We were told we should spend seven days at Manjly-Ata and that is why we took food for seven days but the days flew by quickly and we stayed for three months. We would spend the night by the shore of the lake Ysyk-Köl, sometimes it would rain, but when we woke up in the morning, we were dry. We did not have any difficulties there. We were not hungry, many pilgrims came to the *mazar* and there was always bread and meat left over. We did not need anything else and we could spend three months there. Sometimes the girls would get excited and run away and when that happened we would prepare bread and pray. When I say three months now, it seems to a long time, but we did not notice how quickly the days passed. After our stay my daughter recovered.

While I was at Manjly-Ata I had a dream. There were reddish-brown mice at Manjly-Ata and I would scatter bread crumbs for them. In my dream two of the mice came and put a wing into my palm. I clenched my fist around the wing, but when I opened my hand it was no longer there, instead I held the beating heart of a small child. Another time when I was sleeping my hand was lying out of the covers and I felt something sharp prick my hand, then I saw flames cover my hand and the pain was gone. I understood that this was a sign from God, that he was giving me something.

I did not understand what was going on with my daughter. It was very frightening at first. Later I could understand more and would say: "I am grateful that I have a daughter but, God, if you want to take her, then it must be so". She was old enough to do everything by herself but she kept falling down and hitting herself all the time; it was anguish. She would walk and lose her consciousness whether she was on soft ground or stairs. She fell over the stairs a lot. Even at mealtimes she would lose consciousness. When it seemed as if somebody had tapped her and made her sleep. Such experiences are given to people in order to awake their feelings and to show them there is a Creator.

Once we were going to Jeti-Ögüz by car. My daughter and I were with another woman and her daughter. My daughter was sitting in the middle. I did not notice when the door of the car opened and my daughter jumped out of the car. She fell down a ditch on the side of the road and at the bottom there was a big rock. The car, which was going very fast turned and came back. We were all terrified thinking that she hit her head. Our spirit-patrons told us to sit and read Qur'an. While we read Qur'an my daughter woke up and asked "What happened?" She was alive and nothing had happened to her head. The supernatural power was testing us, to see whether we are sincerely devoted and whether we sincerely believe in God. All of these events were tests.

The power of the Lake is great. Every other day my daughter would run to the side of the Lake and say it is calling her. There were times when she would go into the water up to her neck. I cannot swim and I would beg a boy named Bekbolot to bring her out. Later, I found that if we just sat and read Qur'an and prayed to God, she would return by herself. Now all of my children cannot handle alcohol. Even if they drink a little they get agitated. I read Qur'an and they regain consciousness.

A strange thing occurred in our village one year, many of the village children committed suicide in the course of the year. At that time I had a dream. In my dreams there were waves in the lake and there were many Russian coffins

on the shore; about seven or eight coffins. In the morning I woke up and asked for God's blessings. But that year there were many cases of suicide amongst the young people. Nobody knows the reasons for those suicides.

I do not swim in the lake. We are not allowed to do that. We pray to the lake and that is why we cannot swim there. The supernatural powers have told us: "If you have chosen the way, you cannot swim in the lake. Why do you play and swim? Just pray". When I was little I was ill often and the lake healed me. My mother married an Uyghur living in Kyrgyzstan and when I was born she left my family and left me to my grandmother who brought me up. When I was little I had an illness called rickets and could not walk until I was three. So I was taken to Tong and washed in the lake. My grandfather and grandmother often said that I got well thanks to the power of the lake. Maybe I need to visit sacred sites around the lake and pray to the lake because I have been under its influence since childhood. Now I do not swim in the lake because I worship it.

<sup>151</sup> Ulan Ismailov – Manaschy who tells of his experiences in Chapter 2 of this book. Tamara and Ulan are from the same village [ed.].

<sup>152</sup> Soltobaiy Toktobolot uluu (1834-1918) - a Kyrgyz poet and *akyn* [ed.].

<sup>153</sup> *Jindi Suu* [Kyrgyz] - lit.tr. crazy water, meaning alcohol drinks [ed.].

<sup>154</sup> *Boorsok* [Kyrgyz] - traditional bread as deep-fried small pieces of dough.

## ONE OF THE YSYK-KÖL'S MIRACLES

### **Aiytikeyev Kengeshbek**

*Kengeshbek was born in 1955 in Kichi-Ak-Jol village of Jalal-Abad province. He graduated from the Osh Pedagogical Institute, from the department of Physics and Mathematics. He worked in the Technical university in Jalal-Abad and in Osh as the Educational Administrator. He became the deputy director of Jangy-Jol sovhoz, and after the collapse of the Soviet Union he became a chairman of a local cooperative. Currently he is the head of the "Bata" organization in Bishkek.*

Every year, for the last three or four years, we have been visiting the *mazars* of the Ysyk-Köl, we go around the lake to all the *mazars* around it. The members of the scientific institution "Bata" sometimes plan these trips and we go together. Among many *mazars* in that area, the one that influences me most is the sacred site in Cholpon-Ata, then Manjly-Ata. I noticed Manjly-Ata has very powerful energy.

In the autumn of 2005 there was a very interesting event. We arrived at Manjly-Ata as pilgrims, with Ergeshbaiy Ajiybaev and several other men. We were welcomed by Kadyrbek, the guardian of the site. We were sitting in the house and had started our meal. Suddenly Ergeshbaiy felt strange and as he could not sit there anymore, he quietly went out. I have been working with Ergeshbaiy since 1999 and I know him well. When he connects with the spiritual world he goes into a trance. I took pen and paper and went out after him. It was a moonless dark night outside. He went out, turned right and headed to a small hill nearby. I followed him. When he reached the top of the hill, he fell down on his back. I sat next to him and watched him in a trance, I tried to write down all his words, even though it was dark. He was in a trance for a long time. When he came to himself we returned to the others at the *mazar*. When we read what I had written it was about the Kyrgyz who had gone to Europe. His name was Adyl Baatyr. The spirit of Adyl Baatyr left a message about himself through Ergeshbaiy. The spirit of Adyl Baatyr said that he lives at the Manjly-Ata and this surprised us, Adyl Baatyr conquered Europe, nonetheless his spirit came back here<sup>155</sup>.

Seeing our surprise, Kadyrbek told us an interesting story. About two or three years ago a group of Russian scientists visited Manjly-Ata and they took photos of all the hills. On the photo of the hill where Ergeshbaiy had fallen the previous night, there was the silhouette of a large man. But in reality there had been nobody there at the time of photographing. The man was lying on the hill and Ergeshbaiy had fallen down in exactly the same position. I know it as I saw it, Ergeshbaiy might not have noticed as he was in trance, but I have notes of what he said. This was a very mysterious event.

<sup>155</sup> Here talk is of Attila the Hun (406-453 C.E.) [ed.].

<sup>156</sup> Mirzakarim Norbekov is a psychologist and pedagogue, a Doctor of philosophy and a doctor of medicine. He is the founder and president of the "Institute for self-development" (Институт самовосстановления человека) which offers courses [ed.].

IT IS NOT BY CHANCE THAT GOD BROUGHT ME  
FROM DARHAN TO MANJLY-ATA

## **Jakypov Kadyrbek**

*Kadyrbek was born in 1961 in Darhan village of Jeti-Ögüz raiyon, Ysyk-Köl raiyon. He used to work as a driver. In 1990 he completed a six-month course of bio-energetics in Frunze. Since 2001 he has been the guardian at the Manjly-Ata sacred site complex.*

I have had *kyrgyzchylyk* since 1986. In 1990 I passed an exam at Norbekov<sup>156</sup> school of traditional medicine and then I worked in the “Beiyyish” traditional medical center in Bishkek for 8 months. After that I studied at the Scientific Research Institute for 6 months and received their diploma in “Unconnected Energies”, the certificate is numbered either 152 or 154. Then I started to heal people.

At that time nobody was interested in religion and traditional healing methods. But with the encouragement of some people who were, I worked at the regional hospital in Pokrovka from 1992 to 1996. From 1996 to 1998 I established the traditional medicine department at “Ilbirs” factory where I could see my own patients. People with different illnesses would come to me. I could not cure them all but I helped many people with eczema, head aches, nervous problems and stress, stomach aches, liver problems, arthritis, puss coming out of ears and eyes and those who were bewitched. Most people do not understand that there are things like curses, words and spells that bring bad luck and sickness. These curses are also mentioned in scientific works and in the Qur’an. People should protect themselves from such things.

There are schools in Moscow and Almaty called “School of Development of Distant Energo-Information”<sup>157</sup>. The professors come from Saint-Petersburg, and other big cities. I studied there but did not get a diploma. The school teaches important things, how to open the seven chakras, how to correct a persons aura and how to protect oneself from evil energies.

We have a saying “If you ask for a child, go to Manjly”. When our Kyrgyz people were living in the Altai, the Ala-Too mountains were occupied by Kara Kalmyks. When our Khan Jakyp prayed to God to give him a son, he was given a vision. In his vision he was standing in a place where on one side there was the lake and on the other a mountain, there he was given a tiger by the people. In the morning when Jakyp asked a healer about his vision, the healer said: “Jakyp, God is going to give you a child. There is a place called Manjly in Ala-Too. You should go there and pray”. So Jakyp Khan sent his wife Chyiyrdy and advisor Bakaiy from Altai to Manjly-Ata to pray. This is told in one of the versions of “Manas”, recited by the *manaschy* Mambet Chokmorov. Sayakbaiy and Mambet Chokmorov's versions of “Manas” are different, but there are some similarities too. Both versions tell of Jakyp’s vision.

When he was eight years old Mambet Chokmorov was pasturing sheep at a place called Tashtar-Ata, which is situated close to Manjly-Ata and fell asleep. Manas came to his dream and said: “At the age of 21 you will recite Manas”. He said that and branded Mambet, when this vision happened Mambet was lost for three or four days and then somebody found him. This would repeat itself often, and after a while people realised it was connected with the spirits, they would ask him to tell them a story of “Manas”. When Mambet turned 20 his relatives slaughtered a sheep and conducted a sacrifice in his honour. Since then he has been reciting “Manas” and “Semeteiy”. When he gained fame with his reciting, he was brought to Frunze [current Bishkek - ed.]. There Sayakbaiy Karalaev said: “Mambet Chokmorov recites “Manas” better than I do”. But Mambet disliked Frunze for its “dirtiness” and went back to Ysyk-Köl. In the city he could not read *namaz* five times a day and also he never drinks alcohol. He returned to Tong. He would bring people to Manjly-Ata *mazar* to pray at night, without being noticed by the authorities, he would make people read *namaz*. He died in 1973. So even in those bad times old man Myrzaly and others came to Manjly, guided the pilgrims to the sacred places and taught them to read Qur’an.

The ancient saying “If you ask for a child, go to Manjly...” is still used today and for good reason. One old lady came from Jangy-Talap village of Naryn province, she said was not able to have children until she was 27 and only after she visited Manjly-Ata. Her eldest son is now 45. In the Soviet days people would come all the way from Leiylek and Suzak. Even though they were afraid of the government, they came at night and asked for children. The secretaries of regional committees prohibited visiting *mazars*, but they would come themselves. This is because this is a powerful place and the spirit of this place is Ak-Taiylak.

The word “Manjly” consists of 7 letters. There are seven sacred sites and seven springs in Manjly-Ata. The springs all cure different sicknesses and people visit the different sacred sites according to what they suffer from and recover. The waters in different springs have different tastes. One seems to have more sulphur, another tastes more muddy. When the springs are cleaned, healing mud is taken from them.

The distance between the lake and Manjly is about half a kilometre. Sometimes one can hear and see a white colt calling, a child crying, and a white hare running. Each sacred site differs from the others in its level of power. The first sacred site, closer to the entrance, is called the Manjly-Ata sacred site. That spring contains a large amount of sulphur. It is good for skin diseases. Inside the spring sits a big frog, as big as a bucket, with a shiny skin. It is not seen by everybody. It appears in front of people who are good natured and clean.

There are a lot of snakes at Manjly, and they come into the yard. We spread flour on the ground there. Snakes should be treated well.

There is a saying that there are always two sides to everything. There are both angels and demons on graves. Some people might be under the control of demons. It is said that one should not trample graves much, and one should go there only after ablution. If one spits on the graves it is offending the spirits of the people lying under the ground, they say “I do not have a tongue to speak. If I had a tongue I would not be dead. You, of the perishable world, you are spitting on me”. Their offense is the same as a curse. Boys from the age of 12 and girls from age of 9 and older can visit *mazars*, but they should be clean. However, smaller children should not go, unless they are sick. Little children can be strongly affected by the experience and it can be too difficult for children, we should keep them from these strong energies.

It is difficult to carry the burden of other people. The duties of a spiritual master are to guide people in their pilgrimage; to tell them to take care of the *mazar* and not let them trample all over the place and help them understand its power; the capabilities of each spring. Our duty is also to teach people how to read Qur’an and pray; and to explain the right way of pilgrimage.

Manjly has influenced me positively and has brought me luck. Since I have been here I have become the father of two children. Before visiting Manjly, I already had three children. I named my son, who was born in 2003, Kutman [q.v. see *kut*], in honour of this land. In 2006 when my other son was born I called him Islam, as it was only in this year that I really took up the religious path. It was also the year in which the world began to hear of Manjly-Ata, news of its power spread not only into Kyrgyzstan, but to the whole world. The heads of raiyons mentioned Manjly whenever they visited the south shore of the Ysyk-Köl and Manjly received many foreign visitors.

When I came here first in 2001 some people in Tong had heard about Manjly, but almost nobody had been here and most people did not know where it is. But people seem to be able to find out if they start to have difficulties in their lives. If there is no trouble in life, people even forget about God. Now every year there are more and more pilgrims; a house has been built for them; electricity has been connected; a mosque has been built.

We are all sinners and there are people who come away from this place disappointed, there are also people who envy me. There are many different clairvoyants, mullahs, and ordinary people, there are many different points of view. Not every person can come to a place like this and serve it. In order to serve, a person must be accepted by the patrons of the sacred site. There have been pilgrims who came here and wanted to be my assistants. Those who were strong enough worked for a year, some could not bear it and worked for only half a year. Now, with the growing number of visitors and houses, this place is becoming like a town. So we are recruiting assistants and guardians, improving the facilities of the guest area with the money given by people and we are trying to use it for the good of the people themselves.

I read *namaz*, Qur’an and hold the Moslem religion but at the same time I also hold *kyrgyzchylyk* and serve as a healer. There are people who cannot understand this and are deaf to my explanations. There are some mullahs who oppose visiting sacred sites and say that in this way people are worshiping mountains and rocks. But this is not how it is; people aren’t worshiping the water and rocks. They worship only God. When they pray to God they come to *mazars* because this is a place where they can pray and show respect to the spirits and their ancestors. It is written in Qur’an that passing the graves of the deceased one should show respect, stop, pray and read Qur’an. It is written: “If you notice that there is a spring on any part of the land, earth, nature, you should clean it and open its eye.” Also Qur’an mentions that at such places one should read a Sura, a chapter from the Qur’an, and conduct a sacrifice. If we take all these things into account and reconcile the two sides of our beliefs, then people would understand everything.

The buildings, built at sacred sites, are not mosques, but are places where one reads *namaz*. A mosque cannot stand near graves. The mullahs of the *muftiyat* [q.v.] and *kazyyat* [q.v] know this and so do scientists. We have prepared a suitable setting for people to read *namaz* and we do not have a mosque, for this reason we are not under the control of the *muftiyat* and *kazyyat*. The *mazar* is under government control as this is government land. The local village imams obey the *kazyyat* and are counted in the hierarchy.

In 2003 I passed the test and exam of the *kazyyat* and the *muftiyat*. On September 10th 2003 I received certificate number 134 in Balykchy. It states that I am the imam of Manjly-Ata.

The connection between our culture and sacred sites is very strong. The behavior and culture of a person and the Earth should be the same. If we keep ourselves clean, we should keep nature clean too. If we do not waste any drop of water and use it wisely, we will learn not to waste anything and we will reach great success. Kyrgyz people have great traditions, we met visitors with bread and salt and we respected them. That is also why we were a great nation. But now it is not like that. It is important to respect one another and be united. Manas united all the Kyrgyz people. Thanks to him we are living in this wonderful land.

I had heard about the sacredness of Manjly-Ata since I was a child and I believed in it. I saw this sacred site in my dreams many times. I got very sick when I was four years old, I had epilepsy, I had headaches and I could not bear loud noises. I did not like people and my mother took me to visit healers. My mother also had *kyrgyzchylyk* power. She would look at women and judge them, she knew things, she would say to a pregnant woman: “you will give a birth to a boy” or “it will be a girl”. She knew what people were like she would say: “there is hope in this woman” or “this woman is not very safe.” My mother was like a man: she was very open, direct, outspoken and strict.

It is good that there are a lot of pilgrims. We should not hide our sacred sites; we should introduce them to the world. And the help of governmental and non-governmental organizations is a great support. It is good if the spiritual masters and guardians of sacred sites explain the correct ways of visiting sacred sites and it is important that people show respect. If any place is treated badly it loses its powers. Our houses are also sacred. We should show respect to both our home and a place where we work. It is a duty of every person to praise their land.

<sup>155</sup> Here talk is of Attila the Hun (406-453 C.E.) [ed.].

<sup>156</sup> Mirzakarim Norbekov is a psychologist and pedagogue, a Doctor of philosophy and a doctor of medicine. He is the founder and president of the “Institute for self-development” (Институт самовосстановления человека) which offers courses [ed.].

<sup>157</sup> [Russian] *Shkola Dalneyishevo Energoinformatsionnogo Razvitiya* [ed.].

## CHAPTER 6

### MODERN FORMS OF THE ANCIENT *KYRGYZCHYLYK*

#### INTRODUCTION

*Kyrgyzchylyk* is a word often heard when the conversation turns to pilgrimages, *mazars* and traditional practices connected with sacred places. While visiting *mazars*, sitting over the tea or meals, one often hears people talk about “*kyrgyzchylyk*”, “those who have *kyrgyzchylyk*”, or “are under the influence of *kyrgyzchylyk*”. Hearing this for the first time, one may ask: “What is this *kyrgyzchylyk*?”. A straightforward answer to this question is difficult, literally the word can be translated as *kyrgyzness*, but out of context this cannot be understood.

In literature on Kyrgyz ethnography, history or folklore and even in dictionaries the word will not be found<sup>158</sup>, although it is often used in everyday conversations. It may be that the word was used so naturally by even the researchers themselves that they did not see the need to explain it and study it.

The word *kyrgyzchylyk* consists of two parts: “Kyrgyz” and “-chylyk”. The root “Kyrgyz” is an ethnonym, and “-chylyk” is a collective suffix. Together *kyrgyzchylyk* means the qualities and characteristics of being Kyrgyz. There are other words that have the same construction: *musulmanchylyk* meaning muslimness; *tengrichilik* is tengriism, *tuuganchylyk* is kinship. The suffix carries neither a negative nor a positive meaning: *koshomatchylyk* means groveling but *meiymanchylyk* means hospitality.

*Kyrgyzchylyk* in its broader sense can be understood as all that is connected with traditional self-identification and of the Kyrgyz people and how this is manifested: in severe patriarchy that allows women much liberty, hospitality that requires knowing your position in society, in tight kinship networking and openness to the world.

The plurality of meanings of this word allows *kyrgyzchylyk* to vary in meaning in different contexts and depending on why, by whom and how it is being used. In the recent past, and in Soviet times *kyrgyzchylyk* took on a negative connotation and was associated with backwardness and ignorance.

However times have changed and with the coming of independence the word has been allowed to be used in a different context and is now seen as closely connected with the philosophy of *tengirchilik*. It is used to talk of “a specific Kyrgyz way of looking at the world” and “a system of ideas and values characteristic for Kyrgyz people. The definition given by Mamyrasul Tajiev and Zulfia Ibrahim kyzy can be considered as the contemporary understanding: “*Kyrgyzchylyk – kylym karytkan kaada-saltuu, ürp-adattuu, yrymduu, tübölüktüü, uchu chenemsiz, erkin önükkön kasiet*” that is: *Kyrgyzchylyk* is an ancient, traditional, ritual, eternal, endless and free developing ability<sup>159</sup>.

We came to our understanding of *kyrgyzchylyk* during our field research in Talas and Ysyk-Köl. The word was used in conversations alternatively with *aruuluk* or *aktyk* for an array of traditional knowledge and practices, held by people with extrasensory abilities. These people are called *kyrgyzchylygy bar* or *aktygy bar* that is a person yielding the power of *kyrgyzchylyk* (*aktyk*). These powers are seen to come to a person naturally, they cannot be learnt or acquired.

The powers understood as part of *kyrgyzchylyk* are many. In our field research we encountered the bearers of *aitymchylyk* [q.v.] - clairvoyance; *bübülük* - healing powers held by women healers; *bakshychylyk* - healing powers held by men; *dubanachylyk* - dervish powers; *jaiychylyk* - power to change the weather; *kuuchuluk*, - exorcist powers; *tüsh joruu* - interpreting dreams, *tölgöchülük* - fortune telling with the help of objects; *synykylyk* - the ability to mend broken bones; *tamyrchylyk* - diagnosing a person's state of health by feeling their pulse; *tabypchylyk* - healing with herbal medicine, blessings and prayers.

The widely respected art of reciting the “Manas” epic is also called *manaschylyk* and is included in *kyrgyzchylyk*. The artists drawing and painting heroes of the epic referred to as *kyrgyzchylygy bar*<sup>160</sup> as well as *akyn*-improvisors, musicians, people playing traditional music and master craftsmen of traditional musical instruments. The guardians of sacred sites are also bearers of this Kyrgyz ability.

A noticeable and specific group of *kyrgyzchylygy bar*, are spiritual messengers. They have the ability to receive information from extraordinary sources, these are messages from the cosmic universe, from the worlds of the spirits, from herbs and plants, animals and others. This group has been particularly strong since the 1980's, when they started to publish their books and prophecies. Today, one can find a lot of this kind of literature published in Kyrgyzstan<sup>161</sup>.

Therefore although *kyrgyzchylyk* is the general term for many different types of traditionally spiritual abilities all of them require certain criteria to be fulfilled. The first and most important is the *kasiet* that is the sacred power. All the bearers of traditional knowledge *kyrgyzchylyk* or *aruuluk*, claim the ability to yield *kasiet* and talk of their contact with higher powers. These higher forces have many names: *koldoochular* [q.v.] - the patrons; *küchtör* - the powers; *korgoochular* - the protectors; *eeler* [q.v.] - the hosts; *arbaktar* [q.v. under *arbak*] - the spirits; *Alla-Taala* - Allah; and *Jaratkan* - the Creator. To honour the source that has given them powers and to strengthen the link between the world of men and spirits, bearers of *kyrgyzchylyk* take care and attention to perform their traditional rituals regularly and accurately.

The idea that a person may have *kasiet* and the ability to yield this power is connected with the belief that times and worlds are interconnected. It is the idea that a person is strongly linked to the past and future. The links between the past-present-future can be read in tight connection. The visible and invisible worlds, the worlds of men and ghosts, of thought and emotions and of the bearers of powers and their hosts, all these exist in the *kyrgyzchylyk* (*aruuluk*) system.

In view of the many understandings of the term *kyrgyzchylyk* and its specific meaning described above that we have encountered in our field work we decided to call this phenomenon **spiritual *kyrgyzchylyk***. For the bearers of the sacred abilities this is their spiritual mission, which they have been chosen to fulfill and it is the task of their lives.

*Kyrgyzchylyk* is also connected with a specific understanding of faith. On the one hand it is seen as a sacred quality that guards and develops ancient traditions and upholds the connections with the ways of life of ancient ancestors. On the other hand it is also connected with *musulmanchylyk* which is the totality of traditions and practices of Islam. Kultaev Alymbek, the guardian of Sulaiyman-Too sacred mountain in Osh, sees *kyrgyzchylyk* and *musulmanchylyk* as one and the same thing and his opinion is shared by many bearers of the sacred ability. Most of the guardians and people who possess *kyrgyzchylyk* of the Ysyk-Köl oblast, whom we met during our field research considered themselves muslims, following all the rules and rites of Islam. We also met with this during our studies in

Talas. However the past few years have seen the rise of Kyrgyz spiritual movements trying to underline the differences between the traditions of *kyrgyzchylyk* and Islam and to separate their faith from religion. They prefer to worship outside the limits of the main religions.

The power of *kyrgyzchylyk* can be recognized when it brings the bearers sicknesses that cannot be diagnosed by and for which modern medicine has no cure. The suffering of this person and often of their relatives is the way that *kyrgyzchylyk* forces a person to accept *kasiet*. This is the choice between the spiritual path and the life of an ordinary person, because *kyrgyzchylyk* brings with it service and much responsibility for the bearer of this traditional, spiritual knowledge. This power that cannot be denied is the subject of this sixth chapter.

<sup>158</sup> Examples of these are the following works: Abramzon S.M. *Kirgizy i ih Etnogeneticheskiye i Istoriko-Kul'turnye Svyazi* [Kyrgyzes and their ethnogenetical and historico-cultural links], Frunze: Kyrgyzstan, 1990; Akmatyaliyev A. *Kyrgyzdyn Köönörbös Döölötörü* [Perennial values of the Kyrgyz], Bishkek: Sham, 2000; Bayaliev T. *Religiozniye Perejitki u Kyrgyzov i ih Preodolenie* [Religious prejudices of the Kyrgyz people and their overcoming], Frunze: Kyrgyzstan, 1981; Bayaliev T. *Doislamskie Verovaniya i ih Perejitki u Kyrgyzov* [Preislamic beliefs and their prejudices among the Kyrgyz people], Frunze: Kyrgyzstan, 1975; Karasaev K. *Nakyl Sözdör* [Wise words], Frunze, 1987; Karataev O., Eraliev S. *Kyrgyz Etnografiyası boyuncha Sözdük* [A Dictionary of the Kyrgyz ethnography], Bishkek: Biyiktik. 2005.

<sup>159</sup> Ibraim kyzy Z., Tajiev M. *Tengir Ata*. Bishkek: Biyiktik, 2006, pg.43.

<sup>160</sup> *Kyrgyzchylygy bar* [Kyrgyz] - having *kyrgyzchylyk*.

<sup>161</sup> Examples can be found in: Begaliev O. *Osnovnye Zakony Razvitiya Chelovechestva* [The basic laws of human development], Bishkek: Biyiktik, 2003; Ömürbübü [Begaliev], *Aalamdan Kattar* [Letters from the Universe], Bishkek, 2004; Dalbaev B., Kachkynaliev S. 'Tüpkürdögü Uлуу Söz' [Great words from the Depth] in *Kyrgyz eli kantip baiyyiyt?* [How can the Kyrgyz people become rich?], Bishkek: Sham, 2006; *Jashyl Kitep I: Kyrgyzdar Düinyö Elin Jakshylykka Alyp Barat!* [Green Book I: Kyrgyz people will lead the humanity to good life], Bishkek: Biyiktik, 2006; Ibraim kyzy Z., Tajiev M. *Tengir Ata*. Bishkek: Biyiktik, 2006; *Ruhtar Menen Syrdashuu* [Talking with spirits], Bishkek, 2008; Tezekbaev K. *Tengirge syiynuu*, [Worship to Tengir], Bishkek: Biyiktik, 2004, Volume 1.

## I SUFFERED BECAUSE I COULD NOT FIND THE WAY TO ENLIGHTMENT

### **Abdyvalieva Baktygul**

*She was born in 1962 in the village of Saruu of the Jeti-Ögüz raiyon, Ysyk-Köl oblast. She graduated from the Department of Hydromelioration of the Timiryazev Agricultural Institute in Moscow. Since 1984 she has been living according to the rules of kyrgyzchylyk.*

My healing abilities appeared when I was about 6 or 7 years old. I remember how often I saw people who had passed away, they would walk with me side by side. I was afraid and I used to try to run away from them and hide myself. They would wake me up when I was sleeping, take me to different rooms or outside and they spoke to me, they told me many things, some of which I couldn't understand at the time.

I had prophetic dreams. They were very interesting, meaningful and symbolic. Sometimes I would be flying in the sky with the spirits of the dead people, we would visit beautiful places, where flowers grew and apple trees bloomed, we would sail over the lake. Sometimes I fought alongside ancient warriors helping them defeat their enemies or I would fly around the black stone in Mecca, or climb the Pyramids to stand on the top. There was one dream where I climbed to the very top of a high minarets, from which I could see the tops of the clouds, on one of them an old woman in white clothes was sitting, she wore an *ak elechek* and a small child was sitting in her lap, playing with a ball of fire and making the clouds sooty. The ghosts of Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Brezhnev helped me climb to the top of that minaret. I also walked with Manas Ata and Er Tabyldy in my dreams, I would wander the mountains with them and try to penetrate the secrets of the great Ysyk-Köl, the lake where the water is so sacred that the Kyrgyz say "it cannot be drunk by a dog."

When I think of the experiences in my dreams, I know that I was already then visiting sacred sites. But nights would frighten me, I would dream that I was blind and cry out looking for the light. I think I was suffering because my powers could not find a way out and I did not know how to obey them.

Only many years later, when I was 27 did I start to believe in my powers, this happened one unforgettable day. In those years I used to suffer from terrible headaches. During one of these headaches I suddenly felt that my patron spirits were coming to visit me. This was at midnight and I became afraid, I couldn't calm myself down. Suddenly I heard a voice "Don't be afraid. It's us!" when the spirits came I lost my fear and they spoke to me as if they were normal people, as if we were having an everyday conversation. One of the voices said "you have a headache" and I felt

hands take hold of my head, open my skull and press on the blood veins , it felt as though they were cleaning the flow of blood. When they had finished I awoke as if I had been dreaming, but I hadn't been asleep. I felt much better, lighter and cleaner my headache had stopped. Since that day, I started to believe in my patron spirits. All the dreams that I have seen have an effect in real life. Later when I was 33 I received the power to yield more abilities. This time Allah really opened the door to the eternal way of light. For me that was an unforgettable day.

It was the 14th of June in 1995. It was night somewhere around 3 or 4 in the morning, the angel *Jebireiyil* [q.v] sailed down to me on a white cloud and commanded me to obey the lightness. He cleansed me and gave me the power of clairvoyance. He also taught me how to make *daarat* [q.v.], perform *namaz*, and made me learn all the *ayats* of the Qur'an by heart. He then told me that I could learn everything else, of the ways of healing people, opening their ways, and empowering them with the holy spirit, from Ak Maksut who lives in Kyzyl-Suu and he explained how I could reach him. After searching for Maksut Ata, the guardian of the *mazar* for two months, I found him.

It seems he was already waiting for me and that he had been already ordered by the high powers to teach me and show me the right way. He told me he had been waiting for three years and he said "When we finish your training, I will bless you and then free my place for you so that my students can always work their way to the light". At that time I did not pay enough attention to these words of Maksut Ata. Seven and a half years my angel came to me again and told me: "Your Ata will die soon, you must get his blessings". I didn't understand who was going to die because his name was not called and I didn't know what to do, I felt ill and in my mind I prayed for my father not to die. So it was only after three visitations in my dreams that I went to Maksut Ata and got his blessings. He gave me his blessing and permission to heal people. On the 17th of July 2002 my teacher, Sharipov Maksut Jumagul uulu, suddenly passed away, just after saying midday *namaz*. After his death it was a little difficult for me to work as a healer alone, it was even very frightening sometimes.

I was unhappy because of Maksut Ata's death and one day he came to my dream and said: "I am alive, don't be afraid, I will help you". I doubted whether somebody who was dead could help me, but since then my master Maksut Ata has really been supporting and helping me in all I do. I am very grateful to Maksut Ata and Allah's angel.

The way of *kyrgyzchylыk*, of being a healer, is deep, complex, pure, transparent and straight. If it were not my angel Jebireiyil, I could have lost this way, but I was led and supported by Allah's messenger.

At first I wasn't able to answer the angel's questions for example "What is the difference between white and black?" But thanks to his explanations I came to understand the many sides of life, what is bad and what is good, rich and poor, hungry and satisfied, sick and healthy, strong and weak, everything should be balanced.

Now when I receive insight into the future, I see that life on earth is becoming more and more dangerous. My visions show that in not so many years human life is going to be very hard. I can see the universe being destroyed, the weather totally changed, winds and rains will increase, earthquakes will rack the ground. I can see the earth covered with water and people escaping from the water into the mountains. I can see the people running from the floods over bridges and falling into the depths of abysses, blood flowing like a river under the bridge, I can see millions and millions of people suffering, crying and weeping. Many people will die in road accidents, I can see their broken limbs and feel their pain. That's why I tell my people that the time to save the world is now and that the most important is not to lose the way and to be clean and pure, not to give in to greed, nor corruption, not to break traditions and rituals, not to pollute their bodies. People should keep their dignity and pride, protect their religions and languages and not allow themselves to be fooled.

There is an ancient Kyrgyz saying that speaks of the right way:

Tengri, you created eighteen thousand stars,  
You are the Creator, you are the commander of our fate,  
And we bow before your greatness,  
You are the one we turn to with our prayers,  
And of you we ask the fulfillment of heartfelt wishes,  
You created the moon and the sun in your likeness,  
You became the link between heaven and earth,  
You created the distance between the north and the south,  
You made the world between the west and the east,  
Great Tengri, give us your blessings,

You are the greatest spirit in the Universe,  
Bless us the brothers of Manas, the Kyrgyz.

I must also speak of my background, I am from the tribe Kushchu, my great grandfather's name is Aiydarbek. Tolubaiy Synchy was one of the forefather's of my grandfathers. In my family there are many women, grandmothers, mothers and aunts who were healers. There was Bübüaiym Apa who healed with the help of the holy spirits and with blessings, she opened the way of life for people. Among our grandfathers there was Kanimet Ata, who was a great *tabyp* and healer, he knew the languages of many animals and snakes and he healed people with their help. My ancestors from my mother's side were also healers. There were three brothers who were triplets, their names were Taz Bargy, Kara Bargy, Sary Bargy. All three were *biys* [q.v.] and *bolushes*<sup>162</sup>. My mother's family is from the tribe called Tuvay. Grandfather Taz Bargy was also *kuuchu* [q.v.] and *bakshy* [q.v.]. His predictions would come true and he is said to have also been an *emchi-domchu*<sup>163</sup> and *tabyp*.

I have taken up the way of my forefathers and I also heal people in the same ways as they did. I am learning the ways of my grandfathers. I have helped many people and cured them from serious illnesses. I have brought up a number of students of different nationalities. My students are Erikbay Kyshtobaeva, Gulaiym Isaeva, Aleksey Pushkarev, Valentina Valentinova, Jenish Sulaiymanov, Mirbek Abdykerimov and there have been many others. They are all ready to work independently, they can work with people. We visit *mazars* which they see in their dreams. It must be said that I have managed to cure people, who could not recover with the help of and modern medical care. I made their sicknesses disappear using the lightness and the energies of the third dimensions. Besides, I help people who suffer troubles and I open their way, I show right direction of life. We heal people with medicine made from herbs according to the disposition of the sick people, be they cold or hot.

I conducted the pilgrimage often, in order to purify myself. I visit *mazars*, most often I visit the *mazars* of Manjly-Ata and Ak-Suu. I often visit the mausoleum of Kydyr-Ata, Oluya-Ata in Krasnaya Rechka, Beshkempir-Ata in Balykchy, *mazars* of Kol-Ata, Kumushaiy-Apa in Bishkek, Jer-Uiy and Manas-Ata. I wake up early in the mornings, perform the rituals worshipping Tengir Ata and strengthen my body.

#### MY HANDS WOULD CONTINUE TO WRITE NOT LETTING ME STOP AND STAND UP

##### **Ajybaiy uulu Ergeshbaiy**

*Ergeshbaiy was born in 1939 in the village of Tospu of the Ak-Suu region. He graduated from the Department of Physics of the Kyrgyz State University in 1963. He worked as a teacher in Ak-Suu for 44 years. He is now retired. Since 1999 he has had been in connection with cosmic energies.*

Once I heard the following story from researchers from the Bishkek center of cosmoenergetics<sup>164</sup>: "Some people from Moscow came and took photographs of Manjly-Ata. When they went back to Bishkek and developed the pictures they saw on them a man sitting on the top of the hill. He hadn't been there when they were taking the photos. They said it was UFO". I don't know if this was a true story or not, but it wasn't something I thought about a lot. Then one day I went with my family and friends to Manjly-Ata to pray. We had finished the pilgrimage and about 10 o'clock at night we sat down to eat I was sitting at the *tör*<sup>165</sup> and when the food had been brought, I suddenly jumped up, crossed the *dastorkan*<sup>166</sup> and ran away into the night. Behind me ran Kengeshbek Aiytikeev<sup>167</sup>, who followed to see what was happening. The moon was very bright I noticed, my mind was completely conscious, but I didn't know where I was running, only my feet were moving without my control. And my feet took me right to the top of the hill where the man in the photo had been standing and there I fell down. I fell and grasped the earth. This usually happens whenever I am receiving information from the other world I fall down and embrace the earth. I heard a voice say, "I was a warrior", but the voice did not say who he had been, he did not say his name. When we came back to Bishkek we gathered in the house of one woman. When we were reading the Qur'an I called to the spirits and asked for the knowledge of the warrior's name, who had spoken to me in Manjly-Ata. I hadn't even finished my thought when I suddenly cried out "Adyl the Warrior!" Then it became clear who the voice belonged to. He was not a UFO, but Adyl Baatyr, a hero who is known in European history as Attila.

When we visited Manjly-Ata for the second time, the sacred powers made me run outside again. Earlier I had fallen down on my chest, this time I fell on my back. This time three men ran after me to see what was happening.

Then the voice spoke to me again: “I sometimes come here. It’s me, Adyl Baatyr, who served his people and protected them. I dedicated my life to my people, but now nobody remembers me”. That information was given to me. I realised that spirits of our ancestors are alive somewhere in another world and that we must honour them, as we should honour our past, we should read the Qur’an to them, remember them otherwise they may be offended and not satisfied. After that meeting I gathered a group of people and we slaughtered a sheep, sacrificing it especially for Adyl Baatyr and spoke the Qur’an especially for him. The spirit of Adyl Baatyr seems to rest at Manjly –Ata.

As are all the other *mazars*, the *mazar* of Manjly-Ata is also a place of cosmic connection. White rays come down to *mazars* from the universe. *Mazars* are places where these light rays fall down and rest and the *Ruh* gather at these pure places. As people search for the best pastures, spirits also search for *mazars*. If you come to *mazar* with the devotion of your heart, this ray may also come to you from the universe.

I used to be a teacher and an atheist and I used to not believe in all these things. But now I have learnt to understand them well and I realised there is much written about this kind of phenomenon also in books. There are books that say that in the universe a human being has seven levels. There are such scientific words as “astral body”, “mental body”, and “ethereal body”. Whatever we do everything is noted and written down. After our death those pictures or copies of our deeds leave the body together with our soul and fly away.

The sky is also divided into seven worlds. These are the dark world, the world of Jins [q.v. see *ileeshken*], the world of rays, the light world. The purer we are, the more our hearts are full with light and the better we think of others, the more we have the possibility to fly to the highest world. The world of rays is the one, to which only the prophets go, they are the only ones who can reach it. Those who are close to Jins, go to the world of Jins, and there are others whose souls stay in the world of darkness.

In Bishkek there is a research center “Amelo” where they can measure a person’s biofield. A young man, Andreiy, who works there, once invited me “we are going to a wonderful place, come with us”. There were four of us and we went to the village of Kök Moynok near Balykchy. When we had passed the village and climbed up to the top of the hill, we decided to divide into two groups. I went with Andreiy who said: “There is a place where nature constructed stone houses, it’s a beautiful place”. I had been walking on snow for seven days and I was very tired and I did not want to go that far, but after taking about 50-60 steps I suddenly felt the urge to run and began to walk up the hill very fast. Running I reached the top of the hill, where there was a circle surrounded by dark stones. I fell down and heard a voice say “My name is Beksultan. I was a warrior 5000 years ago and I was killed here during a battle. My body is buried here. My soul is in the universe. Sometimes I come to visit my body”. This information was given to me. Since Andreiy, who is Russian, was beside me and writing down the words that were coming from my mouth, the information was given to me in Russian. When I receive this kind of information, my hands and feet become paralyzed, and only my mouth can talk.

I receive information sometimes and write automatically, in these situations I cannot get up from my seat, only my hands write without stopping for 10 even 15 hours. When I lived in Ak-Suu, I did not understand what was happening to me and I did not understand the messages, I simply executed the commands. There were cases when I was writing for 18 hours. The *ruhs* of Manas Ata, Kanykeiy Apa, other great *ruhs* [q.v.], all of them made me write saying: “You must go to Bishkek, we will be waiting for you in Bishkek”. This upset me I thought “this is not right, I have retired, how is it possible for me to go to Bishkek? The mullahs are right, I am going mad”.

In the end I decided to go to Bishkek. But there the *ruhs* would not let me read books, watch television or communicate with relatives. They only kept giving me information and would not let me have food for 80 days. For 40 days I drank half a litre of milk three times a day and the next 40 days I lived only on boiled water with honey. I did not have a single piece of bread for 80 days. It seems that a ray came from the cosmos and fed me.

Only my hands were writing, but what I was writing about I had no idea. Before Bishkek I had not read my writings myself at all for three years. Even now I do not read most of them as I am short of time. But because I was once a teacher and I had come to Bishkek, I decided to investigate what was happening to me, what kind of phenomena had taken over me and whether there were similar things in the science. As soon as I found books and sat down to look over them the *ruh* would say: “Do not bother with that!” Only after about two or three years did they allow me to read books and then I learnt a little. It seems my peculiarity was called writing “automatic letters”. Russians have published a lot on this. There was a man who had been writing books and after finishing the first part he died, then his *ruh* came and made someone else finish the second part for him.

Having read up on my condition I was glad that it seems the same thing had happened to other people as well. It appears to be called “Psychographic method of cosmic communication”. I know that “psycho” means soul and “graphics” is writing, so it means that some soul is making somebody write. It seems that the energy comes from the cosmos and draws the pen across the paper, making it write. In my case the communication is not poetry but rhythmic words like a melody. The Kyrgyz people in the old times talked tersely but meaningfully, in rhythmic words. When researchers came from Europe and went to pastures in the mountains they said: “Kyrgyz people talk as if they sing”. Even now if you go to remote villages and meet people without any education they talk surprisingly well, so rhythmically.

Sometimes I shout out loud without any reason. It appears that it is a *ruh* that enters me and makes me shout. Several years ago my daughter became very sick and I took her to a woman called Gulsina, who can heal with the help of spirits. It was the seventh day of our stay and I was simply sitting beside her, suddenly in my hand I felt an electric shock. Gulsina looked at me and said “You will heal people. I am giving you my blessing. Your twelfth grandfather’s spirit has entered you. That twelfth grandfather is a Native American Indian. It is his spirit that cries out of you”. I did not accept her words and said “don’t tell such tales. Nobody is inside me”. But since then the uncontrollable shouting started, I cannot stop myself, even though I am ashamed in front of people.

There is such a thing as a stone book. These are ancient stone carvings, petroglyphs: what is written on the surface of stones is their external memory. But inside the stones there is an inner memory. All the events of the past are preserved inside stones. *Ruhs* can get this information from the stones and then they tell these stories to people and make them write them.

When I first arrived in Bishkek I met a young man called Sabyr who was going on holiday to the Ysyk-Köl for two weeks. I asked him to bring me back some stones that he liked. He brought me three small stones, one of which had a chipped edge. When I put the broken stone on the table and took a pen in my hand it made me write the history of the Kyrgyz people and of the lake.

“Where the lake now lies there used to be a grand city” began the stone, “On one hot summer day, half of the townspeople had moved to the higher pastures. That morning when the people at the pastures got up and looked down at the valley, they no longer saw the city, a lake had appeared in its place. Many people drowned under the water and families were separated. The survivors who were in the mountains could not bear the pain and suffering and they decided to leave the place. They sat an old woman on a horse and followed her eastwards praying to God to give them happiness in a better place. It was then that the Kyrgyz people left for the Altai mountains”. This story gives information about the roots of the Kyrgyz people, history knows that the Kyrgyz people migrated from the Altai, but until I heard the information from the stone I had not heard of any knowledge about how it was that the Kyrgyz came to the Altai.

Water also has the property of preserving information, the sacred Ysyk-Köl lake absorbs information from the universe. This kind of information comes to places of light and sacred power, it also comes to plants, to stones, but only a few men can feel it. Information comes to water through rays of light. When these are reflected from water they hit people and through them can be transformed into voice and words. The ray of light is a sacred thing and it is made of seven colors that carry the waves of information. These waves come to special persons, such as *manaschys*, *yrchys*<sup>168</sup>, and *akyns*. These people should be honored and highly respected, they should be cared for by others so that their talents can develop. Singers have the gift to prolong the lives of their listeners with their singing. Poets also take information from the cosmos and this helps them to write their verses. They receive inspiration from the cosmos and can write four or five pages of song in a short time. These songs are preserved for eternity, like “Sary-Oiy”, “Oiy Bulbul”, and “Alymkan”. All the great works which were awarded the Nobel prize were inspired by the cosmic energies and in communication with the higher powers. All the *great* scientists believed in God, for example, Einstein, Mendeleev, Nostradamus, Bruno and others.

The 21st century is the century of cosmic communication. In this century many people throughout the world will be able to communicate with the cosmos and many works will be written on the *ruhs*’ commands. Human beings, from their first moment in this world start to communicate with the universe through their thoughts, feelings, sight and words. If they start to be bad people, they have a ugly disposition or they commit many sins this means that God has severed the communication. I do not think anybody can reject the fact that all the religious knowledge in the world has been given to us from the universe.

<sup>162</sup> *Bolush* [Kyrgyz] - like *biiy*, another title for a governor [ed.].

<sup>163</sup> *Emchi-domchu* [Kyrgyz] - healer [ed.].

<sup>164</sup> Members of the Society of Cosmo-Energetics in Bishkek [ed.].

<sup>165</sup> *Tör* [Kyrgyz] - place of honor where the most important or elder person attending the event is seated, traditionally the *tör* seat is opposite the door [ed.].

<sup>166</sup> *Dastarkan* [Kyrgyz] - traditional table-cloth [ed.].

<sup>167</sup> Keneshbek Aiytikeev the director of the “Bata” foundation, his article can be found in the fifth chapter of this book [ed.].

<sup>168</sup> *Yrchy* [Kyrgyz] - a singer [ed.].

WE HAVE TO BE CAREFUL IN WHAT WE THINK,  
WHAT WE SAY AND WHAT WE DO

**Arykbaev Malik**

*Malik was born in 1961 in the village of Sary-Kamysh in the Ak-Suu raiyon. He graduated from the History Department of the Kyrgyz State National University in 1992. Since 1986 he has been working as history teacher at a secondary school in the village Kaiyrma-Artyk.*

Since my childhood I have been able to see unexplicable “visions” which were not seen by others, I would see for example old women in *elechek*. Sometimes I would predict the future and my predictions would come true. Most of these future visions were of bad things, accidents that would happen and my grandmother who was a wise woman and held this power herself, told me not to talk of bad things that I saw would happen. She was a healer and could cure those who came to her with a high temperature or sickness simply by sitting by her patient and performing ritual gestures with her hands. If somebody was cursed, or sick with the evil eye she could help, she would draw her hands along the sick person’s body and perform different rituals like *kirnelöö*<sup>169</sup> and *ashtoo* [q.v.] asking for the sickness to fall back onto itself and not to spread. She could also help many women with childbirth. She made *tölgö*<sup>170</sup> with 41 stones. She interpreted dreams. She had sacred abilities, for a person who does possess such powers cannot do all these things successfully.

Since October 1992, my special abilities of clairvoyance and reading sacred signs started to increase. I had many visions and much of what I saw was not clear and the meaning could not be caught, this caused my much suffering.

By the will of Tengir and with the help of the powers of my ancestors and the sacred spirits I gradually entered the way of *kyrgyzchylyk*. There came a day when I lit a candle and received the *ayan*, I was given the choice to take up *kyrgyzchylyk* and I accepted it. I started from *tabypchylyk*<sup>171</sup>. Afterwards I started to study my powers, I investigated the way of *tabypchylyk*, read about experienced practice and the subject literature I came to the following conclusion: the words and actions of every human being, be they bad or good have consequence in the future. Everything comes back to us or it is reflected in the life of our children, our deeds “come out” of our children. That is why one should be very careful with what one thinks, says and what one does.

My way of healing is only my own but I follow certain rules of the art. It demands routine that keeps a person in power of the sacred qualities given by Tengir, and this path is very difficult. This is not just easy magic. It must be understood in a deep way. In order to achieve this I try to search for the things that come to my mind, I search for answers to my questions. I have searched in religion, in the Qur’an. I have also read a number of books on psychology and parapsychology. Being a historian, I investigated ancient history and the history of religions. I met with people who have healing powers. I read books of talented thinkers as Nikolai Rerikh and Sergeiy Lazarev. I tried to meet with Lazarev himself. I pilgrimaged to many sacred places. With time I have changed and my knowledge has developed. I understand that it is necessary to keep far away from bad things and incorrect actions; it is necessary to be pure, to think in a positive way and to act in the right way. It is keeping to this path that has let me despite facing different obstacles increase my sacred abilities.

People come to me with different questions. Unlike others I do not touch sick people and I do not cure them with massages. I do not give medicine. I simply talk to my patients. During these sessions I am in contact with the spirits and with the help of deceased ancestors, great saints and my supporters I investigate the person’s “karma”, in other words, their fate, their past life, and their character. In this way I find the cause of my patients’ sickness or difficulties

in their lives. In this was I can tell my patients the reason that brought the sickness and explain how to deal with it. In another words I heal not the patients' body but their *ruh*, their inner world.

According to the laws of the Universe, the law of Tengir, a person's inner world is reflected in the external world, in other words the way of your inner *ruh* will also be the way of your external life.

I will stop here and try to explain this. Human life is ruled by thought. If a person thinks positively and lives with pure thoughts, then their heart will be pure and their character good. A man with a pure inner life will never be ill and will always be happy. This is because thought is a material substance that affects life.

If a person has negative thoughts, this brings hatred, fear, offence, intolerance, jealousy and envy. These are the most powerful negative energies in people and they bring bad character. These emotions gradually destroy a person's fate and health and they influence a person's life and the lives of others. In the heart of a man who has no love for God, there is no love for himself and for other men. A person who does not have the energy of love in his heart, in his *ruh*, gradually destroys himself. Is there a cure for this? The only medicine I can suggest is to separate oneself from the negative energy and inner aggression and to learn the way of love and the know how to forgive and apologize. This can be reached by prayers, requests to Tengir and understanding. A person should strive to understand themselves and people around, learn to be compassionate. In this way you open your heart to God and to people. You fill it with Tengir's love and you give back this love for God. This love should be infinite. If you love God you will love yourself, and God's love will enter into people with a pure heart and pure *ruh*, for a heart like this Tengir's *sham*<sup>172</sup> shines. Only in this case will a man's life be happy and healthy, his surroundings purified and flourishing.!

Therefore all the ways of directing your own life are in yourself. Only through your thoughts and character can you take yourself either up to paradise or down to hell on earth. Everything is in your hands! In short, the inner world of a person should be harmonized with the external one. The meaning of life is in this and this is what Tengir desires from us.

This is called recovering from the injuries of karma. This is my method of healing.

<sup>169</sup> *Kirnelöö* [Kyrgyz] - healing ritual for children [ed.].

<sup>170</sup> *Tölgö* [Kyrgyz] - predictions [ed.].

<sup>171</sup> *Tabypchylyk* [Kyrgyz] - traditional healingness [ed.].

IT IS NOT EASY TO BE A DERVISH,  
ONLY THE HARDY ENDURE

### **Molokoev Kadyrakyn known as Dervish Ata**

*He was born in 1928 in the village of Chong-Kerbez then called Sary-Kamysh in the Ak-Suu rayion. By profession he is an accountant. He has been a dervish for 30 years.*

I inherited the gift of the *dervish* [q.v.] from my forefathers. My grandfather from my mother's side, whose name was Chyrysh, is said to have been a holy man and an eloquent speaker. There is a Kyrgyz saying: "Alban and Bugu are kin to each other". Alban is a tribe of the Kazakh people, Bugu is Kyrgyz tribe. It was my grandfather Chyrysh who united these tribes, joined them in inseparable friendship and so they became kin. My own father knew *tölgö*, he knew the day of his death. He could tell the story of Manas for days and nights, not in verse but in simple words. As for my grandmother Kamka, who was the wife of my grandfather Chyrysh, she had a third small breast under her right breast and on Thursdays and Fridays she would fall down unconscious, during these spasms she would receive information from higher powers and speak it out loud. When our historical figure, Balbaiy Ata<sup>173</sup> was poisoned and was dying in Alma-Ata, she was far away in the Tüp region in the village of Aral, but she felt his death and cried out: "*Kokuïy*<sup>174</sup>, our Baatyr's soul has left him!" After shouting out the message she fell down unconscious. And the people waited for the bad news of Balbaiy Baatyr.

Besides all the sacred qualities of the great Ysyk-Köl lake it has one simple quality: it brings plenty. Like a mother who feeds her child, so the lake sets before us a table full of food. Around the lake there is never famine. They say that the patron of the lake lives in its underground waters but this is not true. There is a river that flows down the mountain of Karakol, it is called Kashka-Suu. On its western side there is a *mazar* with 27 springs. At the top of the *mazar* sits an old lady wearing an *ak elechek*. She can only be seen by the chosen few and she is the patroness of the lake.

The Kyrgyz people say that a father only “gives” and “takes” from his children. 80-90% of a child’s upbringing depends on the mother. It is she who is always near children and who gives them the wings to fly out of the family. Mothers unite their children. For her it does not matter if one of her children is a minister, the second a shepherd, the third an alcoholic, a mother does not divide her children but she welcomes them all to the table and feeds them. In this way the Ysyk-Köl unites people.

The holy lake has brought to life many great wise men, *myrzas*, warriors, *manaschy*, poets, akes. Where has the tradition to “know your seven fathers” come from? This rule came from the lake. We had seven fathers, all of them equally holy and they took care of their people. They are: Narynkol Ata, Karakol Ata, Ak Bash Ata, Cholpon Ata, Choktal Ata, Oluya Ata and Kochkor Ata. In Osh, in the town of Kyzyl-Kyya there is a big *mazar* known as Oluya–Ata *mazar*. In Jalal-Abat there is the *mazar* of Kochkor-Ata in the town Kochkor. Kochkor Ata and Oluya Ata left the land around the lake and went South with their people to protect them there. Cholpon Ata and Oluya Ata were flexible and wanted to work to educate their people. Oluya Ata went South, bringing the people blessings and he educated and worked for the people there. Cholpon Ata stayed in the North and worked for the advancement of his people there. The other five atas were great warriors and they fought to protect the people from invading enemies. It is from the need of the people to honour and remember the lives of these great fathers and their deeds that the tradition “know your seven fathers” was derived. It means “do not forget your gift.”

The word *myrza*<sup>175</sup> also comes from the lake region. There were five *myrzas* of the lake: Aryk Myrza, Myrzakul Myrza, Asan Myrza, Kara Myrza, Tokoch Myrza. The people would bow before them and say “the Myrzas are coming”. Nowadays when you go to Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan you will also hear this word “myrza” used. It was from around the lake that the title *ake* came into existence. This title is given only to people who are considered holy, wise and eloquent. From this honorary title comes the polite term for older men, the Kazakhs and Uzbeks use this title when addressing older men.

Our people have a saying: “Boronbaiy was chosen by the people and he became a sultan”. He was given this title as follows. In this time Ormon had crowned himself a “han”<sup>176</sup> and the people of the lake told Boronbaiy “We want you to have a higher title” and crowned him “sultan”. At the time there was a sultan in Arabia, there was an emir in Bukhara, but among the Kyrgyz people there were no sultans. Boronbaiy was the first Kyrgyz to receive this title.

In 1981 we went to Zimbabwe in Africa. Their traditional dishware appeared to be like that of our ancestors, made of wood. We call the dish we use to ladle soup a *suzgu*. They used that the *suzgu* to pour into drinks into our cups and gave us some wooden sticks for drinking. Their carpets were like ours and made of *chiyy*<sup>177</sup>. When we tried the drink they had offered us it tasted like our *bozo*<sup>178</sup>. We had two translators. I said: “You knew that Kyrgyz people will come and maybe that is why you prepared our Kyrgyz drink?”. When my words were translated, the hosts replied that it was their own national drink. When I asked what it was made from they answered from *taruu*<sup>179</sup>. So it was real Kyrgyz bozo and then I thought: “Before our era the Kyrgyz people spent 800 years building an empire all over the world, this might be the remains of those times”.

I have been in Chechnya many times, my last visit there was in 1991. Between Dagestan and Azerbaijan a big river flows. We call a smaller river an *özön*. There is a large bridge on that river. When I was passing over that bridge I saw written on the Dagestan side: “Manas özönü”. I was very interested and asked about the name. They told me that they had a great warrior, Manas, who was their forefather. So it seems the Caucasian people took our Manas Ata to be their ancestor even though we are the ones who tell his story. I kept silent and did not tell my speaker that Manas was Kyrgyz, because Chechen people are said to be so proud that they if offended they draw their knives and do not replace them until satisfied. Old people from the nearest villages came to the river and worshipped the sacredness of Manas, they read the *namaz* there. I saw this with my own eyes. I took a picture of that place and gave it to our Manas mausoleum museum.

Travelling around Chechenstan we were once hosted by a family who offered us a melon for dessert. I made a joke about this and said: “In our country we give feed it to our animals, don’t give it to us.” The Chechens were offended by this and got angry. Knowing their temperament well I said this was a “joke”.

Before that I went to the *korgon* of Mamaiy. Mamaiy was a Kyrgyz man. The place is difficult to describe, it is a very beautiful place. There were many tombs there and I was walking among them. I saw that near each *korgon* people had placed red wooden benches big enough for two people. There I saw about ten Russian looking people, dressed in suits and ties, most of them overweight. I approached them interested, wanting to talk to somebody. I

greeted them and when they asked where I was from I said I had come from Frunze, on the orders of the higher powers, and that Mamaiy was our forefather, that he was Kyrgyz. The Russian were very surprised by my words. When I asked how they understand the meaning of the word *korgon* they answered a small hill. As they say, “every bird sings its own song”, we understand *korgon* as the place where people are buried. I explained that this is the place where Mamaiy Ata was buried. They said to me: “Perhaps you are right” and left. I was inspired to all my travels by *ayan*.

There is a saying: “Look at a warrior when he is old, look at a horse when it is exhausted” and you see me now as an old man. I work as a dervish. This differs a lot from clairvoyancy. A dervish does not stay in one place but travels. When he says something his words flow from *kaiyp*<sup>180</sup>. A man who receives a strong *ayan* secret is called a dervish. Being a dervish is not easy, only a patient man can be one. I make medicine from herbs, heal people, bless them and open their ways.

Let me tell of one of my ayans. I visited the *mazar* of Manjly-Ata and made a sacrifice. We slaughtered a horse, performed bata. A lot of people were gathered there. In the evening as we sat around the *dastarkon* I said: “Tomorrow great sacred power will come to us, we must keep our eyes on the sun”. The next day somebody brought me a photograph. When I looked at the photo I saw on it the singer Sagynbek Mombekov, general Fedorovitch from the Russian Federal Security Service, a young man whose name was Ömürbek and me. On the photograph there appeared to be a circle of light on our chests, they were so exact and clear that even a compass could not have drawn them onto the picture. I was asked what these circles may be and I replied that they are the sacred powers I was talking about the previous night. These kind of *ayans* can really happen.

There are a lot of things to say about Manjly-Ata. Two thousand years ago people from Pakistan visited Manjly-Ata to pray. There used to be seven great cities around Manjly-Ata and the Silk Road passed by there. 2200 years ago people from China and Mongolia came here to pray, that was the time when the major world religions did not yet exist. Manas Ata visited Manjly-Ata and prayed there, afterwards he marched to Beijing and crowned himself Khan there. Manjly-Ata is a *mazar* not only of the Kyrgyz people, it is a *greatmazar* of the world, a very sacred site.

<sup>172</sup> *Sham* [Kyrgyz] - candle or light [ed.].

<sup>173</sup> Balbaiy Eshkojo uluu (1797-1867) - one of the leaders of the Bugu clan who fought for the independence of the Bugu people. He received the title of *Baatyr* when he was still alive [ed.].

<sup>174</sup> *Kokuïy* [Kyrgyz] - a word expressing a feeling of fright, fear, suffering [ed.].

<sup>175</sup> *Myrza* [Kyrgyz] - similar to the English word “sir” but also a title given to aristocratic, clever, and intelligent people [ed.].

<sup>176</sup> Ormon Han (first half of the 19th century) was one of the leaders of the Sarbagysh clan and for his actions he was honoured with the title *Baatyr*. He became the Han of the northern Kyrgyz and fought the Kazakh Han Kenensary. Ormon Han and Boronbaiy *Baatyr* ruled at the same time [ed.].

<sup>177</sup> *Chiiy* [Kyrgyz] - reeds [ed.].

<sup>178</sup> *Bozo* [Kyrgyz] - Kyrgyz traditional slightly alcoholic drink, home-made from fermented wheat [ed.].

<sup>179</sup> *Taruu* [Kyrgyz] - millet [ed.].

<sup>180</sup> *Kaiyp* [Kyrgyz] - supernatural powers [ed.].

## CHAPTER 7

### MASTER AND APPRENTICE

#### INTRODUCTION

There is a notion of Father Sky and Mother Earth among the Kyrgyz. Kyrgyz people live by addressing them in prayer in the heavens, believing in a fate prescribed by God and accepting the path of providential destiny. They consider the earth of the ‘Motherland’ as sacred, live with respect to Nature and its laws, and are grateful for burial on the Motherland at death. In this regard, humans are all guided by the laws of the Sky and Earth. It does not matter to which nationality a person belongs. The Sky and Earth appear as masters to human beings.

Mastering consists of “showing the path” and “guiding one to the path”. Apprenticeship means following the path shown by the master. These roles are common across humanity. Everywhere in the world we find the phenomena of master and apprentice. Usually masters would be older than their apprentices, although there were cases where the

reverse is true. Both acquire deep connection by finding connections on spiritual levels. Sometimes a special relationship is bound to emerge between them.

Today's master was yesterday's apprentice. The master achieves his mastery by passing the tests of apprenticeship, gaining experience, mastering the knowledge of mastership, learning the main rules of the craft and managing the experiences. Having an apprentice has been considered a mark of pride and a great responsibility. Without an apprentice the master cannot be recognized as master, and without a master an apprentice cannot become a master. However, an apprentice does not always have a relationship with a living master. In some cases the apprentice may have a master "in spirit" and follow to their wisdom (skills, knowledge, thoughts) and keeping the path of apprenticeship without alive master. In time, a master guiding a number of apprentices can lead to the formation of a creative school or spiritual center. The relationship developed between the master and apprentice is not only on a private level but it can also have a social meaning. For example in Kyrgyz literature, if young starting poets regard the great poet Alykul as their master, they have to study Alykul's poetry. Likewise, reciters of the oral epic *Manas* learn by listening to Sayakbaiy Ata and mimicking his style of chanting. An outstanding young talent on the *komuz* can aspire to be like Ybyrai Tumanov, just as a starting singer can be influenced by one of the "stars" of the stage.

Concerning the phenomena of *kyrgyzchylık* and *aktyk*, there are certain responsibilities that the master will have with regard to the apprentice. Mainly, it is to facilitate the process of communication between the higher powers and the apprentice, to serve as a "bridge" and to help to apprentice to follow the divine path. The master is also to impart secret knowledge of *aktyk* and teach the practice of visiting sacred sites. Traditionally it is not the master who chooses the apprentice, but vice versa. A future apprentice seeks a master himself or through another by approaching the master and expressing his desire for apprenticeship. The master decides then whether or not to accept that person. Starting from the time the apprentice is taken in, the two start sharing mutual responsibilities, because the apprentice assumes responsibility to strictly follow the requirements of the master throughout the apprenticeship.

The master and apprentice may see each other only occasionally, or they might be constantly working together. In some cases the master lives in one village and an apprentice lives in another district area. In some other cases an apprentice might be living in the house of the master in order to have a direct experience of how the master lives, what the master does in everyday life. The apprentice may share food with the master in his house and sometimes lives there until his teacher passes away. In such cases the apprentice shares the household work and serves the master as a part of his moral responsibility. The apprentice is aware that one day his service will stop, the day when he receives one of the several sacred tools from the master (tools such as the whip, beads for rituals worship, scripture of Qur'an and the words of blessing). No one can tell when that time will be come, whether long or short. Below there is more information about the relationship between the master and apprentice, regarding the following questions. Does the master decide to take an apprentice because of the latter's special abilities? Or is mastership motivated by financial interest, the gain from an apprentice in the form of livestock, etc? Does the master generally hold pure intentions towards his apprentice? What are the main criteria, characteristics, or capacities that permit one to become a master? What are the apprentice's limits of fulfilling the master's requirements? These questions will each be addressed.

Another possibility is when an apprentice-to-be receives a prophetic dream from divine spirits that reveal to him who should become his master. He may learn where that master lives and what his approach is without knowing his actual name. The potential apprentice will then search for his master. Though a young person might decline other possible advice, in the case of a dream he dares not refuse such a direction. For the well being of their family, the person must start his journey to find a future master described in his dream. This meeting of the master and apprentice will be taken for granted by them as something that was meant to be, and neither will be surprised about it. For the prospective master would also receive a prophetic dream about his potential apprentice, who is on his way to find him. Thus, the fact that the powers of the universe make known the meeting before the actual event slowly but surely brings the master together with his apprentice as prescription of destiny.

Masters can have various experiences. In the following articles you will be able to read the stories based on perspectives of both masters and apprentice, who have different capacities, and different ages. But all of them are on the path of *kyrgyzchylık*.

## Amandyk kyzy Maiyram

*Maiyram was born in 1962 in the village of Munduz, Jeti-Ögüz rayion. Graduated in 1980 from the Technical School of Construction in Balykchy, and since 1981 has been following the path of kyrgyzchlyk.*

In early stage of mastering my apprentices, we first visit all the places that they have already seen in their dreams. If those places turn out to be mausoleums of *akeler*, we receive prophetic dreams when we visit them. Depending on the will of the God, one will be gifted with capacities of wisdom, oratory, healing, or sorcery. We are told and simply accept it. If we receive a message from Bugu Ene, we will be given *elechek*. At the right time they will be taught how to recite the Qur'an and Namaz. Those with pure intentions will do well before God. Most of the time when we visit sacred sites, springs, streams, or remote mountain sites – places that were visited by the ancestors; our patron-spirits tell us what to do. Each apprentice receives different messages in the form of a prophetic dream. Some see Manas Ata, and others Umai Ene or Jer Ene<sup>181</sup>. If my apprentices are gifted with healing or soothsaying, angels of the Prophet Mohammed will visit them. A message like “this person must practice soothsaying,” will be delivered to them. Or else ritual tools like a whip, knife, or mirror will be given to them. Each ritual tool is accompanied by its own master-spirit. After that, the apprentice will start practicing the ritual worship of Namaz and accept the path of *aktyk*<sup>182</sup>.

Visitors have to perform a ritual ablution before coming to a sacred site. Then they step into the sacred site with their right foot and have to bow before entering. Master-spirits or owner-spirits of the sacred sites will then welcome them. In order to avoid being bewildered by seeing the spirits, visitors need to recite the Qur'an while entering. Afterwards food has to be made and served, and the Qur'an is again recited. Then they should perform the rituals of *zikir chaluu* while walking around the sacred site. When departing the site, they step out with their left foot should not turn their back on the sacred place.

Mastership is a very important responsibility. Sometimes when apprentices succumb to epilepsy or paralysis or a spiritual emergency, they need appropriate help from their masters. And so it must first of all it be determined whether the apprentice will be able to bear the responsibility of apprenticeship. Let me talk about this process, based on my experience of mastering one of my apprentices.

When my apprentice A. came to me, I was told by my angels that A.'s great ancestors were Kalmaks. I also enquired about the appropriate day for her traveling to me, and was told that it must be on Thursday. Apparently a Kalmak man buried at the upper part of the mountain in the Kashka-Suu sub-region located in northern side of Karakol town. “I am the one you are looking for,” we were told. We were met by the spirit of a man who was wearing a very old jacket, white pants, the left side of the jacket at his knee was cut and he was wearing a scarf around his waist. Those standing behind this elder were wearing coats made from sheep skin, but with the woolen side out. When I asked about the past of those spirits, I was told that they were cursed when they were alive.

I often receive orders to do something from the world, but I do not act on them unless my angels tell me to do so. Kalmak Ata talked about A.'s weaknesses. He asked: “Did you come to ask for your path toward *aktyk*? We will guide you on the path of *aktyk*, but first we will test you”. Then we recited the Qur'an and were blessed by Kalmak Ata. After that he told us to visit the sacred sites of the seven *akes* and ask for strong health.

When we visited Manjly-Ata, we were given wisdom and abilities of sorcery. At Manjly Manas Ata came to us and asked: “Listen, child, will you be able to bear this responsibility, for Balbaiy Ata and Kalygul Ata are gifting you with *oluyalyk*<sup>183</sup>”. Afterwards on our way back from Tüp, we saw Balbaiy Ata on a massive black horse, standing close to a big tree. On approaching, he said, “I have seen you coming, and have been waiting for you, my son. Accept the gift given to you,” and he whipped his old grey horse at the mouth-piece. Then he said, “Now go meet Köl Ene<sup>184</sup>, for she is waiting for you. If you go there with your palms up, you will receive her blessing.”

Then Balbaiy Ata told us that at the sacred site there are three springs located at the upper part of the Chychkan village. We had received many blessings at that point. We were received by Köl Ene, her hair spread out around her, wearing an *elechek*, and accompanied by the angels of the lake. She said to us, “Oh dearest ones, I see you have come to me. I have been waiting for you, and now I will gift you with the ability to see visions.” She had been watching him through visions for quite a long time. Since then my apprentice has been able to see the image of his first master spirit and protector. Afterwards, Balbaiy Ata said that we appear to possess the capacities of orator and horse-boy, so that we had to visit Tilekmat<sup>185</sup> and Sadyr Ake. They emphasized that it was a weakness that my apprentice could not recite the Qur'an in full, and I was told to teach him that.

When we went to meet Tilekmat Ake, we saw his spirit only after quite a long time. Then we met with the spirit of Sart Ake. When we approached Kydyr Ake, he had been holding council with a tiger. Then he said: “Listen, my children, you made one mistake: you should have first met with Karga Ake, who is the eldest.” We quickly realized our mistake and went to meet Karga Ake. We apologized before him for our omission, then asked for his fine blessings. We asked where we should go next, and then we came to Shapak Ata<sup>186</sup> and Karach Ata<sup>187</sup>. When they gave us their fine blessings, we asked them for *ang-sezim* that is ultimate consciousness of the truth.

After that episode, my apprentice went on to endure more ordeals. Once he had a dream in which his protectors told him: “Hey, child, what you do you think you are up to? You must ask for forgiveness from Kochkor Ata.” To find out why, I asked: “Why you have summoned us?” he asked angrily “What has your apprentice been up to?” I had been busy and was not able to see my apprentice. But after speaking to the father spirit I found out that my apprentice had been helping his domestic animals to deliver babies, and as a result became ill. I found out that my apprentice had stepped into an impure place and had not been reciting the Qur’an. That was why Kochkor Ata was angry with him, and so he was not feeling well.

Those on the path of *aktyk* need to avoid immoral deeds. If such people do wrong things by accident, then God will make him experience misfortunes, these are sent as a sign, thereby saying, “If you will not open your eyes yourself, then I will open them”.

<sup>181</sup> *Jer Ene* [Kyrgyz] - Mother Earth [ed.].

<sup>182</sup> *Aktyk* [Kyrgyz] - understood as *kyrgyzchylyk*, see the introduction to chapter six [ed.].

<sup>183</sup> *Oluyalyk* [Kyrgyz] - oracles; see the glossary [ed.].

<sup>184</sup> *Köl Ene* [Kyrgyz] - mother lake [ed.].

<sup>185</sup> Tilekmat Jylkyaiydar uluu (exact years of his life are unknown but his work is dated to the middle of the 19th century) - ambassador and one of leaders of the Bugu clan.

<sup>186</sup> Shapak Aldash uluu (approx 40’s of 17th century – 1813) - one of leaders of the Belek sub-tribe of the Bugu clan.

<sup>187</sup> Karach Ake was one of the seven Ysyk-Köl *akes*, from the Bugu clan, Jeldeng tribe.

#### I BELIEVE IN KASJET OF EJE

**M. Akjoltoev<sup>188</sup>** – *An apprentice of Maiyram Amandyk kyzy.*

In the past whenever I came across articles in the media about clairvoyance, healers, shamans, soothsayers, and forecasters of the future, I did not ascribe much importance to them. I was sceptical, thinking, “These are fairy tales. How can such healers, who can barely speak properly, heal illnesses that the best doctors could not.”

I would never have thought that I myself would turn to healers for help one day. When my friends would say, “your path has been blocked and the state of your health is not good because your spirit has been affected, and someone has used black magic to harm you.” I made fun of them for believing in such nonsense.

I lived a happy and prosperous life with my family. I would drink alcohol but I was not addicted to vodka. I turned away from people who asked me “can you help me with my hangover?” showing my dislike towards such drinking. I failed to notice when I myself became addicted to alcohol; when I stopped taking care of my children and parents; and when I became isolated and lonely. I was happy as long as I had vodka to drink and could forget about everything else. I would not even listen to my wife, parents, or relatives who told me to stop drinking. In this way I lost my family. Basically, I became a tramp.

I have now realized that there are many good people in the world. One of my female acquaintances who witnessed me hanging around strange places took me to Maiyram Amandyk kyzy by force. When I came to her I was stinking with *samogon*<sup>189</sup>, staggering on my feet, and could barely speak. Seeing this, Maiyram said, “I can see that it is not his fault, he has been cursed by black magic and this has made him an alcoholic and a street person.” I feebly heard her saying these words. It sobered me up slightly. But still I did not want to listen to her, preferring to keep doing what I had been doing before. Madame Maiyram recited some incantations above a glass of water and as she gave it to me she said, “You have to learn to recite the Qur’an; it is up to you if you do not want to listen to me, but you have to believe that there are people who have special capacities, that will help you.” Now, I do not regret listening to her. Slowly, I regained my proper mind, now I do not drink vodka at all. I reconciled with my wife, strive for a better future for my children, and work as hard as I can.

I have changed my ideas about some of the mysteries of nature that I had not given any importance to before. I started reading more about evil spirits, dark spirits, and black magic that can misguide a person from the right path. Now, when I read any announcements about the mysteries of nature, news of the supernatural world published in provincial or national newspapers, I analyze them carefully. For example, even Chingiz Khan, who spilt people's blood like water (in his infamous conquests), in his time searched for the 'recipe' of immortality and ways of getting rid of painful illnesses. To reveal the secrets of nature he turned to stories of supernatural abilities. And so, sorcery and shamanism are phenomena that have existed for many centuries.

Madame Maiyram also has a special ability that enables her to contact with nature. Her divination always turns out to be right. The incantations that she recites are powerful and strongly influential. From her words, I gather that she also experienced hardships and went through unstable stages in her life and eventually she chose the path to God.

Many people ask for her help. Some were lost as I was before. Perhaps we become more aware of the mysteries of nature through such people as Madame Mairam. I say so because I myself have come to believe that it can happen that "the intentions of the people become impure, and they use black magic towards those they dislike". Does black magic really exist? Perhaps no one can answer that question. But one must believe in certain powers and in such healers as Madame Maiyram.

<sup>188</sup> With the request of the author the name of the apprentice was changed [ed.].

<sup>189</sup> *Samogon* [Russian] - home made alcohol drink [ed.].

### TAKING A SACRED SITE SERIOUSLY...

#### **Mongoldorov Kubanychbek**

*After completing his secondary education, Kubanychbek attended and graduated from the Physics Department of the State Pedagogical Institute in the town of Prjevalsk [current Karakol]. After that, he worked as the Chief Economist in the district planning department; as a teacher in the high school in the village of Maman in the Ak-Suu Region; as an educator at the 14th technical-professional educational institution of the town of Karakol; as a methodologist at the technical-professional educational center of the Ysyk-Köl oblast. He also held the position of chief expert of the State Financial Administration of Ysyk-Köl oblast, at the district level.*

My name is Kuban Mongoldorov. Until recently, I did not truly know myself. I asked myself who I was, but was not able to get an answer. Those who meet me for the first time may very well think of me as someone lacking self-knowledge, because they are unaware of my past life experience. For those who do not know about my life, let me tell about it. Perhaps then you could help me gain self-knowledge.

I was born near the blessed turquoise lake. More precisely, I am from the sacred village of Bokonbaev, in the Tong province. Usually, a Kyrgyz person can tell the name of their tribe right away. I am from the Bugu clan and the Kydyk sub-tribe under it. My birth was a cause of great excitement for my parents, as I am the eldest child and I had a very happy childhood. I have to admit that I did not personally experience hardships of life, since my mother had a high position as a member of the party. I can even say that I grew up as a spoiled child, compared to other kids, I was very naughty. No matter what kind of games we would play with other kids, I would always take a dominant role. Basically I always wanted to lead the others. Maybe this was because of my character, or maybe because my mother was educated and I was good at school. My friends were big and strong guys. I think the more you fight, the more fighting seems a fun thing to do. We would dominate other boys and intimidate them to pay us so called "taxes". Using that money we would buy alcohol to drink. I was good at sports too. I would train boxing. To fulfill my civic duty, I served in the army.

With the influence of my mother I was accepted to the institute in Karakol. I was spoiled and could not be bothered to attend the classes. They were too easy for me though and I got to know all of my group mates only at the end of my second academic year. All my spare time was used for reading books.

When I was young I could not stop being pugnacious, and my mother took me by force to an elderly lady named Ajar Apa who was known as old lady Kanimet. She was a soothsayer. Ajar Apa told me, "This boy will get married seven times, and later he will be a victim of the government." She paused and then said to me, "You will become a fraudulent mullah, deceive the people, and then you will visit seventy sacred sites." I made fun of the prediction, thinking, what does it mean that I will have seven wives and then become a mullah? And honestly at the time of the

visit I was tipsy. Then Ajar Apa said: "It is not he himself who is laughing, but the vodka that he has drunk is making him laugh."

Everything she said has come true. Let me start from the very beginning. I got married as other people usually do and I was married to a very nice woman. Years passed and we had a child. Suddenly my wife became very ill and in 1981 she passed away. My seven-month old child lost his mother and I became a widower. If only I had the self-knowledge that I have now, but at that time I did not know myself. Ten years later in 1991 my mother passed away, and it was after that all my hardships started.

Maybe I was lost or maybe it was destined. At a certain point I got together with the guys with whom I went to boxing events or sometimes we would be involved in serious racketing activities that had become prevalent in those days. We were gangsters, we would steal from the rich. And so, we soon became rich ourselves. Then I saw that prosperity could be a cause for conflict because after becoming rich, our gang split into two. I cannot not tell whether the other group was just smarter than us, or we were slow to catch on, but in the end they betrayed us. The police started searching for us, and we had to leave, we did not have any choice.

The leader of our group became a mullah, and I had a dream vision and started worshipping at sacred sites rather than at mosques. Not long after a friend of ours was caught at the mosque by the police at the time of ritual worship. They could not find me since I was at a sacred site. But even if I was not arrested then, I reached a condition that was worse than an arrested man could reach. I was reminded of Ajar Apa saying that I would be a victim of the government. I realized that this also came true, since I was wanted by the police. Initially I deceived mullahs, claiming to be a clairvoyant and in doing so, I entered the world of sacred sites. Later I realized that what I was doing was a grave crime.

There was no way back for me. I started to whistle without stopping, unable to control myself. One day when I was sitting at a sacred site, I started seeing visions and hearing some voices saying to me, "You escaped arrest once, but now you will be 'arrested' by us." Since then I became incapable of doing anything myself. I cannot control my speaking, and a certain force compels me to do the things. I follow directions that make me to go to this or that sacred site and one day I realized that I have visited seventy sacred sites. Then I remembered the words of Ajar Apa saying that I would visit seventy sacred sites.

When I go to sacred sites I cannot control myself. Sometimes I howl like a wolf, or hiss like a snake, or speak in different languages. I am aware of what I am doing but I am not the one willing it. I do it because I do not have any choice, because mysterious forces control me. If I stop doing what they tell me to do, they start torturing me by choking me. Thus, I have been forced to regret that I did not take the sacred sites seriously and that I used them for unworthy purposes. I think that sacred sites are places that store up the energies of special people since ancient times. And indeed, energies preserved since ancient times will have powerful properties. No matter what kind of person visits a sacred site, through the power of the energy one can receive new information or new energy. That is why the people who have a weak energy level come to sacred sites and can gain new energy from the sites and start feeling better.

The practice of visiting sacred sites has put me in this deadlock condition. I have always loved freedom. What a blessing it is when you can be free in things that you do, like walking and eating, etc. I cannot be free in action, as there are always some limits set for me. I cannot even drink my favorite drink, beer. I try to drink but my hand does not let me. Basically I exist within limits. I have been asking for help from just about everyone to free me. Unfortunately, no one can help me in this.

I decided to go to see clairvoyants. At first I started searching for them around the Osh market, but for some reason I did not like the people I met there. In the end, I heard from someone about a powerful clairvoyant whose name is Kalipa Toktobai kyzy. For some reason, I wanted to visit that person. I searched for that person and eventually I found her in one of the regions of Bishkek city. I do not trust people easily, especially at first meetings. But slowly I started trusting Kalipa because she was able to tell me things about the life of my mother, where and how she worked, and how she passed away. She told me, "I have known that you would come to me for four years and I have been waiting for you." Such people like her who have authentic power are also good psychologists. Later I found out that when I went to her she already knew me and what I had done. Certainly not everyone has such power of foreseeing and I can tell that it is a special gift.

After meeting her I decided to become her apprentice. I realized that it is not easy to go through apprenticeship. There are certain rituals that an apprentice has to go through. So we did them. We went to the sacred site of Manas Ata and since the ritual was going to be in my name as an apprentice, I bought a sheep to slaughter for the ritual. The ritual was conducted as follows: first we recited the Qur'an and slaughtered the sheep. Then I put my hands into the blood of the sheep and took a vow, saying, "I take you as my master, and I will fully follow your guidance." The fulfillment of this obedience and vow is the becoming an apprentice. At that time I did not realize that, by going through such a ritual, the master wins over the apprentice and attaches him or her to herself.

At that time, my master had about three or four hundred apprentices. When it is the right time, the master gives a whip or ritual beads to her apprentices, according to their abilities, and releases them. There were cases when some apprentices would not be given the whip and they would be upset about it. I cannot say that I didn't learn anything from my master. I learned from her how to put a person under light hypnosis, how to strike down a person, no matter whom, from ten or fifteen meters away. Also I learned how to practice soothsaying and how to do the ritual of purification, *dem saluu* [q.v.]. Other apprentices are usually released in the period of five months at most and in this time they gain full knowledge. I would like to point out that some people with special capacities have started to use their abilities for commercial purposes to run their businesses.

It appeared that my master knew that I had enough money to live on and she kept me with her for three years. Other apprentices would pay for the apprenticeship and would be released shortly after to find their own ways. Those who paid would get their whip or beads and be released within twenty days. My master would receive twenty-five people at a time. Once during a time of receiving new people, my master was performing the purification ritual of *dem saluu*, saying "Allah, Allah, Allah, suf, suf, suf." Instead of keeping quiet, I said to her frankly, "Eje, when I hear you saying, 'Allah, Allah, suf, suf,' it seems to me that you are saying 'give me money, money.'" I often asked other people to tell her not to take money, but she ignored this and now most of her power has seeped away. My frankness resulted in a conflict between us.

As for me, I like money and wealth, but I do not know why. Perhaps it is because I grew up in a prosperous family. I sometimes want to charge for my services, but since the time I was escaping from the police and visiting sacred sites, I was told not to take money and the voices and so I have been strictly prohibited to do so. One day my master told me, "I will give you neither a whip nor ritual beads." It was the time when my money had at last exhausted itself. But this did not scare me as she had hoped it would and I announced that I was going to leave. She said, "If you leave, I will cast a spell on you, and you will not be able to walk." But she did not do this. I think that it was because she knew about my past life and was afraid of doing that. I will not be wrong if I say that in this way, even clairvoyants were unable to resolve my problem.

After some time, under the advice of some people, I started receiving and healing people. All in all, I have received three hundred and eighty people. I have no idea how many of them got healed, but nobody has gotten worse after visiting me, nobody has come back complaining that their health became worse.

Later, a force compelled me to recite the "Manas" epic. But my version of "Manas" is not like the traditional way of reciting "Manas", as chanted by other *manaschy*. Before I was able to fulfill the first task, another one was added. I am now wondering whether I am a *manaschy* or what? I have addressed this question to the Manas Studies and Folk Literature Center, under the Kyrgyz National Academy of Sciences. At the time I asked myself whether they could answer me truly. When I went there they received me well and listened to my way of "Manas" chanting. What surprised me was that all the scholars came to the same conclusion. Samar Musaev was the leader among them and he said, "You are talented, but you should quit your way of chanting and learn Sayakbaev's way of chanting "Manas" by heart." All of them agreed with this opinion. This annoyed me I think scholars ought to think broadly and should not let themselves be influenced by their superiors. I was angry that none of scholars objected to Musaev but that they all accepted his opinion. I looked at Musaev and told him: "I have no intention of becoming a *manaschy*, but I came here to ask you to figure out what my chanting is about." This visit has not helped me discover either my identity nor the meaning of my chanting." To this day I chant when it comes to me.

Just as Ajar Apa foretold, I am currently living with my seventh wife, whose name is Gulmira. She is very understanding towards me and when I go to visit sacred sites, she goes together with me as a companion.

Perhaps I was influenced by the devil, but I went to see mullahs as well. They told me, "If you start performing *namaz* five times in a day, you will be released from all your concerns." I started doing this, but the voices told me,

“you are not allowed to do Namaz”, and they hurt my back and twisted my feet and I had no choice but to follow them. I feel better when I visit sacred sites. I now receive all kinds of information, and usually most of it comes true.

ONLY WHEN THE APPRENTICE IS READY  
HE WILL MEET THE MASTER

**Muktarova Gulnara**

*Gulnara was born in 1954 in Tashkent. She graduated in 1978 from the Department of Economics, Kyrgyz State University. In 1996 she graduated from the Medical Institute in Bishkek. She has been practicing traditional healing since 1988.*

It has been more than twenty years since I began practicing traditional healing. I am now at a stage of life when I can assess my life. Before that, I could only judge from my childhood. From childhood memories I can remember barely being able to walk. I remember passing together with my parents through some kind of corridor or tunnel with square mirrors. This was when we visited the monastery of Kiev-Pechorskii. I recall the place very well. When I was 3 or 4 years old, I had visions in which I saw my future husband, his father, and myself. At that moment I already knew some things about my life. I would be afraid of looking at the mirror at night. I recall seeing white clouds in the mirror and extremely bright things! We lived in the center of Bishkek, the city was called Frunze at the time. We lived close to respected and well-known people such as Alymkul Üsönbaev, Sayakbai Karalaev, and Myskal Ömürkanova. Though I do not remember other people, I can remember these people very well. Especially Sayakbai Ata. I can remember his appearance.

In my childhood, my wild dreams would often come true. Whatever I talked about would come true in reality. This is something that could not be taken away from me. My great-great grandfather (on my father's side) was a *dervish* [q.v.]. When he left to go somewhere, he would just disappear and then reappear later when he returned. He could go from one place to another place with great speed. By reciting incantations, he could make a river change direction, make it rain, and during the *zikir chaluu* [q.v.] ritual, he could walk to the top of the yurt. My father and sister remembered my grandfather in this way. When Dumana Ata had little time left before passing from the world, he invited all his relatives and told them not to bother to bury him, because, according to him, his body would fly to Mecca. However, his relatives did not follow his words, and he was buried. Nevertheless, on the next day they found a mirror in the form of vortex on top of his grave and a footprint. The grave was empty and his body was not there, to the amazement of the people.

My other great-great grandfather (from my mother's side) was a powerful clairvoyant who would receive divine revelation. He could make anyone lose their consciousness just by looking at them. Because of that, he would sit behind a woolen curtain. He helped people and everything he said would come true. This is why I have so much knowledge about soothsaying!

And this is how I started out. These figures were my masters given by the divine powers. When I started on my path, the spirits of my forefathers came to me. This happened in the night. The door to my room that had been open, suddenly closed by itself. The sheet covering me lifted up to my chin. I could see in front of me my forefathers and many others standing behind them. Without saying anything, they passed through my body, it seemed, like light going through, and then they left. It was since that experience that I started foreseeing things that would happen in the future. I had not even been asked by my masters from above whether or not I wanted the ability of soothsaying. They would teach me and leave. Then I had masters who taught me how to use my hands for healing. I would not have been able to learn a single *bata* without their help. There are times when I listen to their blessings from the bottom of my heart and can really feel their power. Once I went to a sacred site to perform a *zyyarat* [q.v.] ritual and saw a vision of Qur'anic suras. They were moving across the walls of the sacred site, written with golden letters. They were also moving within my consciousness. Since that time I recite no blessings other than the Qur'an. I know that this message was delivered to me from the Creator through my masters.

In my life I have witnessed not only happy days, but days of misunderstanding, sadness and anger. My closest relatives do not always understand me. But I have people who are very close to me – my spirit masters – and my teachers on earth. I bow and pay respect to them. I also send them my warmest greetings. Perhaps not all of their efforts were right, but everything is by the will of the God! Sometimes they would make mistakes and the

consequences of their mistakes would be harmful to me. But in the end, they taught me many things and imparted to me the greatest knowledge – how to avoid doing bad things.

Now I know that even black magic is done with God's permission. Permission is granted so that we would change as a person and come to the path of the God! Each of my masters taught me their own skills. I reached this level of understanding through several stages in my life. They recognized me as a traditional healer and master. I could call this is the school of formative upbringing. In this school I have experienced the crisis (literally "illness") of the inner world and the crisis of misunderstanding. With the help of my living masters, I started looking at things in a deeper way. I learned how to love God. I came to understand the expression: "Only when the apprentice is ready will the master be met".

At each stage of my learning, God sent me divine and living masters. Once, a favorite master of mine was in a dilemma whether or not to give me his *bata*. But his divine masters told him that he has to give the blessings only to me! Our worldview and the level of knowledge were quite similar and genuine. So he gave me his blessings, and with that the required stage was fulfilled, I was able to become a traditional healer and master. I understood that blessing is given not by the living master but from the divine protectors and sacred powers, with the permission of the God. The blessings of sacred powers result from the bequest and wishes of our ancestors. And how we live our days is a sacred responsibility before God.

As I understand it, a master is first of all a leader who understands the laws of the nature and who possesses remarkable knowledge. The master helps an apprentice understand and become accustomed to mysterious things. Not everyone who wants to can become a master, for the master is chosen from on high. Every master was first an apprentice and each apprentice had to attain a certain level of knowledge from the master and from divine powers before becoming a master himself. Masters are specially chosen people and they bear enormous responsibility before God.

The master organizes a school for student-apprentices and the latter have to graduate in a certain time. Those alumni will develop their knowledge further and later God willing, the apprentices will organize their own school and become masters.

I myself had a student-apprentice, whom I took on rather late. I once foresaw myself going into a trance at a sacred site, during which I would become the keeper of an object made from the bones of a camel and would become a master seven years after that. I was later given a present from India, ritual beads made from camel bones, and as I had foreseen, my first student-apprentice came to me only after seven years from receiving the present!

I have had different kinds of apprentices. They had different beliefs and goals. Among my apprentices were business men, lawyers, teachers, and few traditional healers. The commonality that connects all of us is our love toward God!

My apprentices come to me for all kinds of reasons. Mainly they come when they have problems related to their health, but when they come, they stay for a long time. In most cases, prospective healers start healing themselves using elements of yoga. Such was the case with one of my first apprentices, Evgenia, a Korean who then converted to Islam and changed her name to Jangyl (a Kyrgyz name). Kaliman was a young girl with ICP<sup>191</sup>. My girls, especially Kaliman, could do unbelievable (so I thought at that time) things with their bodies, they were very flexible. But in the middle of the exercises they would come out of a trance and break out of the movements. They would beseech their invisible masters to stop making them do the movements, but they would still keep doing them. Later Gulmira came to me, she suffered from a hernia of an intervertebral disk. She was in a grave condition and could not walk. There was also Albina who came to me she was in a state of depression. Then Alla came to me, she could not hold any cutlery because of a trauma to her hand. Then Meken came to me. I have to note that, despite their handicaps, they were all able to do Hatha Yoga at a highly professional level. Noticing this skill, I immediately recognize those who will become my apprentices because I myself had the same experience when I was an apprentice. There are things that unite us through various things, and these I believe, are the deeds of our Great Masters. This is the group and school that God has given me.

I think a master does not choose his or her own students-apprentices. They were chosen and united by the will of Great Masters. If God wills it, I will be given instructions on how to give blessings to them.

The knowledge of how to help people is a gift from Above! It does not come by simply wishing it to happen. Living masters only help new learners and apprentices understand experiences that they are going through. Certainly,

a master helps when he or she teaches an apprentice-learner certain skills, such as how to use the ritual whip and knife properly. But the most important thing to understand is that proper performance is not sufficient, but the ability to see and experience the magic of sorcery. It is important to be able to perceive the power, strength, and help of the Great and Sacred Powers. I have been repeatedly convinced in the truth of the saying, “Only when an apprentice is ready will the master will be met.” I met my own master, a Buddhist monk, Jetendra, very unexpectedly. He is a possessor of the Tibetan-Indian, free-style branch of Reyki healing. I was given an opportunity to gain the knowledge of Reyki healing<sup>192</sup> by God through my master. Healing does not segregate people by nationality, religion, or politics. It creates a condition for interrelationship between the individuals, based on belief that each individual bears responsibility before God in accordance to their relationships towards others.

The secret of blessing is known only by our God, Great Masters and Saints. Hence, it would be good to experience the fine fruit of the blessings in our world of today. I would like to express my great love and gratitude to God, who has gifted us with inner knowledge, and my deep respect towards my living masters and student-apprentices.

<sup>190</sup> *Allah Tallah* [Kyrgyz] - the Great Allah [ed.].

THROUGH THE AYATS OF THE QUR’AN, MY MASTER HAS BEEN RETURNING HER APPRENTICES  
TO THEIR SOURCE.

### **Deiyneko Tatyana**

*Tatyana was born in 1956 in Abakan, Siberia, Russia. In 1981 she graduated from the Department of Economics, the Scryabin Institute of Agriculture in Bishkek. She worked for many years in her profession.*

*She has been practicing traditional healing for 15 years.*

I have been blessed with the joy of meeting Gulnara Asanovna [Muhtarova - ed.]. We met 12 years ago. I have shared my problems, resentments, and disappointments with her. It seems to me that my perception of the world used to be limited and narrow. Gulnara Eje was apparently sent by God and has the ability to heal the body and the soul. Our problems, as a rule, are created by ourselves, because of wrong perceptions and our misunderstanding the world. Even though Gulnara Eje and I follow different belief systems, this did not stop us from being very close. Gulnara Asanovna led me to God and has made many things clear to me. She taught me how to worship from the bottom of my heart and how to express my gratitude towards God for all success that I have attained when I am in church. She would communicate with me a lot. I would eagerly look forward to each of our meetings, and it is like this to this day. She is a highly educated and very interesting person. It is a great pleasure to listen to her. I am very glad that this particular person became my master.

Gulnara Eje has been taking me with her to sacred sites. The first site we visited, we went to ancient mausoleums at Burana in Tokmok. Then we went to the mountain called Tears of the Mother, located in Ysyk-Ata. From there we went to visit the Great Rock of the Prophet Mohammed, peace be upon his resting place, and the rock that was carved out from the cliff of the Buddha. Afterwards we went to the mausoleum of a Sacred Herakli located in Anan’evo village. He was a pious man of Ysyk-Köl province. Together with the religious leader of the Nikolai church, Father Victor, we went down to the cave of monks. According to the legend, the Apostle Matthew was buried at the site. After this pilgrimage we went with our families to worship at Mother Tihvin in Karakol town.

Believers of every different religion go to visit sacred sites. At those sites they search for God and his blessings. Thus, just by reciting the “ayats” of the Qur’an, Gulnara Eje has helped most of her apprentices to return to the roots of their origins. She has helped me find the path of Christianity.

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **SACRED CAPACITY AND MEDICINE**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

One of our most popular Kyrgyz sayings begins with the words *birinchi baiylyk – den sooluk* which means the greatest wealth is health. Traditional medicine of the Kyrgyz, as is the case of tradition of all nations, has its roots in ancient and mythological times. There have always been people among the Kyrgyz, with mystical healing powers. In this nomadic culture there have always been healers taking care of the newly born children and the elderly.

The most commonly used medicine in traditional healing was and is water. This is the case not only among the Kyrgyz people but all around the world. This is due the qualities of water itself, and its power is strengthened by the “word”. There are certain incantations used to influence the healing powers of plain water that can bring amazing results. Some of these ancient methods of healing have filtered into modern medicine and are used today, as no-one can deny that sometimes warm words of encouragement are more important than even the most expensive medicaments.

In traditional societies living in harmony with nature, an ecologically clean, ascetic and sustainable lifestyle there was no need for expensive medicine and high-technology equipment. The nomadic people used what was underhand as their medicine: spring water and mountain herbs, vegetable and animal fat, milk of goats and cows, *kymyz* which is fermented mares milk, *bozo* - a drink made from millet, wheat and maize.

The development of what can be called “official” medicine has changed the place and role of traditional folk healing. The Soviet era did much to fight the old methods of healing; on the one hand healers were persecuted, on the other hand education and the Soviet system of values aimed to eliminate immaterial and irrational thoughts and beliefs. In those conditions the work of healers, herbalists, soothsayers, midwives and many other people yielding extrasensory abilities and using the art of traditional medicine, could not exist.

The fall of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s brought radical changes in the life of ordinary people and the position of traditional medicine also gradually changed. One of the first traditions in which we can observe a strong revival is that of folk healing and medicine. Today in Kyrgyzstan academic and traditional medicine is developing side by side and in accordance with one another. People, having lost hope in hospitals and polyclinics turn to the traditional healers. Others not finding a cure in traditional methods in their turn go to official doctors. What is most important is that in times of suffering people have the choice, they can seek help both in modern and in traditional medicine.

## I HAVE TAKEN THE OATH OF HIPPOCRATES

### **Almabekov Kubanychbek**

*Kubanychbek is a semeteiychi. By profession he is a doctor-surgeon. He was born in the year 1955 in Grigorievka village of the Ysyk-Köl province. After graduating from secondary school, he studied in the Medical Treatment Department of the Kyrgyz State Medical Institution, which he completed in 1987 with honours. Currently he works as the director of the hospital of the Tiüp rayyon.*

By profession I am a surgeon but I also support, respect and use traditional medicine. It is not possible to deny the existence of special powers be they transferred from one generation to the next, or be they seen in people following the path of *kyrgyzchylyk* out of whose palms biocurrents flow. As a part of my professional experience I have often seen the powers of innate healers called by us *synykchy* who live in our communities. Kyrgyz people believe that “first of all a person’s wellbeing is up to Tengir and only then a healer”. I assume that all practices and rituals of the healing phenomenon have been practiced since the time of Manas. In the epic of Manas there are people such as clairvoyants and *daly köriüichü*<sup>193</sup>.

Kyrgyz people have been practicing phytotherapy since ancient times. During the Soviet period mainstream medicine was predominant, but now people have started to return to the old ways of practicing medicine. It is impossible to separate human beings from nature, because humankind is a part of nature. Parts of nature such as the air, water and plants have qualities that effect people’s health. Sometimes, there are cases when as doctors we discharge a patient from hospital because their state of health seems to be untreatable, they go back home and visit their mullah who makes the ritual of *dem saluu* [q.v.] and they are cured in some unexplicable way. From a psychological perspective the final blessing of *dem saluu* is very important for a person who is going to pass away, it

gives them hope that they will be accompanied into the afterlife, that we will honour them after they are gone according to the Shariyat.

I am a descendent of the Aldayar tribe. There was a time when the Kyrgyz people held great respect before the words of two great men, one of them was Mويyt of Aldayar the other Döölös of the Sart people. Mويyt ake is the eldest and the most honored *ake* among the six Ysyk-Köl *ake*. He is my seventh father. Mويyt ake had the ability to know the age and gender of adults or children passing by and he was never mistaken. He was a clairvoyant who knew what kind of hunter a eagle chick would be, whether a foal would be a racer. He could tell the gender of an unborn baby. Nowadays in order to identify the sex of a baby in the mothers' womb people have to use ultrasound technology.

It seems that in those days the bodies of the deceased of the Kyrgyz people living in the Chuiy, Naryn and Ysyk-Köl valleys would be buried in the Andijan and Kokand areas. My forefather Mويyt ake was a clairvoyant and he could foresee the time of his death. Before he died he expressed his last will saying: "I want my body to be buried at Manjly-Ata, and I want you to stop taking bodies to be buried in the Kokand kingdom". This was his will and people followed his commands. So, the body of our father was buried at Manjly-Ata *mazar* and none of the pilgrims who visit the site leave without visiting his tomb.

Once or twice a year I go to Manjly-Ata. When I go to visit the site I pray at the tomb of our father and drink water from the 40 springs of Manjly-Ata and this empowers me. When I worked as director at the hospital of Jeti-Ögüz, I got to know the current custodian of Manjly-Ata; Kadyrbek. At that time Kadyrbek drove a car that belonged to the Ministry of Finance office of the region. We get along very well, I can talk with him, as if we were relatives and we talk about the special qualities of the *mazar*.

I also believe in all places called *mazars*. Those places attract cosmic energies. I have heard of a scientist from Russia, who took pictures of the site and later he noticed the silhouette of a huge man who looked as if he was wearing space-suit in the picture. Nowadays, the power of the sacred sites can be proved, we have scientific evidence of the power of the water. I am amazed by the springs that are located at the Manjly-Ata *mazar*. Each spring of the site tastes different and each spring is recommended to cure different kinds of sickness. Since ancient times Kyrgyz people have been enlightened and have possessed this sacred knowledge.

I have sworn the oath of Hippocrates and I treat all patients who come to me in the same way, I do not consider the differences among of social status, wealth and knowledge. I have been working in my profession for 35 years. Before an operation, surgeons pray: "God help me, the spirit of Manas help me!" Before I start difficult surgery I usually receive a prophetic dream an *ayan*. I believe the messages in these dreams, they tell me the outcome of the surgery, sometimes it will go well sometimes it will be hopeless but I always conduct the operation anyway. I think that all experienced surgeons are helped by some kind of energies.

In accordance with medical ethics and rules a surgeon should not operate on his or her family or close friends. I also try to hold to this rule. Because operating on someone close to you is is operating on yourself. But if it happens that I have to operate on somebody I know, I prepare myself spiritually beforehand, I fall into a trance and recite. Usually before complex surgeries, my relatives and the members of my family see me reciting verses of "Manas" while I am asleep.

Kyrgyz people practice *tumar chiyyip beriüü* which means to draw a talisman. I think this practice is the right thing to do. Mainstream medicine ought to recognize and understand that such practices are useful. Among the Kyrgyz people there are people who have can *synykchy* abilities and other healing qualities that are generally called *kyrgyzchylyk*. We say his or her hands are *emsek*<sup>194</sup>.

Presently the United States of America are introducing the *önöktöshtük töröt*<sup>195</sup> project to Kyrgyzstan. According to the suggestions of the project: "Women should give birth in any conditions that is comfortable for them, it is not necessary that they give birth in a reclining position." This has always been known among the Kyrgyz people. In old days when a girl or a woman gave birth inside a yurt, her mother in-law or the midwife would assist and the other daughters in-law of the family would help deliver the baby. The woman was allowed to give birth in any position that was convenient for her. She could hold the sides of the yurt, anything that was comfortable for the delivery. It seems that the time has come when our traditional practices are being taught to us in a foreign language.

In the "Manas" epic, when our Manas Ata was ill, Kanykeiy Apa cured him by treating his wound using medicine called *üpiü* and *apy*<sup>196</sup>. When they were in China, Kyrgyz people would make a special medicine called *Kytaiydyñ*

*kyрма дарысы*<sup>197</sup>. Here one can see the strength of the Kyrgyz spirit, they used opium rationally in moderate quantities making special medicine to treat diseases, they did not allow themselves to become addicted. It is only now that opium is considered a drug.

Kyrgyz people also use the plant *uu korgoshun* called “the Ysyk-Köl root” literally translated as “poisonous lead”. It is given to treat various sicknesses in carefully measured doses. Sometimes this plant would even be used without it being boiled. Here it was necessary to be very careful. In terms of modern medicine the plant “poisonous lead” has tonic qualities. Mint also has tonic qualities and so does cedar. However cedar is not an attribute of the shaman.

When we burn cedar, the smell that comes from its burning cannot be compared even to the most intoxicating of French perfumes. The smell is wonderful and it has healing qualities.

The healing qualities of plants are used by us today, young girls and women follow the examples of their grandmothers and great grandmothers using herbs to strengthen their health but also their hair and nails, they use herbs for their beauty.

This connection of the Kyrgyz people with nature is one that should be respected. It is one that is strong and integrated into everyday life, this is knowledge that must be safeguarded and preserved.

<sup>191</sup> Infantile Cerebral Paralysis – paralysis in infants caused by brain damage [ed.].

<sup>192</sup> Reyki – healing with energy currents passing through one's palms. This method is considered an ancient tradition that was revived in the 19-20th century [ed.].

## IF YOU HAVE CANCER, DO NOT LET IT SAP YOU

### **Kerim kzy Maiyra**

*Maiyra was born in 1962 in Jyly-Saiy village in the Kegen raiyon of Alma-Ata oblast, Kazakhstan. She is the daughter of a Kazakh father and Kyrgyz mother and the daughter-in-law of Kyrgyz people. She came to Kyrgyzstan in 1992. Before that she participated in Akyns [q.v.] competitions in Kazakhstan. She was accepted by the Kyrgyz people in 1992 when she first recited in front of a Kyrgyz audience.*

*She studied accountancy in Kazakhstan. Later in 2000 she graduated from K. Tynystanov Ysyk-Köl State University from the department of Kyrgyz philology. She is the author and composer of 54 songs. In 2003 her first collection of songs “Egiz tildegi ergүүлөр” was published. At the moment two collections of her songs “Aitysh - Alla belegi” and “Biiyiktik”<sup>129</sup> are going to be published.*

*Maiyra Kerim kzy participated in and won several national and international competitions of oral poetry. In 2008 she won the main prize at the international festival “Aitysh” and became a winner of the Estebes Tursunaliev Award.*

Dear reader!

I have decided to share my experiences with you as I believe they give a useful lesson and that I may have helpful advice that you will take into consideration. Below I have listed the illnesses from which I have suffered since childhood, at least these are the ones that I can still remember:

1. When I was 6 or 7 years old I had the measles.
2. At the end of the 3rd form of secondary school, I burnt myself and had a second degree burn. I was treated in hospital and recovered.
3. In 1973, I was in hospital with quinsy, from which I recovered.
4. In 1976, I has an eye disease and was treated in hospital.
5. In 1983 I fell ill with hepatitis and was treated, half a year later I had a relapse of the illness and also recovered.
6. In 1984, I had a stroke and got better close to the end of the year. Parts of my face were paralysed for some time.
7. From 1986 and 1996 I suffered from what the Kyrgyz people call *jengil-jelpi tumoo*<sup>199</sup>. Not considering the colds I had I did not have any serious illnesses in those years.
8. In the years from 1997 and 2007, I had problems with my liver. Liquid was extracted from my lungs. I had two operations.

9. In the beginning of the year 2008, I had problems with my lymph nodes. I started to get irritated very quickly. I started to feel that I have an unexplainable illness inside of me. Eventually, I had surgery at the Intestinal Department of the National Surgical Center named after Mambet Mamakeev. I recovered from that. In the same year I was diagnosed with cancer.

10. From 2008 until the year of 2009, until the month of March, I have undergone chemo-therapy six or seven times.

During the process of my treatment from the aforementioned illnesses I also used the *kyrgyzchylyk* way of healing. Ancient medicine, whose secrets have been safeguarded in our traditions is also efficient and requires much skill and knowledge just as mainstream medicine.

The ways in which *tabypchy* and *emchi* treat people should be considered separately from the healing methods of *bübü-bakshy*, *dervish* or a person who performs *zikir* [q.v.]. I do not want to say that either one of them is worse, and both of the ways are respected by the people. It is also the case that traditional medicine and modern medicine respect each other: among the gifted people a healer bows to a doctor and a doctor will bow to a healer.

Most patients at the end of treatment are grateful not only to the doctor they say: “God has saved me, I went to the other world and came back”. And we obey not the power of needle and scalpel but the doctor, our bodies succumb not only to their education and skills and but to their words and to the power of the nature. Practitioners who got the gift of the nature through the mystical way and through evidence, are in power of with strong feeling and capabilities, are those who practice *tabypchylyk* and *emchilik*, which have been widely spread among people since ancient time.

When my children, whom God gave to me as a gift, were ill I would always use the ways of *emchilik*. When I was a child and I got sick these methods of treating were used on me and they became a habit for me. I would always treat my children at home except for the serious injuries or kidney infections or heart ache other things that I recognized needed hospitalisation. But when my children were little they were under good medical observation and care.

But my approach to *tabypchy* and *emchi* is also to some degree sceptical, I admit that I don't always believe in the healers. I think I have faith in about half of the healers and half of the healing methods, I try to look at the practice both with faith and rationally. Besides traditional healers, I have experienced the help of 6 or 7 people, seen as wise, or with broad religious knowledge, gifted clairvoyants, yielding natural powers.

The last time when I had surgery was in May 2008. After the operation my husband and I went to the central Cystology department and for the results of the analysis and only then did I realise that the most crucial danger was still in front of me. The diagnosis was: “Abdominal Cavity illness. Serous-hemorrhagic peritonitis. Intoxication”.

After that, starting from the end of June, many people, doctors and my close relatives started to help me look for ways of fighting the illness with the bad name. My husband advised me not to look only in one direction but also to look for ways of treatment from *tabypchylyk* and *emchilik*, to go to a *kasyida okugan kishi*<sup>200</sup>, religious old man called Derdesh Ata from Ak-Saiy, to visit Manjly-Ata *mazar*. He told me not to loose faith and told me that if God wishes we can find a cure even through traditional medicine.

I can't express my feelings and condition when I first read the diagnosis. However in the bottom of my heart was there still pure faith in my God. My double treatment, the modern one and the traditional one started in June 2008, when I was given the first course of chemotherapy.

At first I tried the “Tian-Shi” bioadditive, mixtures prepared from natural herbs, taken in the form of tincture, a drink. When I found out that the “cancer marker” in the blood decreased after the second course of the chemotherapy, the weakness of my organism after strong medications was combined with fear. Doctor Sultan Bakirovich Orozobekov who is a highly-experienced professional, Roza Boljurovna a healer, Japar Bekturov a surgeon and Kaljikeev influenced my illness significantly, they helped me overcome my fears, helped me to be patient and calm.

Among those people, who helped and morally encouraged me to believe that my patron who gives me my musical skills is still protecting me was Sutenova Baiyma Japarovna. She is a journalist and she devoted many hours of her valuable time for me, she would spend two to three hours before going to work and after coming back from work with me. I am convinced that no skillful psychologist would have spent that time with me and supported me as much as she did, sharing her kindness, wisdom and the lessons of her humorous life experiences.

One of the reasons for my getting this illness is that cancer cells which exist in the organism of every person react to stress and this can aggravate the illness. This seems to have been what happened in my case. When I heard of my daughter's accident I was shattered and I thought my life was going to turn upside down.

Is this the end? Or is it just the beginning? What will happen at the end? What will I do? The answers to these endless questions can only be found hidden in a person's inner self and in their ability to distance themselves from certain things. This is as profound as many secrets, like courage, the cutting edge of doctors' knives, the power of ancient healing, the fate of the patient depends on all these.

My first visit to a traditional healer was to a Korean woman, she was a certified healer who claimed she could cure different diseases. She lived in the Vostok-5 microregion of Bishkek. She said: "Since you have started chemotherapy, complete it, but you do not have cancer. This is something else, evil done with the hands of another person. It is a woman, she is tall, with big breasts, dark hair, she is thickset, big. There is another woman helping her. It happened many years ago". After giving me her own treatment she said: "after completing this treatment, it will be up to you whether you decide to come again or not. As for the retaliatory measures to those women, I will do that myself, you should not do anything, do not get distracted and do not worry." With these words she saw me off.

The second person whom we visited was an old man named Vladimir Fedorovich, who lived on Armavirskaya street in Bishkek and who treated people with herbal medicine. He did not agree with the diagnosis and the medical scan check-ups. He said it was my liver, kidneys and pancreas that did not function properly. What is interesting he fixed his diagnosis only by reading my pulse. He gave me a mixture of natural dried herbs that had the smell of the mountains. He also said I could only take three to four courses of chemotherapy.

The third time we went to a healer, Derdesh Ata again expressed his disappointment with the conclusions of the doctors. He judged on the basis of his previous experience with patients and he told me what he thought was the cause of my illness. According to him, this illness started when the large intestine stopped working and that in addition to the habitual illness of abdominal cords, pancreas, and liver, the salt of osteochodros went from muscles to the soft meat. He said: "Abandon the chemotherapy and come to visit me for ten days and you will be cured". I told my husband what he had said and how I had approached him with scepticism.

Maybe because of the tincture from various herbs or because of the ingredients used for preparing herbal medicine but when I met the healer I stopped being suspicious. At first when he asked: "What ails you? What is the reason for your coming here?" I asked him for a different thing that was not connected to my real illness. However he acted in such a way that in the end I was glad that I had turned to: he put his little hands onto his eyes and gave true answers to my questions, he was a simple man and obeyed God, and openly asked me to pay for his service. For these reasons I changed my opinion about him and believed in him.

After being treated by Derdesh Ata and visiting Manjlyy-Ata *mazar*, besides modern medical treatment a new world of *kyrgyzchylyk* slowly started to open itself before us.

The fourth place that I visited was the house of an *emchi*, who lived on Kamchatskaya street of Bishkek, which was on the way to Sokuluk. He treated people through the Islamic ways of healing, religious messages, massage, and cleansing. He explained that my visiting him was inspired by God, that all the rules in his place were based not on him, but on the great power of God, that he and all individuals who help people are only God's representatives who are fulfilling their duties in front of God and the Qur'an. He performed some cleansing rituals and said that in order to get well one only one thing is needed, that is hope. On the second day of cleansing I realised this was true. I am grateful to Allah for this hope.

My fifth visit was to a relative of mine, who is a clairvoyant. I turned to her in order to know about my future and what the stones would say of my fate. She knew that I treated her fortunetelling not as a gift from above, but as a kind of lesson of morals. When I went to her I myself was also observing the way how the stones would lie. At the end of the session I was pleased, the stones said that good things were waiting for me in the future.

The sixth visit was to an old lady, who possessed unusual powers and magic, she could understand secrets of the universe, she was not like ordinary people and with the help of this cosmic knowledge she had been seeing and curing patients for the past 16 years. She is well known among the people. Our paths has crossed before but this was the first time I was turning to her as a patient. My musical talent was one of the reasons why she wanted to see me and was willing to treat me. Her hands were so soft, her voice would accompany her movements, and I was surprised by how many secrets were hidden behind her dark eyes. She said that it was the cleanliness of her heart and intentions that

allowed her to have these powers but she was not their owner. She told me: “When I first heard that you got sick I was afraid. However, your current condition and the way you look now are telling me that your illness is a little bit gone”.

The seventh person was a famous healer in Kazakhstan, who lived in the Sary-Bulak village of Kordoiy raiyon. He was considered a very wise man. He would openly tell the patients everything that he saw or felt, without hiding anything. When I met him it turned out he was a very spiritual person. The results of his treatments proved that he was a person who knew and worshiped the powers of the secret universe, which are unknown to us, ordinary people. He told me that he had seen me nine years ago, that my current condition was showed that I was not able to find my way and thus suffering. As for my illness, he said that it was very serious, and that it had been sent by a woman, she had sent the badness to me through food served during a feast. I felt the real power of his energy as soon as I took two sips of “Legend” water, which absorbed the power of his palm and his spells that he spoke in a trance. I want to note that by his gesture I understood that I would still learn many things, and that there were many things to tell.

My dear readers, my doctors and cleansing healers, my relatives and close people! I can tell you that the only thing that gave me support through the last two years since I got sick, in all my moments of sufferings and happiness, in all the moments of being alive and being a servant of God was my belief that “If God gives sickness, he will give health too”. This became my motto, my advisor, my patron and this is what I will always follow. Never loose hope and never give up looking for different ways of getting well, dear people who share the same illness as me.

At the end what I want to say to my people, relatives, friends everyone who shares my worries, to the poets whom I performed with, my students who are learning a great skill, is that, may God forgive and save me, Maiyra Kerim kyzy, the daughter of Kazakh people, a daughter-in-law of Kyrgyz people, who knows how to sing, but who might commit some sins through ignorance. Even though I have “cancer” please God, don't let me be “rejected” by the people.

One of the hero sons of the Kyrgyz nation, the great gifted historical writer Tölögön Kasymbekov once wrote “One will never hear how Allah gives or takes away, one needs patience and will and most importantly faith”. This is my great hope.

<sup>193</sup> *Daly köriüchü* [Kyrgyz] - a person who does soothsaying on mutton shoulder-blade bone [ed.].

<sup>194</sup> *Emsek* [Kyrgyz] - successful, lucky hands of a healer [ed.].

<sup>195</sup> *Önöktöshuk töröt* [Kyrgyz] - giving birth in partnership [ed.].

<sup>196</sup> *Üpü* and *Apy* [Kyrgyz] - powder made from herbs used in traditional medicine [ed.].

<sup>197</sup> *Kytaiydyñ kyrma darysy* [Kyrgyz] - a Chinese medicine made from drugs that is used for treating wounds. from: Yudahin K.K. Kirgizskorusskiy slovar' [Kyrgyz-Russian Dictionary], Moscow, 1965, pg.496 [ed.].

<sup>129</sup> *Egiz tildegi ergüülör* [Kyrgyz] - Inspiration in two brother tongues; *Aitysh* - *Alla belegi* [Kyrgyz] - *Aitysh* [competition of improvisers] – the gift of Allah; *Biiyiktik* [Kyrgyz] - Altitude [ed.].

<sup>199</sup> *Jengil-jelpi tumoo* [Kyrgyz] - light cold, flu [ed.].

## I HAVE MY OWN KOLDOOCHU

### **Mamakeev Mambet**

*He was born in Kerege-Tash village of the Ak-Suu raiyon in the year 1927. He is a professor of medicine. In the year 1973 he was titled an Honorary Doctor of the Kyrgyz USSR. Since the 1974 he has worked as the director of the surgical department of the National Hospital. He has supervised doctorate degrees and 21 master degrees and he is the master of about ten apprentices. He is the author of more than 200 academic works and 9 books. He is an Honourary Academic of former Kyrgyz USSR Academy of Science (1987). He is has been a member of the Kyrgyz National Academy of Science since 1989 and the Kazakh Academy of Medicine since 1995.*

*In 1998 he was awarded the State Award of Science and Technology; the I. Ahunbaev award by National Academy of Science in 1997.*

*Since 1995 he has been heading the National Surgical Center named in his honour M. Mamakeev.*

*He has been decorated with the 1st and 2nd degree “Manas” medals and the “Ak-Shumkar” order. He has been given the title of National Hero of the Kyrgyz Republic.*

None of my ancestors possessed any special healing abilities. My grandparents and my own parents lived a very poor life. They worked in a kolhoz all their lives. Our poverty was such that until the time when I left to town to study I did not know how to slaughter a sheep. We could not afford this.

My parents lived in the most miserly yurt out in the steppe. They learnt that Kyrdyr Ake was visiting his people and he should be hosted by the people. However nobody had anything to offer him and most of the local people did not accept him in the due fashion. My parents who were young at the time, came out to meet him and welcome him offering a bowl of *jarma*<sup>201</sup>. Then Kydyr Ake gave my parents his blessings, at that time my mother was pregnant with me. *Sanjyrachylar* story tellers think that I have been successful because I was blessed by Kydyr Ake.

According to legend Kydyr Ake is the sixth *akes*. There have been many holy people among the Kyrgyz people, however Kydyr Ake has been remembered because he was a very wise man. In those days there was no paper to write on and no science and the word of the ake was law. Many issues were solved by their wise words.

I have had the honour to meet his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. One of his grandchildren is Düiyshön Kydyrov who is now a member of parliament. His children are good people, but there is no one among them as wise as Kydyr Ake.

A year after the mausoleum of Kydyr Ake was built a funeral ceremony was held there in honour of a hundred years anniversary of his passing away. I took part in the event, it took place at the time of the presidential elections. Askar Akaev<sup>202</sup> who was then president was leading his campaign and proposed a meeting of the Ak-Suu region close to the mausoleum of Kydyr Ake so that the two events could coincide. He gave a great speech and talked of many interesting things, he spoke of Kydyr Ake, his deeds and his personality. The elders of our community were very impressed by the presidents' knowledge saying "we had not heard much of this before."

When we returned to the city, I asked Askar Akaevich about the source of his knowledge, I said: "Kydyr Ake was the father of our people. Where did you learn all that information about him that you told us?" Askar Akaevich told me that when he was studying in Leningrad for 17 years, he had stumbled upon books in which Kydyr Ake was mentioned in one of the libraries and he had found this information very important and remembered it. Askar Akaev told me that as long as the things go well he would bring the documents about Kydyr Ake from Leningrad. Those documents have complete information about the doings of Kydyr Ake. Akaev was a very intelligent man and he had the ability to remember details like this.

When the mausoleum of Kydyr Ake was finished people wanted to put a photograph of the *ake* on the grave, but nobody could find a suitable picture. After long searches his children found one of his pictures and brought it to me. I told them that I could not recognize the picture and that I had never seen him alive. But I knew one of my relatives, who had been working as a diplomat in Moscow for 15 years had known Kydyr Ake. His name was Kachykeev and he was almost 96 years old. We took the picture to him to ask whether this was Kydyr Ake. But when we showed it to him he almost shouted "take it away" because it wasn't the *ake* but a photograph of Baiytik Baatyr. Only later did we manage to get a photograph sent to us from Leningrad.

There are many stories told of Kydyr Ake by the people. One story tells of how his son died, because Kydyr Ake unwillingly put his the evil eye upon him. Kydyr Ake was sitting on top of a hill with his friends and they saw about ten horsemen approaching. It was his son galloping with his friends in the direction of the village, his son was in the lead. Kydyr Ake's friends turned to him and asked "isn't that your son?" But before they finished the question Kydyr Ake said "Oh, it is too late, it is too late." When his son came home he was complaining of headache and on crossing the hearth he almost immediately died.

At that time Sadyr Ake was guest at the house of Kydyr Ake. When Kydyr Ake was told about his son's death he hung his head but said: "do not disturb all the guests". He did not allow them to tell the guests about the death of his son. After the quests finished eating the meat that was served, Kydyr Ake took his *komuz* and started to play the mysterious and sad melody. Listening to this melody Sadyr Ake guessed of the loss and said to other guests: "Men, this melody is sad, get up!" Then Sadyr Ake took his horsemen as far away from the house as a foal can run, then rode back wailing, expressing their grief for Kydyr Ake's son.

There are many other stories. One of the horses of Kydyr Ake was a good racer horse and he would win prizes at racing competitions. When I was working as a member of a parliament I visited Sary-Jaz many times. There I saw a big rock, on which the skull of Kydyr Ake's horse had been placed. Later one of the frontier guards shoot the skull down by accident.

The story of that horse is as follows: Kydyr Ake was invited by his friend to Kashkar. It was custom to give the guest a gift but the friend did not know what to give Kydyr Ake. Just before leaving his friend's house, Kydyr Ake saw a mare giving birth. The newly born foal fell to the ground, stood up, shook itself and jumped over its mother. Kydyr Ake felt that newborn colt would be a fine horse and he asked his friend to give him the horse. His friend was happy that he had a gift and replied: "take the colt, take him together with his mother". And indeed that colt became an excellent racer.

In the year of 1916, at the time of the *Ürkiin* [q.v.], many Kyrgyz people died because they did not listen to Kydyr Ake, he said "We should not have conflict with the Russians because we do not have the power to fight them. It will not be an equal fight, they have more power than we do at the moment." When Kydyr Ake passed away Russians also came to his funeral and they mourned him. And when Kydyr Ake's mausoleum was to be built, Russian people from the Ak-Suu rayion also wanted to establish his monument locally in Ak-Suu.

At that time I took my holiday leave and went to the village together with my younger brother Japar. They had started building the mausoleum for Kydyr Ake, so I went there to see it personally. When we went there the foundations of the mausoleum were already standing. The remnants of the old mausoleum were inside the new foundations. When I looked down to see the old mausoleum more closely a white viper slid out from under the bricks. I stood back frightened.

I went to the village elder, who was more than ninety and told him what I had seen. He was a wise man, in socialist times he had worked as an activist social worker and he had lost a leg during the war. After hearing my story he calmed me down and said "do not be scared, it was a good sign, I have lived a long life but I have never yet heard of anyone who has seen a white snake at the mausoleum of Kydyr Ake. It means that Kydyr Ake has been protecting you and you will do well. There are many snakes in the hills, but I have never seen a white viper before."

All seven of the *akes* were the possessors of special powers. Nowadays every village wants to have its own *ake* and *baatyr*s. It doesn't matter if they be worthy of the title. At the opening ceremony of the monuments for Kuseiyn Karasaev<sup>203</sup> and Kasym Tynystanov<sup>204</sup> in Karakol town, Askar Akaev proposed to honour Karasaev with the title of *ake*. However his suggestion was not supported by the people, the *akes* were too important. This title is given by the people themselves and after Kyrgyzstan gained independence, the people themselves built monuments for the *akes* whom they honored and respected. I took part in all of the seven unveiling ceremonies of the mausoleums.

When it comes to traditional music I think that contemporary orchestras cannot reach the heights of Ybyrai Tumanov and Karamoldo Orozov playing. Why is this so? Because both of them had real and natural talent. They were able to create pure and fine melodies. Asankan Jumakmatov is a very talented composer. He transferred the original melodies of the *komuzchu* into orchestra music. But it does not have the soul of the real *komuz* music. Both of the mentioned *komuzchu* were the natural talents with no musical education, this is amazing phenomena. I knew Ybyrai, he was my neighbor. Once when I was young I was listening to recordings of "*Jash Tilek*"<sup>205</sup> or "*Erkindik*"<sup>206</sup>. I could hear his heavy breathing that sounded like "bysh-bysh". Later when I had the chance to see him perform in person I noticed that this was not the fault of the quality of the recording but it was his way of breathing. So his heavy breathing has also been passed down to history. He was a giant of a man and he had very big hands, he was very quiet and silent, cautious with words.

The *küü* of Karamoldo called "*Kököiy kesti*" is the greatest *küü*! It is now played at funerals it is indeed a really sad melody.

Do you know who Sayakbaiy was? How can a man's memory fit so many words? He could recite for so long and with such talent that today a whole academic institute is needed to study his works. They look at every word and there are more than a million of those. He was an incredible man, he could recite for days, without pausing, during these sessions he did not feel hunger not thirst nor fatigue. He was a very holy man.

I believe in God. That is why here [in the middle of the yard at the State Clinic named after Mambet Mamakeev, ed.] I asked for a mosque to be built. On Fridays, the mosque fills up with visitors. Most of the people who live close to the clinic come here to pray. If the patients are afraid of the operations they can go to the mosque and pray, it helps them to get rid of their worries.

I believe in the spirits of our ancestors. We usually call for the protection of the spirits with the words "Spirits protect us!" Whenever I pass by sacred sites, I always stop by and pray at them. I think that in general human beings have to believe in something. Once people believed only in the Communist Party and they would do everything that it told them to do. Now that is gone and everyone can follow rules of their own. That is why it is good thing to have a belief that brings rules with it. We should help people to believe, for example, if a patient comes to us with a great faith in his recovery and asks for a specific doctor to treat him, we immediately agree with his demand. It is difficult to help if people come without belief. That

is why doctors have to be careful when they talk to their patients. A patient can die not of his illness but from the words of the doctor.

Our village is called Kerege-Tash. After Karakol city there is the village of Ak-Suu and after that our village begins. The mountains there are called Kichi-Kerege-Tash and Chong-Kerege-Tash. It is because they look like *kerege*<sup>207</sup>. I assume that in old days a person such as Kydyr Ake gave those mountains their names.

There is a *mazar* located at the top of the village called Ak-Baka which means white frog. People drink water from the spring. The water flows right from underneath the mountain and it is a very beautiful place. I could sit for days and gaze at the spring. Every time when I go there, I ask for a whole bucket of water and drink it. The villagers of Kerege-Tash and neighbouring villages used to go to pray at the spring, they would sacrifice animals and pray or make their wishes. Old people say that before, one could sometimes see a real white frog sitting at the spring. Now that spring is sometimes active and sometimes it is not. I don't know why it sometimes does not flow, maybe it is because of our current ways of life? A big stream used to flow from the *mazar* and then people used the water to water their gardens and it faded away. Now, once again the people want to save the spring, people visit the mausoleum of Kydyr Ake and they come to pray at the spring, so to protect it a fence has been set up around it.

I repeat this often and am proud of it: I have a patron spirit. I am very grateful for this protection, and it seems my wishes have come true. As for my professional work, my position did not come easily, I had to work hard to achieve what I have. It took education, knowledge, much effort and work. At the same time I believe that my patron spirit helped me, I am a hundred percent sure that it gave me the strength and encouragement I needed. I tell my friends, my children and even fellow parliamentarians: "I have a protector spirits, which guides me." This has helped me through hardships and to success and I believe it will bring better things yet.

<sup>200</sup> *Kasyida okugan kishi* [Kyrgyz] - a healer which treats by reading *Kasyida* (Islamic religious poems) [ed.].

<sup>201</sup> *Jarma* [Kyrgyz] - refreshing national drink usually made from maize and cornflour [ed.].

## PART II

### ACADEMIC PAPERS

#### THE DISPUTE ON PILGRIMAGE TO SACRED SITES AMONG KYRGYZ MUSLIMS

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##### **Introduction**

Often, when discussing sacred sites, the question of their classification is raised. There is a Kyrgyz saying: "When asking for a child – go to Manjly-Ata, when asking for wealth – go to Cholpon-Ata"<sup>208</sup> it gives us an example of folk or emic classification of sacred sites. This is a functional classification, which is based on the sacred sites' primary function. According to the saying, every sacred site has its' own specific function, that is, the site has a certain influence on people. However our research in Talas and Ysyk-Köl has shown that the majority of sacred sites have not one but many abilities. Therefore the success of the pilgrimage depends more on a person's intentions and on their ability to establish contact with a certain place. After establishing such a connection, between the pilgrim and a sacred place, its' influence can be very wide and not limited to the designated function of the place. One may ask for many things, be it family prosperity, blessings, health, spiritual inspiration or many others.

Formation of sacred sites could be another classifying principle. This divides sacred sites into two categories: natural sites and manmade sites (Aitpaeva, 2007). However a large amount of sacred sites in Kyrgyzstan are combined: the manmade and the natural have long merged. Manjly-Ata – a large sacred complex located on the south shore of the Ysyk-Köl is a very good example of this, here the objects of worship are springs and trees as well as old mausoleums (*kümböz*).

Yet another means of classification - is the time of appearance of the sacred site, or the time of its' being identified as a sacred place. Due to the fact that there are very few written sources to be found on the history of sacred sites in Kyrgyzstan, this classifier is based on information preserved in oral tradition. Based on the oral history, it is reasonable to identify three large time blocks, these are mythological or prehistoric, historical and then modern times. To illustrate this we shall once again use the example of Manjly-Ata, on which we have not yet found any written sources. However, according to legend, many thousands of years ago, a man called Manjly lived there. In the absence of written sources and based on oral history, where Manjly-Ata is considered a very ancient site, the appearance of this site can be attributed to mythological or pre-historical times. Accordingly, places like Ak-Baka (White Frog), Ak-Tailak (White Camel Foal), Kochkor-Ata (Father Ram), Bugu-Ene (Mother Deer) seem to come from times that may also be defined as mythological.

Sacred sites named in honour of a historical figure, who appears in written sources of any kind (be they books, letters, photos, genealogies), can be designated as historical. The mausoleums of the Ysyk-Köl *akes* can be considered manmade, historical places of worship.

Sacred sites that have been discovered or that appeared recently, in times that have not yet passed into history, can be called modern sites. One of these *mazars* is the Ata-Beiyt complex in the village Tash-Döbö next to Bishkek.

Another classification worth mentioning is propriety of the land on which a sacred site is located. For the time being, most sacred sites stand on state property, but more and more of the sites are being passed into the hands of private or corporate owners<sup>209</sup>.

Regardless of the above mentioned attempts to classify sacred sites in Kyrgyzstan, it cannot be denied that today sacred sites are one of the centers of religious and spiritual life of local communities. In the years 2005-2008 Aigine Cultural Research Center studied sacred sites and here we met and learnt the opinions of many pilgrims. These led us to establish as our main focuses of interest *Kyrgyzchylyk*, seen as a set of traditional knowledge and practices and *musulmanchylyk*, seen as a set of beliefs and practices of folk Islam. In the progress of our research we learnt that hot debates about what type of Islam should be practiced in Kyrgyzstan evolve around sacred sites and the tradition of pilgrimage

### **Academic traditions and reality**

It seems to be the academic tradition to consider the Islam existing in Kyrgyzstan as a blend of pre-Islamic and Islamic traditions and rituals (Polyakov, Montgomery, Toktogulova). It can be said that this perspective was already introduced by Chokan Valikhanov, who in his works from the XIXth century notes, that regardless of the fact that the Kyrgyz converted to Islam, they have in most part retained their pagan rituals. This opinion was maintained by Samuel Abramzons' (Abramzon, pp. 284-355) studies based on years of field research and Batyrbek Amanaliev's (Amanaliev, pp. 3-35; 43-60) analysis of Kyrgyz philosophy, both who claimed that Islam in Kyrgyzstan is practiced sustaining most of the ancient superstitions and customs of the pre-Islamic tradition.

However as Nathan Light observes: "In the case of Kyrgyz religion, throughout the 20th century both Soviet scholars and clerical officials have attempted to distinguish Islamic and native practices, while popular practitioners have generally been less concerned with these divisions" (Light, pg. 492).

The concept of "folk Islam" is not a new term, however nowadays in western academia it is referred to as "everyday Islam". Two recent anthropological studies conducted in Uzbekistan, the first by Maria Louw (Louw, 2007) and the second by Kristina Kehl-Bodgori (Kehl-Bodgori, 2008) also show that the tradition of *zyyarat* (pilgrimage) [q.v.] is an inseparable part of Uzbek Muslim religious practice.

The results of three years of our field research also show that the greater majority of Kyrgyz pilgrims consider themselves Muslims. It should be mentioned there is a negative and critical attitude to *mazar* pilgrimage in Kyrgyzstan also.

The claim that Islam is the religion of the majority of Kyrgyz people is not a question in the discussion between the supporters and critics of the pilgrimage tradition. The discussion concerns the type of Islam that "should" be practiced. In short, based on Aigine's research the question is whether this Islam should:

- permit or prohibit worship at sacred sites.
- permit a wide spectrum of rituals and spirituals practices or limit itself to the practices mentioned in the Qur'an.
- allow old healing practices or exclude them as pagan heresy.

The *moldos*<sup>210</sup> (mullahs) consider themselves the main experts in this discussion. Most people also recognize *moldos* as the main experts in this field.

Today in Kyrgyzstan a high council of the Muslim hierarchy has been created, it is called the *Muftiyat* [q.v.]. This is a means for uniting and supervising *moldos* of all types. According to Rahmatullo Egemberdiev, the director of the mosque and madrassa section of the Muftiyat, the next level of the hierarchy is the *Kazyyat* (from the word *kazy*<sup>211</sup>) [q.v.]. The Muftiyat contains nine *Kazyyats*, two in the cities and seven in the regions. In every region, depending on the population, there are mosques, and every mosque has an imam and his helpers.

In the year 2007 Aigine CRC conducted research in the Talas region, taking as its subject of research “*Moldos* as guardians and destroyers of tradition”. This study was conducted using quantitative and qualitative methods of research. With the help of students from the Talas State University we interviewed 103 *moldos* between the ages of 20 and 84.

Based on the research and our previous experience with studying sacred sites, we formed a general hypothesis. It can be said that a) there are several types of *moldos* in our country b) the difference between the two types is found in their approach to folk traditions and ritual practices.

The absolute majority of *moldos* from Talas, that is to say 90,5%, believe that Islam is the main religion in the country and that the state should support initiatives to build mosques. Moreover the absolute majority of our respondents 84,5%, claim that the type of Islam practiced in Kyrgyzstan is the correct type of Islam. In the light of the hypothesis there are several types of *moldos* in the country; the last number seems to point to potential tension between different types of Muslims.

The understanding of what is the “correct” or “incorrect” (Abashin) Islam is often connected with the status of the *moldo*.

### **Official and unofficial statuses**

The first field research in Talas showed, that the division of *moldos*, made by Polyakov in Soviet times (Polyakov, pg.196), into “official” and “inofficial” religious specialists, is one that still holds firm in Kyrgyzstan. The “official *moldos*” of Talas are those who received religious education and have documentation to confirm this. Out of 103 of our interviewed, 43 *moldo* had finished their Islamic education.

“Inofficial *moldos*” are those, who received education from other respected *moldos* and who are titled *moldo* by the people. They have been given the right to conduct religious practices and rituals by the residents of the street, village or region (the area may differ) in which they work. In Talas there are now 38 such *moldos* and another 14 people who learnt the laws of Islam independently.

Many of the “inofficial” *moldo* note that they became religious leaders and began to lead their followers not of their own accord and initiative. Alymkulov Ismail, 79 years old, the Imam of Balbal village in the Talas region told us:

“One day my fellow villagers approached me and said: since you know all the prayers, you will be our *moldo*. I had just been signed out of hospital and I didn’t know the duties of *moldo*. I refused the position, telling them: how can I do something I don’t know how to do? But they didn’t pay any heed to my words and they made me *moldo*. And that’s how I became their *moldo*<sup>212</sup>”.

This example of the people choosing a *moldo* based on a person’s knowledge of the Qur’an and his ability to recite prayers is a typical situation among the Kyrgyz people. According to research conducted by Privratsky, 2001 and Ranasayagam, 2006, this is also characteristic of Islam in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

In pre-Soviet times, literacy, including religious literacy, was rare among the Kyrgyz. In Soviet times the literacy rate changed radically, counting the majority of the population. However the amount of people with the ability to read religious texts did not rise because of the Soviet ideology. For this reason both in pre-Soviet and in Soviet times people who could read the Qur’an and recite prayers were chosen by the people to be *moldos*.

Today, as Islam is the mainstream religion and Islamic movements have started to spread throughout the country, the “official” *moldos* are finding it easier to be honoured by the higher council as they have Islamic education and an official status, therefore they are included in the legitimate religious system. The “unofficial” *moldos* have found themselves in a weaker, unprotected position as they are not supported by the power of the Muftiyat. The “inofficial” *moldos* were not in a privileged position in Soviet times either, however the importance of these kind of *moldos* was noted by Polyakov during his research: “The majority of these people know, neither dogma nor canonical norms and

rites, nor the official prayers, but even so they are very good leaders of Islam on an everyday level. They understand very well the needs of their communities. They are the keepers of local Islam, in which the requirements of the people are contained. The kind of Islam preserves the above mentioned order and that which will be further discussed. Without this everyday Islam and the unregistered mullas, the fancy Friday mosques would stand empty and would find their floors covered, in the best case, with cheap cloth mats instead of the expensive carpets lying there now“ (Polyakov, pg. 198)

Also, *moldos* of both status, namely 86,9% of our respondents, believe that the direct consequence of receiving higher education in a religious institute, is a high level of morality of the graduate. The greater majority, 91,7% of the *moldo* agree that, every Kyrgyz person is obligated to fulfill muslim obligations. And in support of this 88,1% of our respondents believe that the state should encourage initiatives of building mosques in villages.

In view of the statistics and information mentioned above we should ask: What then, are the principle differences in the worldview and religious approaches between “official” and “unofficial” *moldos*?

### ***Moldochuluk and Kyrgyzchylyk***

Practices of turning to Islam in sicknesses and through pilgrimages, traditional healing with using the power of certain Surah from the Qur’an, the individual teaching approach *ustat-shakirt* (master-apprentice) allow to make certain parallels between the practice of *moldochuluk*, meaning the totality of obligations and practices concerned with being a *moldo* and *kyrgyzchylyk*, meaning the totality of folk customs and traditions.

There was a series of questions, focused on finding the relation between Islam and folk beliefs in our questionnaires, in both the qualitative and quantitative research.

We found that these questions were approached and answered in a similar way and that they were what may be called the “personal factor”. We can take the example of the respected elder of Talas, Satylgan-moldo, whose opinion can be seen as the stereotypical approach: that these, Islam and traditional faith are two different sets of beliefs and traditions. Satylgan-moldo firmly separates these two spheres of religious activity, and in his opinion *kyrgyzchylyk* is seen as a sin: “*Kyrgyzchylyk* is a mistake. Nowadays we call clairvoyants bearers of *kyrgyzchylyk*, but this is fortune-telling does not tell the truth. In the Shariat these people are called, *dubana*, *bübü* [q.v.], *bakshy* [q.v. under *bübü*]. Islam hates *kyrgyzchylyk*; it also hates *dubana* [q.v.] and *bakshy*. In the Qur’an, The Holy one says, that all soothsayers and fortunetellers commit a breach against faith, as do they, who believe their words”.

It is obvious in all of Satylgyn-moldos’ statements, that he does not support traditional practices and worship. However his opinion is not shared by the majority of *moldos* in Talas. By asking the question: Are Islam and traditional practices one and the same thing? We received an interesting picture of the religious worldview of our respondents. The following chart shows the answers of our respondents.

We have marked the answers “completely agree” with the opinion that Islam and traditional beliefs is one and the same thing in section A. The chart shows that more than one third of *moldo* do not see the difference between the two practices.

The Aigine psychology and psychiatry expert Dr. Elena Molchanova presents this occurrence as a psychological self-defense mechanism of our respondents. She says: “We have shown that these people simultaneously practice their traditional faith and Islam, but these can be so firmly united only if we have internalized the belief, that they are the same thing. It seems that more than one third of the *moldos* of the Islam faith in Talas province believe that paganism and Islam are the same thing. This cannot be ascribed to illiteracy; rather this is a psychological fissure and an attempt to protect their religious self-identity”<sup>213</sup>

This interpretation may be useful if we were to base our argument on the stereotypical approach to the subject and assume that there is a clear division between paganism and monotheism. However if this approach is discarded we can simply say that, over one third of Talas *moldos*, are bearers of the **type of Islam** that unites in itself the principles of the Muslim faith and traditional Kyrgyz beliefs.

This point of view is fully supported by Nurlan, (46 years old), who possesses a status of “official” *moldo*, since he has graduated from the Islamic Institute of Bishkek. Nurlan was one of the first graduates of this Institute, however

after graduation he did not continue religious service, but turned to healing and became a *tabyp* (traditional healer). Now Nurlan's main occupation is traditional healing. In his opinion Islam and traditional beliefs have the same aim and lead to the same goal. He says that: "In Islam the prophet Mohammed is considered one of the last prophets. I am very happy, that I belong to this faith. Firstly because Islam teaches morality, secondly it encourages a correct way of bringing children up, that keeps them away from bad things and leads them to piety. In other words, if a person is obliged to say Namaz five times a day, he will never commit a crime. I think that the Kyrgyz people follow this path".

This belief in the synthesis of Islam and traditional beliefs is supported by the "unofficial" *moldo* Sapan Kudaiybergenov (54 years old), from the village of Booterek: "Kyrgyzchylyk and Islam work together. How is this? Islam is our religion. When a *tabyp* heals a person he turns to God to ask for his help in the healing and the blessing of the sick person".

The above examples are just two voices from the large group of *moldo*, who do not see the difference between *moldochuluk* and *kyrgyzchylyk*. Besides this "personal factor" we also noted the "age factor" which is the correlation between the approach to the question of the connection between *moldochuluk* and *kyrgyzchylyk* and the age of the questioned *moldos*. The older a *Moldo* is, the more he is likely to respond positively to

the question of the relationship between *moldochuluk* and *kyrgyzchylyk*, and the more tolerant he is likely to be of traditional beliefs.

### Generation and tradition

The distinction between the "clean" and "unclean", the "correct" and "incorrect" Islam and, consequently, the divide between different types of *moldos* lies in the approach to the traditions and principles of ancestors.

More than half of our informants consider this question to be the source of the conflict and connect this conflict with the generation gap. Nasir-moldo, who is 34 years old, the *imam* of Manas village thinks: "Yes, there are some contradictions between generations. According to what we were taught by our elder *moldodor*, our traditions and customs are a part of the Shariat [q.v.]. The elder *moldo* explain their point of view in the following manner. It seems they sometimes try to explain, that the modern *moldos* have created a new, different hariat. Well, they believe, that if we keep both the Islamic and folk traditions, that is better. But according to what we learn nowadays, this isn't considered the right kind of faith. Customs and traditions shouldn't be considered a part of the Shariat, and they shouldn't be practiced as the Shariat"<sup>214</sup>.

There are rituals that are not the subject of serious debate amongst the *moldos*. Firstly this is the traditional Kyrgyz burial ritual, when the body of the departed is buried on the third day after death, whereas Islamic tradition requires the body to be buried on the next day. Often, in order to honour the deceased the family bears large financial costs, this is greatly criticized by many of our respondents, the *moldo* whom we worked with. And we have seen that this tradition is gradually changing and becoming more Islamic – this may be due to the influence of a new kind of Islam, however it may also be due to the difficult conditions of life and poverty that is the everyday for most people.

Worship in sacred sites seems to be the core of the dispute between the *moldos*. The "unofficial" and some of the "official" *moldo*, treat this pilgrimage as a sign of piety and often lead the pilgrimages themselves. This is a source of much annoyance and sometimes aggression from the part of the "official" *moldos*, most of whom were educated in religious centers abroad where there are different traditions of religious practice, in Egypt, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

There is a thin line between what is considered the "correct" or "incorrect" way of making a pilgrimage. In the opinion of the *moldos* who practice only in mosques, worship at *mazars* is seen as worshipping stones and streams and considered *shirk*, that is worship of other gods or things beside God. This is considered one of the gravest sins of Islam.

On the other hand Muslim pilgrims, and especially healers for example Būsada Mombekova or the guardian of a sacred site Chinar-Terek Chachykeiy argue that they are not praying to the stones and the streams, but they are asking for Allah's blessings at these sites and believe these are places where the connection between God and human beings is stronger.

Satylgan-moldo makes an exact distinction between worshipping *mazars* and praying at *mazars*: "In the Shariat there is no such thing as worshipping *mazars*. However in the hadith of the Prophet it is said, that it is necessary to read the Qur'an to spirits, because the spirits of the dead can be compared to prisoners. If you read them the Qur'an they rejoice, just as a prisoner rejoices when he is allowed a visitation. But the people don't make this distinction, they

don't understand the difference. They come to *mazars* and forgetting about God, they pray "Spirit of our father, Manas, help us!" This is unacceptable. The spirits can't help in anyway. The prophet said that we may pray at *mazars*, because there is no quieter place than a tomb. That is why we can come to tombs, pray and ask for our prayers to be heard by God and he will help us"<sup>215</sup>.

The line between what is accepted as a pilgrimage and what is considered a sin is indeed thin and easy to cross considering the power of the cult of ancestors and nature imbedded in Kyrgyz tradition. For this reason the majority of "official" *moldos* have prohibited the pilgrimages to sacred sites. This ban is also a sign of the lack of wanting to understand this tradition, as a result the process of simplification and radicalization of "official Islam" takes place. This simplification leads to the creation of a gulf, between the two perspectives and leads to the intensification of their relations. Generally "unofficial *moldos*" explain apologetically that they are not "entirely *moldos*" (*moldo dele emesmin*), because they did not obtain religious education and that it would be good to replace "unofficial" *moldos* by a new cadre of young and literate leaders, who would introduce a new type of religious education into villages. But in the discussion about sacred sites they take a definite position and defend the old tradition as the part of "their Islam". The "unofficial" *moldos* sometimes take active part in the debate, sometimes they stay far away from the conflicts continuing to pray and heal at sacred sites.

If we look more carefully at the "age factor" we can see that it is really a distinction of education level. It tells us less of the generation gap, then of the difference in educational norms expected of a *moldo* in different times. For example, Satylgan-moldo is 76 years old, however he is one of the crusaders against *kyrgyzchylyk* as the tradition of backwardness and ignorance. He is also the only *moldo* from Talas, to have received a religious education. He was a pupil of the renowned Shakir uulu Alihan. No doubt by receiving this education, which can be called classical and systematic, Satylgan-moldo learnt to make the clear distinction between the pre-Islamic and Islamic traditions of faith.

It may be that the lack of such a systematic Islamic education is the reason why the older generation of *moldos* does not see the difference between Islam and traditional practices.

The fact that the younger generation places a very clear distinction between Islam and traditional practices has been seen many times at round tables and conferences organized by Aigine in the year 2007 in Talas, Bishkek and Karakol. The younger generation, educated in the country and abroad, has a very clear opinion of what constitutes the "correct" type of Islam, and this type rejects any sort of practice at sacred sites.

### **The co-existence of different types of Muslims**

Accessibility and institutionalisation of religious education in Kyrgyzstan has led on one side, to a noticeable increase in the amount of Kyrgyz *moldos* of the younger generation, and on the other side to the introduction of a standard and formal way of practice. This kind of Islam is in conflict with many folk customs and traditions.

The guardians and bearers of this kind of traditional knowledge are the other *moldo*, who believe, that *kyrgyzchylyk* in no way offends Islam, but that it is a way of praising the Almighty.

For the time being the official religious authority does not have the administrative, financial and personnel means, to unify the interpretation and practices of Islam in the country. If this kind of action were to be initiated however, at least one third of the spiritual leaders of Islam would strongly resist it.

All the *moldos* with whom we worked were Kyrgyz, which from their point of view is synonymous with being Muslim. This is a question of self-identity, in which the ethnic and religious loyalties have been united.

### **Conclusion**

Behind every *moldo* in Talas, as in the whole country, stand his followers. This means that if out of the 103 interrogated *moldo*, 60 of them belong to the category of "unofficial" *moldo*, then around half, if not more, of the Muslims in Talas do not see the difference between folk traditions and Islamic norms and unite these practices in their daily spiritual lives. The question of pre-Islamic or Islamic roots of the pilgrimages to sacred sites is not a problem for them. According to our observations this type of Muslim faith is more popular in the regions we studied. But it is also the case, that representatives of this kind of faith rarely make their opinions known and rarely voice their position. According to Nathan Light the reason for this is "because many people perceive Islam as a shared, scripturally-based international religion, and they do not hear about the diversity of Islamic practises throughout the world, they often accept as authoritative pronouncements about what all Muslims should do" (Light, pg. 492).

The representatives of the “official” Islam, that is the Muftiyat and the Kazyyat consider this kind of practice “incorrect”. At one of the round tables a representative of the Bishkek Central Mosque emphasized that *kyrgyzchylyk* can be seen as an important and interesting example of times that have passed into history, but today it must be considered a sign of backwardness and poor education.

The tradition of pilgrimage upheld by the “incorrect Kyrgyz Islam” maintains the intimate connection with nature and with ancient spiritual practices. This connection is also a source of inspiration for “new religiosities” which in the words of Sigurd Bergman (PhD of religious studies) “as they emerge both inside and outside of traditional world religions, are characterised by a strong sense of a holistic emphasis on nature, and they experiment frankly with imaginations and traditions of *sacred space*”<sup>216</sup>.

Kyrgyz Muslim pilgrims usually argue that there can be many forms of worshipping Allah and that these could only exist if Allah had given them his blessing. If we look for scientific paradigms to explain this notion of traditional thinking, Niels Henry Gregersen’s theology of nature could be one such approach: “Gregersen’s theology of nature builds on the notion of God as the Creator of creativity” and “we should see the natural self-unfolding of life forms as an expression of God’s creativity” (Bergann, pg.372).

The majority of Muslim pilgrims are supporters of this “incorrect Islam” not because of a conscious decision reached by years of intellectual searching or by choosing this religiousness. They came to this faith because many of them were faced with difficulties in their lives and pilgrimage to sacred sites helped them, this was for them the religious act through which they straightened their lives.

Regardless which kind of classification we choose, there are places considered by many to be sacred. These are places where life and death, culture and nature, people and other living organisms are united in a more harmonious existence, then elsewhere.

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#### THE ROLE OF SPIRITS IN KYRGYZ CULTURE

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With the purpose of observing the phenomenon of ‘communicating with the spirits of the dead’ in Kyrgyzstan, a research project was conducted in the Talas region. The aim of the project was to research the attitude of the society to people with special abilities that allow them to communicate with the spirits of the dead and to draw attention of scholars to some peculiarities of traditional Kyrgyz culture.

The research was conducted with the help of two different research methods; 1) in-depth interviews with the people yielding special abilities, who communicate with the spirits of the dead; 2) a survey of public opinion on attitudes to the phenomenon. This article is based on the results of the public survey.

The participants of the public survey were 212 people chosen randomly. 61.8% of the participants were women and 37.7% of them were men. 97.2% of the respondents were of Kyrgyz nationality. The results were elaborated and analyzed with the help of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The average correlation according to Cronbach’s coefficient alpha indicated a reliability value of 0.908.

##### **Definition**

As a consequence of the radical Islamization process in Kyrgyzstan, ancient traditions and beliefs were defined differently and were named as paganism. As the research practice showed, the phenomenon of communicating with the spirits of the dead (*ruhtar menen süiylöshüü*) along with other traditional practices create big disputes between the followers of ‘pure’ and ‘traditional’ Islam. In order to avoid misunderstanding in the future I find it necessary to clarify the concept of the ‘spirits of the dead’ (*arbaktar*).

According to the definitions provided by Karasaev: “*Arbak*” - is 1) Spirit, it is the plural of the word “*ruh*”; 2) Respect to the dead ancestors, to respect and honor their spirits (Karasaev 1996; pp.102-103). According to the Kyrgyz understanding all the spirits of the dead give support to the people and information, they hope for Qur’an

recital in their honor and live amongst their living descendents. Ordinary people cannot see them but the spirits of the ancestors see the people (Privratsky 2001) The fact that the word “*arbak*” comes from Arabic may suggest the presumption that the phenomenon came to Kyrgyz culture after the spread of Islam in Kyrgyzstan.

According to the concept of “pure” Islam, one should believe in the existence of the spirits but worshipping and asking for their help is considered *shirk*. The phenomenon of communicating with the spirits exists in Islam as well, but not every person can communicate with them. Such a privilege is given to prophets, saints and other great people. However, in Islam communicating with the spirits of the dead is considered to be a sin. The reason is, along with the spirits of the dead the *jin-shaitan* [q.v.] can also communicate with people and the possibility that the *jin* can lead to the wrong way is high. Due to the lack of abilities people cannot know if they are communicating with the spirit of the dead or *jin*. (Gülen 1998).

“The ancestor cult is a contextualization of Islamic belief and ritual that substantially defines the Kazakhs and their acculturation to Islam” (Privratsky , p. 114). As with Kazakhs the Kyrgyz belief in the ancestor spirit cult is observed on the level of “local” Islam. It is hard to call it either Islam or shamanism. It is hard to evaluate and label as good or bad because people have believed this for centuries and people find an answer to their spiritual needs and searches in it still today.

### **Observing Kyrgyz culture**

In the Kyrgyz culture, communication with the spirits of the dead is practiced on two levels. On the first level the spirits communicate with people with special abilities: *kasiet* facilitating the contact. Many people with the ability to communicate with the spirits don’t come to this way by their wish. Typically, these “chosen” people come to this way through different kinds of lingering sicknesses, or they inherit the abilities from ancestors, some other ways are also possible. These “chosen” people get their ‘assignment’ in this life and it must be fulfilled. These kinds of people are innate *manaschy*, *dubana*, *bübü-bakshy*, *jaiychy*, traditional healers, *aitymchy* and others (Aitpaeva, Molchanova, pg. 398)

For example, in Kyrgyz culture the innate *manaschy* ability is a clear sign that the teller is communicating with the spirits of the dead. There is direct involvement of the ancestor’s spirits in being chosen for reciting the “Manas” epic and getting the blessing from the mentors (Van der Heide 2008). Examples of such *manaschys* are our contemporaries Talantaaly Bakchiev (Egemberdieva 2007) and Ulan Ismailov (Ismailov 2007).

The second level of communication with the spirits of the dead are the everyday practices of ordinary people. People pay respect to the spirits of deceased ancestors by reading Qur’an, sacrificing animals, making *mai y tokoch*<sup>217</sup> and letting the spirits smell the scent (there is a belief that spirits feed on the smell of fried oil) - all of these are an indication of people’s conscious and unconscious belief in the spirits of the dead.

In both of the above mentioned levels the role of the dream and *ayan* [q.v.] are crucial. When one takes into account the invisibility of the spirits, getting *ayan* is a highly spiritual process. I will discuss this issue further in the article.

### **World view**

As among the Kazakhs (Privratsky 2001) in order to understand Kyrgyz religion, one needs to understand the phenomenon of respecting the spirits of the dead and communication with them. When one observes every day life it becomes clear that these two things make up the core of people’s believes. According to the results of the research the majority of the respondents (70%) believe in and fully accept the existence of the spirits of the dead. As already mentioned earlier, reading Qur’an on Thursdays and Fridays, devoting the prayers to the spirits of the dead, making *mai y tokoch*, *mazar* worshipping are the everyday Kyrgyz spiritual activities.

Respect and reverence for the spirits of ancestors and spirits of the dead in general is neither a religion nor a faith, said Privratsky (2001) who studied the religion of Kazakhs. Privratsky analysed the phenomenon on the basis of the collective memory theory. In his concepts - there is a spiritual link between generations. Deceased parents or relatives come back to life on Thursdays to get family news.

Knowing genealogical lineage, the tradition of remembering the fathers to the seventh generation - also upholds the connection with the spirits of the dead. The researcher Arik who studied the religion of local Kazakhs in Xingjian says: “These practices covered most aspects of life and death. The phrase “way of life” is more useful than

“religion”...” (Aryk, pg.10). Among the Kyrgyz too, the phenomenon of respecting ancestor spirits and communicating with them is a tradition as strong as other old customs.

When we asked about the possibility of the communicating with the spirits, there were interesting results - the possibility of the spirits to communicate with the people is higher (58.5%) than the possibility of people to communicate with the spirits (53.3%). Here a very important but hardly noticeable boundary is worth looking at; the choice to communicate or not to communicate belongs to the spirits. This serves as another evidence of the wide spread belief that the spirits of the dead are stronger than the people.

For example, the notion that the spirits come to the place where there is *mai tokoch* fragrance shows a specific understanding of the afterlife. Namely, being a spirit is the next stage of the human existence. 80.2% of respondents agreed that spirits come to the places where Qur'an is being recited.

Attitudes of the Kyrgyz to the spirits of the dead are special. The spirits are seen as a natural part of life. People talk about the spirits of deceased as of family members who are far away. The spirits of the dead are respected. In certain cases people are afraid of the spirits of the dead. According to the understanding of the people, the spirits treat the people like the people treat them. If you meet their needs and do not forget them, they will protect you. However, if one forgets them, then bad things happen, the person or their relatives may have accidents and undergo difficulties.

### **Ways of communicating with the spirits of the dead**

The first way to communicate with spirits is through food fragrances, this is the *jyt chygaruu*; preparing of ritual food on thursdays On the day when traditional *mai tokoch* is cooked, the spirits are not invited but they come with the hope of being remembered. Therefore, the spirits should be “fed”. Looking through the irreligious perspective it is a sign of hospitality. Just as guests are invited to taste food, the spirits also should not be left without food. (Privratsky 2001). However, if the spirits of the dead are forgotten, they remind people of themselves through prophetic dreams (*ayan*). If we look at the results of the survey, 89.2% of the informants responded that they saw the events in the future in their dreams but of course; the frequency of the dreams varies from each respondent.

According to my experience as a member of Kyrgyz society, when one sees spirits in his or her dreams the Qur'an is read during or after breakfast and on the nearest Thursday or Friday, *mai tokoch* is cooked, followed by a Qur'an recital devoted to the spirits of the ancestors and all the “waiting” spirits. The dream may be only a reminder, or an *ayan* omen of bad or good. (Aitpaeva, pg. 119). If the omen is for bad, the Qur'an is recited and people pray to God for protection from the bad. If the omen is good and if it comes true the spirits are thanked. Before beginning a new task or part of life the spirits are asked for blessing. 82.1% of the respondents believe that their business will not succeed if they will not get a blessing from the spirits. Asking for the blessing from and thanking the spirits varies from just cooking oil bread to ritual sacrifice of animals. This depends on the economic well-being of families.

Pilgrimage to sacred sites is another way of communicating with the spirits of the dead. At the ritual level, food has to be brought and Qur'an should be recited. If you look deeper, it is believed that the spirits of the prophets, saints and the great people live there. (Aitpaeva 2007). This indicates that the people come close to the spirits and it is the way of communicating with them. Some people see spirits at the *mazars* and get messages from them. The studies of *mazar* phenomenon in Talas show that it is spread wider than in other parts of the Kyrgyzstan. If we take the Ysyk-Köl oblast as a comparison people visit *mazars* less often. It is even possible to say that many are against *mazar* worshipping.

### **Attitudes towards people with special abilities**

Above we talked about views on the phenomenon of communication with the spirits of the deceased and the perception of ordinary people. I will now go on to the attitude in Kyrgyz culture to people who have the ability to communicate with the spirits of the dead.

People with such abilities see themselves as special or “chosen”. However, by the people they are sometimes respected but sometimes considered charlatans. According to the results of the survey 68.4% of the people believe that “not every person has the ability to learn to communicate with the spirits”. This shows the high level of belief in the existence of the “chosen” people. 42.5% of the respondents strongly believe that some people have an ability to see what other people cannot and another 42.5% responded that it is highly possible.

59% of the respondents believe that the people who communicate with the spirits are sacred people. Another 54.2% believe that the people with special abilities are a national treasure and have to be protected. When we asked the same questions as negative questions the response was varied and was considered a disputable question. The response to the statement “those who assert that they can communicate with spirits are just dreamers who believe in reality of own fantasy” were half positive and half negative and it was difficult to come to any conclusion. Such a result is natural because with the spread of the “pure” Islam, there is a negative attitude towards people with special abilities in the society.

Ranasayagam (2006) noted that the introduction of “pure” Islam influenced the activities and understanding of the people who communicate with the spirits among the Uzbek healers. Healers assert that they get information from the spirits sent by God and they usually communicate with the spirits of Muslim prophets and saints. First, they say that there is one God, and secondly, that the spirits are Muslims. Such a direction is observed among the Kyrgyz too. For example, the relations between the *bübü-bakshy*, healers and clairvoyants are built on that basis. In the experience of studying *mazar* worshipping there are often cases when the spirits of the people do not match each other. Receiving information from the Muslim spirits, healing with their assistance is an attempt to enhance their prestige and strengthening their importance in the society, the term provided by Louw (2006) is they try to get “sense of agency”.

If we talk about the existence of religion among the spirits, usually most of the people who communicate with the spirits get information from the Muslim spirits. However during our study of *mazar* worshipping in Kyrgyzstan, we met a healer from the Ysyk-Köl, who receives information from the spirits of the Christian faith. Her treatment was based on the traditions of the Christian faith.

Among the Muslim and Christian spirits, there are the spirits who possess light or dark power. They not only influence relations among people but can also help people to heal illnesses. When dark forces possess humans, the disease is diagnosed with the help of the dark forces, and information on how to treat the illness is also received from the dark spirits, then it can be expelled from the human body. In situations like this the people serve as mediators between the black and light forces (Centlivres, Slobin, pp.160-170).

In Kyrgyz culture, there are many disputes around the phenomenon of clairvoyance. This situation was also confirmed by the results of the survey; 54.2% of the respondents believe in the reality of the phenomenon and another 44.4% doubt or even deny the existence of such a phenomenon. This proves the double-sided attitude towards clairvoyants. Although there is disagreement in attitudes towards clairvoyants, in certain cases people said they would go to clairvoyants. 61.3% of the respondents indicated that if they would find out that one of their friends tries to foretell the future they would ask him for advice and another 66% believe that if a person can foresee the future then he or she will be able to save their families and themselves from misfortunes.

Answers to questions about the existence of people who can change the weather (*jaiychy*) were also mixed. This suggests that this type of paranormal abilities is less known and less practiced. 93% of respondents are younger than 50 years old and this is why we did not reach the opinions of the older generation (those above 60 years old). 50% of all the respondents are people under 25 years of age and 39% of them do not believe that somebody can have the ability to change the weather. Even if representatives of the older generation were in an absolute minority there seems to be a tendency among the people to believe in the ability of changing the weather but it is difficult to treat it as a reliable source. We can get a reliable answer only when we will survey representatives of the older generation in a larger amount.

The last question of the survey was what is the similarity or disparity between the ordinary people and people with the special abilities? The results are presented in the chart below:

In this graph we see that most of the respondents chose the first two answers. The people’s ability to differentiate real and imagined things is an indication that the “ordinary” people are not the participants but the observers of the phenomenon of communicating with the spirits. This proves that even though people have positive attitudes towards those who communicate with the spiritual world, the majority (82%) stay far from the phenomenon itself.

## Conclusion

This project and other research experiments conducted by the Aigine Cultural Research Center, clearly proved that the existence of spirits and the ability to communicate with them is deeply rooted in the minds of the Kyrgyz people. Be it a communication with the spirit of Manas, or the prophet or the saints, or just a recital of Qur'an on the graves of ancestors - all this suggests a very close relationship with the spirits of the dead among the Kyrgyz. Due to the fact that it is absorbed in Kyrgyz culture, it may be better to call it a way of life rather than a religion.

From the religious perspective, even the belief in the phenomenon of communicating with the spirits is widespread in Kyrgyz culture, the Kyrgyz are far from being pagans. Devoting Qur'an recital to the spirits of the dead, belief in the existence of one God are signs that indicate that the Kyrgyz people consider themselves Muslims. Of course, according to the opinions of the 'pure' Muslims most Kyrgyz might be 'bad' Muslims but if the people consider themselves to be believers and if their belief is an answer to their search for spirituality then what is the importance of its definition?

As noted above, the survey was conducted among a relatively small number of respondents. It is quite obvious that a survey of more people would clarify many questions and give rise to new questions concerning the phenomenon. Including more representatives of the older generation would give the opportunity to learn their opinions and attitudes.

<sup>202</sup> Askar Akaev was the first president of the Kyrgyz Republic in 1991-2005 [ed.].

<sup>203</sup> Kuseiyin Karasaev (1901-2005) - linguist, the first lexicographer and lexicologist of the Kyrgyz language, he contributed in the work on creating the Kyrgyz Alphabet [ed.].

<sup>204</sup> Kasym Tynystanov (1901-1938) - one of the creators of the modern Kyrgyz language and Kyrgyz literature. He was a social activist, a teacher and professor [ed.].

<sup>205</sup> *Jash Tilek* [Kyrgyz] - wish of youth [ed.].

<sup>206</sup> *Erkindik* [Kyrgyz] - freedom [ed.].

<sup>207</sup> *Kerege* [Kyrgyz] - wall of the yurt which is made out of crossed wooden rounded sticks [ed.].

<sup>208</sup> [Kyrgyz] *Bala surasang – Manjly-Ataga bar, baiylyk syrasang – Cholpon-Ataga bar.*

<sup>209</sup> Other classification methods have been suggested by T. Dyiikanov, J. Samanchina (Dyiikanov, Samanchina, pp. 151, 152) and by Emil Shükürov (Shükürov, pg.7).

<sup>210</sup> The term *moldo* is derived from the Arabic mulla, pronounced mawla or maula, meaning parish minister or priest. It is used in the majority of Islamic countries, such as Iran, Turkey, Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent as the title of religious leaders (*Islam: Enciklopedicheskii Slovar*, pg. 170).

<sup>211</sup> *Kazy* [Arabic] - one of the levels in the moldo hierarchy (*Islam : Enciklopedicheskii Slovar*, pg. 125).

<sup>212</sup> Field research notes from "Aigine Cultural Research Center" archives.

<sup>213</sup> E. S. Molchanova, presentation on the project *Arbaktar menen süiylöshüü* [Communicating with spirits] from Aigine Cultural Research Center archives.

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## SACRED SITES AND OBJECTS OF THE PEOPLES OF ALTAI REPUBLIC, THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

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Sacred (sacred and cult) sites are areas (or territories) of land and water that have a specific spiritual meaning for people and societies. As a demonstration of humanity's specific worship of nature as well as a source of inspiration and spiritual values, sacred sites were recognized by people thousands of years ago, much earlier than the rise of modern environmental conservation movement.

Migrating through a large continental land area, Central Asian ethnic groups lived in a variety of landscapes, learning to survive in those natural areas and conditions. They learned to identify particularly important areas, for example, sacred sites and sites with electromagnetic (energetic) properties, adapting to and adapting the area to their way of life and religious, spiritual, and moral values. If one considers the toponymy of the many energetic sites in Inner Asia (Altai, Sayan Mountains, Tibet, and Mongolia) and Central Asia (Tian-Shan), one can observe the close cultural connections among Turkic-Mongolian peoples.

For example, mineral springs with healing properties are known in Altaian as *arjans* (or *arashans* [q.v.]). In the Altai Republic, the Manjylu Arzhan (near the Ulagan Raiyon village of Balyktuyul') is a particularly revered and sacred place for native Altaians and Telengits. In Kyrgyzstan there is a sacred site with healing springs of the same name (Manjyly-Ata) near the village of Bokonbaev in Ton Raiyon. The term "manjylu" has an interesting etymology. In Kyrgyzstan, a folk legend connects the Manjyly-Ata cult site with a kind of sacred Mongolian origin, hence "mongol" is "manjyl" (from an interview with Krutikov, A., 2004, Kyrgyzstan). In Altai a number of Altaian epic poems refer to the heroic personage of "Ochir-Mand'I" (meaning "Symbol of Power," literally "Vadjara Mandji"). The word "mandzhi" is of Sanskrit origin, by way of the Tibetan and Mongolian languages. Based on this, one could suppose that the word "Mandji" is the name of a powerful Buddhist god. In Turkic languages the suffix *-lu* indicates a possessive case, allowing "mandjylu" to be translated as "source of the spirit Mandji" (Almashev, Ch. D., 2008). A clearly shamanic attribute or item used by *kams* (Altaian shamans) during shamanic rituals (*kamlanie*) in Altai is also known as a *manjak*. The origin of this word is unclear; possibly it too is borrowed from Mongolian and Buddhism and used in shamanic practice in Altai. It is also possible that the word can be defined as "the power of a deity" (Amanchina, M. K., 2008). Sacred sites with analogous names are found in Buryatiya and Mongolia (Khamaganova, E., 2008).

Cult sites with similar place names spread over great distances across Asia are an indicator of the spiritual connection and commonality of the cultures of the peoples living there, in this case the Turkic-Mongolian peoples. It also indicates their ability to interpret or "reclaim" natural landscapes and areas based on their own spiritual foundations, foundations that facilitated the formation of rich cultures, a unique philosophy, and sustainable forms of natural resource use.

It is also worth noting that the Altaian worldview developed with a great deal of influence from shamanism, the main religious and spiritual belief system in Altai. The Turkic peoples of Central Asia and Siberia had differing historical fates. Unlike the Kyrgyz, Altaian tribes were not brought into the Kara-Khanid state's sphere of influence in

the 10-12th centuries, as were the Turkic peoples of Central Asia. During the 12th-15th centuries, the peoples and languages of Altai were under the powerful influence of Mongolian languages and Buddhist tribes. Buddhism's cult practices in Southern Siberia expanded significantly in the 16th and 17th centuries, although it was not widely practiced among Altaians at that time. Many of them were, however, adherents of shamanism, a fact affirmed by the presence of a large number of words describing religious shamanic cults and their priests. The first written sources to mention shamanism among the Turks can be found in Uyghur monuments dating to the latter half of the 11th century. Beginning in the 13th century, the term *kam* began to be applied to shamanic cult priests (interview with Dyykanova, Ch. K., 2004).

Altai has been a cultural crossroads for many centuries. Although Altaians have absorbed many religious and philosophical perspectives from a variety of peoples and faiths, they have preserved an ancient type of shamanism, a fact seen vividly in their hero epics. These amazing Altaian epics, which artistically illustrate the life and history of Altaians, as well as their philosophical, aesthetic, and ethical worldviews, have been written down and published in book form. The epic "Altai Baatylar" (Altaian heroes) was published in nine volumes (approximately 100,000 lines of poetry), and other as-yet-unpublished epic tales comprise another several tomes. In terms of artistic qualities, emotion, and monumentality, the Altaian hero epic stands alongside other world-renowned oral masterpieces. The Altaian epic is syncretic in that it contains plots, motives, and characteristics drawn from other peoples' legends. For example, the Altaian epic "Alyp-Manash" is close in subject to the Kyrgyz epic "Manas," "Kezer" is reminiscent of the Buryat "Geser," "Janar" resembles the Kalmyk "Jangar," and so forth. By absorbing Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism, and other Asian religions, the Altaian epic incorporated the spiritual and religious values of those religions, while remaining shamanic at its core. There are many words and concepts in the Altaian epic borrowed from Mongolian, Tibetan, Uyghur, Sanskrit, Sogdian, Persian, and other languages, although in essence it remains a Turkic epic. Of all Turkic peoples, only Altaians have preserved their unique and ancient style of epic story-telling – *kaiy* (overtone throat singing), and it can take seven days to sing an epic of over 7,000 lines.

All of the aforementioned characteristics of the history and culture of the Altaians created particular philosophic, aesthetic, and ethical perspectives as well as a view of the surrounding environment through the prism of mythology and epic poetry. A scholastic or holistic view of the world and nature around them is characteristic, as with many other Central Asian indigenous peoples. Strong nature conservation components as well as worship of sacred sites are found in the traditional spiritual beliefs of not just native Altaians, but also the indigenous minorities of other Turkic peoples (Telengit, Tubalar, Chelkan, Kumandin, and Shor), Altaian Kazakh, and Russian Old-Believers living in Altai Republic.

Residents of Mountainous Altai, as it is also known, have preserved certain knowledge thanks to which people still behave in particular ways at mountain passes, observing the mountain dwellers' ethics. The first Russian Old-Believer settlers adapted to the customs and traditions of the indigenous Altaian people. People living in the Uimonskaya Valley lived in the wilderness, near pristine forests, creeks, and springs. The valley's indigenous residents, members of the Kypchak and Todosh clans, viewed nature with reverence, deifying mountains, trees, and rivers. The Old-Believers did not oppose them. As followers of the old faith, they had preserved many pagan beliefs and rituals and also considered water, grass, and forests to be sacred. Water has always been regarded as holy (Kuchuganova, R. P., 2000).

The spiritual aspects of Telengit culture are broad, ranging from a distinctive local language with ancient origins to the preserved ancient ritual systems. Today, Kosh-Agach Kazakhs continue to recognize their partial Kazakh ethnicity and are adherents of Islam. In tribal terms, Altaian Kazakhs maintain a memory of their belonging to large tribal and clan groupings (Naiyman, Kerei, Samaiy, Karataiy, Uak, and others). One can also observe the vestiges of past shamanism in specific instances of the Islamic tradition. Many worship ceremonies of ancient springs are documented in Kazakh ritual, rituals that were also common among the Telengit. The population has preserved many vivid examples of local folklore: myths, songs, stories, legends, and sagas (and all of their genre varieties). Of particular interest are the legends about mountains and stones and the totemic stories of place names and mountains. For both the Kazakhs and the Telengit, traditional culture covers a broad spectrum of realization in both its spiritual and material forms (Oiyunoshev, V. P., 2008).

The Altaians' distinctive worldview can be seen in their consciousness, character, and behavior and has been established with centuries-old traditions. It developed a unique ecological culture, including an entire spectrum of moral values and an unusual philosophical image of the world. Altai's mountains are sacred places to the clans and

tribes of the indigenous population. Each clan (*seok*) has a sacred mountain – *yiyk tuu*. For Altaians, all nature is animate; the natural world around humans is full of spirits. Each valley, each mountain peak, each spring has its own spirits, or masters, known in Altaian as *eezi*. The Altaian tradition of worshiping mountain, river, and mountain pass spirits has deep roots and still plays a significant role in the people's worldview. The Altaian mountain cult has been well known for a long time. Mountains protect clans from evil spirits and facilitate prosperity and well-being. Each clan represented a mountain's spirit differently – *tuu eezi*. Mountain spirits figure mainly in epics, myths, legends, and stories (Erlenbaeva, M. T., 2007).

The local population in Kosh-Agach raiyon has preserved a number of cultural and religious rituals that are closely related to the region's microcosm. These include:

1. "Glorification of Altai", a ritual that is conducted at the start of summer and autumn (*Jajyl bür* – "green branch," *Sary bür* – "yellow branch"). At summer's start, those conducting the ritual ask the higher powers for more livestock, a good harvest, and prosperity. In the autumn, they ask for the protection of livestock over the winter and a good end to a difficult period. In Mongolian Altai there is a distinct style of music and singing known as "Altai maktaal" or "praising Altai" in Mongolian (Almashev, Ch. D., 2006);

2. Rituals worshiping clan places, i.e., members of various clans pray at their clan mountain or other location, which reflect parts of bigger rituals, although these are specifically addressed to representatives of the given clan;

3. Ceremony for visitation of healing springs (*arjans*) that requires a broad range of religious, ecological, and healing rituals and procedures, including fasting, abstinence from smoking and alcohol, etc. In order to visit the *arjan*, one doesn't have to be sick. On the contrary, it is best to conduct these rituals in order to support one's life force.

4. Cults worshiping mountains, localities, rivers, springs, animals, and birds, as well as stories about sacred places that are related not just to the ritualistic side of community life overall, but also the everyday life of each person.

Field research materials show that the mountain peaks of Sailyugem, Kokoru-Yiygy, Irbistu, Tobojok-Bajy, Tespen-Bajy, Ak-Turu, and Maajay-Bajy are considered sacred to the entire local population of Kosh-Agach Raiyon. Many sacred peaks are described with the term *yiyk* ("sacred," a label used as long ago as in ancient Turkic inscriptions). A mountain's sacred status requires the observation of a series of strict rules: no climbing the mountain unless ritually necessary, no hunting for animals or birds on the mountain, periodic consecration of the mountain using ritual actions, reference to the mountain among other sacred mountains, etc. One can turn to sacred peaks for sacred-magical aid not just at specific times according to rituals, but also at times of life's misfortunes or difficult periods for the entire people (war, earthquakes, drought). For example, Kosh-Agach Telengits still believe in the existence of wooden rafts on the mountaintops of Kokoru-Yiygy, Tespen-Bajy, and one of the peaks above the Kurai Steppe. It is said that they have been there since the time of the Great Flood.

Similar ancient beliefs and ceremonies also include the interconnectivity of one's land and the surrounding world. It is believed that observance of these behavioral rules, developed over centuries, for relating to nature is the essence of a prosperous life for the entire community in this land; moreover, observance can extend the life-force of the clan and tribe for generations.

Field expeditions and literature reviews regarding the use of ancient archaeological sites in both the ethnographic past and today show that there is a historical continuum in the principles of natural resource use by the nomads of various time eras on the Ukok Plateau, a place sacred to many peoples of Altai. This is true not just of places suitable for habitation and farming, but also of sacred places – sanctuaries and burial sites. This underscores the special status of these lands in terms of great cultural and spiritual significance.

The nomadic architecture of Central Asia developed a defined system of natural landmarks. Particular attention was given to those landmarks whose silhouette, shape, or unusual divergence from the surrounding landscape lent them to human use. These landscape phenomena connected architectural structures to the locality (Tkachev, V. N.). Several possible factors influencing site selection have been identified: 1) burial mounds were erected near permanent wintering sites; 2) sites were selected based on the need for marking steppe pasture boundaries; and 3) landscape features of a given location were considered. These indicators are relatively discernable on the Ükök Plateau. A continuum of the Plateau's use for both agriculture and ritual purposes has also been discovered. It is particularly interesting that no specific type of religious thinking, no adherence to monotheism or polytheism, played a role in this situation (Akimova, T. A., 2008). One can see this in looking at Kazakh settlers, whose formation of a diaspora in Altai was complete by the start of the 20th century. One Kazakh migration route led from eastern Kazakhstan to Altai

along the banks of the Kara-Alakha River at the end of the 19th century and the start of the 20th century. There was a pasture belonging to the Chingistai Kazakhs (Karatays) at the marker of the Kara-Alakha's confluence with the Ak-Alakha River, and it was in this same place that their clan burial grounds were established. It is unusual that the Kazakh Islamic cemetery (cob and wooden mausoleums) were built atop an ancient burial site, on the burial mounds of the early Scythian era. This is where the legendary Tokhtamys, leader of one of the first groups of settlers, is buried. The Kazakhs of Jazator village still revere him as a clan object of worship (Oktyabrskaya, I. V., Cheremisin, D. V., and others).

Local people view animal and plant inhabitants as a part or subject of Altai's natural spiritual landscape. Many Altaian clans have their own totemic (*bayana*) animals. For example, the Maiyman have the roe deer, eagle, wood grouse, and wolf; the Mundus, the golden eagle, owl, and bull; and the Komdosh have the otter, and so forth. This belief traces back to ancient times and is connected to clan legends and myths about animals, Altaian forebears, and their clan and family totems (Yurkova, N. A., 2007).

Our ancestors viewed Altai as an integrated ecological system with many representatives of the flora and fauna blending into that system, living there into posterity. Each of these representatives of living nature finds its own niche. According to the religious and mythological beliefs of Altaians, each living being in the world is of divine descent and serves a divine purpose. Altaian beliefs suppose that our world is harmonious and beautiful because it was created by *Kudai* (God). All Altaians worship and bow before God – *Uch-Kurbustan* (the name is Sogdian by way of Uyghur – 33 *tengri* of heavenly gods named *Khorbustan*). It is believed that he is embodied in each particle of Altai, unseen but all-seeing, unheard but audible to all, imperceptible but ever-present and all-powerful, found in each animal and plant. He is the earth and the cosmos (both micro- and macrocosms). The core traditional Altaian belief is that nature is a living being, *tyndu* (Altaian, literally “having breath and soul”). As a part of matter, the earth also has breath... and everything on earth is living (Yamaeva, E. E., 2007).

Few know that the Amur (or Ussurian) tiger, the largest animal in the cat family, is part of the biological *panthera tigris altaica species* and that these tigers (*bar* in Altaian) once lived in the Altai region. The last tiger in Altai was killed at the start of the 20th century... The other member of the cat family, the beautiful and grand *irbis* (snow leopard), may well meet the same fate. The Altaians, like all of the world's Turkic peoples, consider the *irbis* to be a *baylu* (sacred) animal. Its destruction is occurring as a result of the loss of traditional values, a process that hit especially hard in Soviet times, leading to the mass extinctions of many animal species.

The traditional ecological knowledge of indigenous Altaians, alongside other cultural and spiritual restrictions (a taboo on hunting totemic animals), contains ethical regulations for hunting commercial species. Traditional Altaian beliefs dictate that all animals can be divided into two groups controlled by the **heavenly god** (*Uch-Kurbustan*) or the **underground master** (*Erlik-Biya*). For example, the *kish* (sable) is a creature of the heavenly god. One is only permitted to kill a specific number annually and only using the required rituals (interment of the body on a platform, etc.). Clothing and jewelry are sewn from the skins of heavenly creatures and then worn. At the same time, it is forbidden to wear clothing made from the skins of “underground” animals, for example, the *toogry* (musk deer), *boorsyk* (badger), and others. From a practical perspective, this traditional wisdom can be explained by the fact that their skins and fur contain substances harmful to the human organism. For example, a hat made from musk deer skin is harmful to human vision.

Totemism of the animal world is one of the ancient beliefs and lore that many peoples possessed. Its essence lies in the belief that specific groups of people are related to particular animals. In Altai this wisdom still plays a significant role in shamanic practices. As with many Turkic people, the Altaians revere *bay-terek* (sacred poplar), *bay-kayyn* (sacred birch), *mosh-agash* (Siberian pine), *archin* (juniper), and others. Each clan has a totemic tree as well as a unique *tanmu* (sign, stamp). Traditional knowledge of plants is useful when selecting herbs for cooking and healing. Old-timers in the Russian Old Believer villages of the Uimonskaya Valley still possess sacred wisdom of Altaian medicinal plants as well as the art of healing with plants. Some totemic plants are believed to have healing and sometimes even magical properties. For example, the alpine plant *ayunyn sagaly* (Altaian, literally “bear's whiskers”) is particularly valued by the Telengit of the Kosh-Agach Raiyon. It is forbidden to collect large amounts of it. Local residents believe that a strong earthquake in 2003, occurred as a result, among other reasons, of a violation of this taboo. At that time, people had begun to illegally gather “red brush” (popular name of a plant) in large quantities and in taboo locations (Erlenbaeva, M. T., 2007).

Unfortunately, the traditional knowledge possessed by Altaian local and indigenous communities is rapidly being lost due to a variety of societal changes over recent decades, as well as due to the passing of the older generation. Large-scale commercial exploitation of biological resources (both plants and animals) as well as poaching and illegal trade are, without a doubt, additional negative factors, especially as they occur without even a glance at the laws or cultural and moral norms and customs of the Altaian peoples. Many plant species have now become rarities in Altai. The totemic (to Altaians) and endemic alpine plant *arkaatai* (“common sawwort” in Russian, *Saussurea orgaadayi* in Latin) is an example of this issue. At the beginning of the previous century, the Telengit of Kosh-Agach raiyon gathered the roots of this plant near Sailyugem, drying it and using it for rituals and medicinal purposes. The Tuvans call this plant *orgaadayi*, from the Turkic word *kataiy* (“woman”).

The very beautiful ritual for collecting this totemic plant’s roots remains only in the memories of elders: “In order to dig up the root, the man (women are forbidden even to approach the plant) prepares as if for a pilgrimage, fulfilling all the necessary rituals.” Upon finding the plant, the man prays, asking for permission from a higher deity, *tengri*, and then sets up a small felt ail (an Altaian yurt) over the plant (the yurt is miniature, no more than 50 cm in height). In this way, the entire plant is sheltered from *tengri* and *kuna* (“sun,” Altaian), and the stem with the flowers is on the *ochog* (“hearth,” Altaian). In the center of the micro-yurt, the opening at the top would be kept closed in order to prevent sunlight from reaching inside. The root is shaped like a woman’s body and is considered to be animate, so the root is carefully protected from sunlight and the sky. The unearthed “woman-root” is wrapped in a prepared piece of white material and carefully transported home, where it is dried in an honored place in the yurt, the *tör* (“altar across from the entrance behind the hearth,” Altaian), again covered and carefully protected from the sun’s rays (Erlenbaev, T., Erlenbaeva, M. T., 2008).

Sacred places are revered by people of many religions who have inherited those traditions from their ancestors. Sacred places are protected over millennia and serve as symbols of caring and spiritual connections to nature. Today, this wisdom is typically known as the traditional ecological knowledge of local and indigenous communities and is needed now more than ever. By combining traditional knowledge with modern scientific techniques, we can save larger landscapes, water bodies, animals, plants, saving, in the end, ourselves, as part of nature. The sacred places and objects (plants and animals) recognized by local and indigenous Altaian communities prove that the first environmental conservation and ecology movement arose many thousands of years ago, much earlier than the appearance of modern nature reserves<sup>218</sup> and parks. The existence of sacred places illustrates the best side of humanity’s relationship with nature.

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## SACRED SITES AND MANASCHYS

### **Bakchiev Talantaaly**

*Manaschy, started to recite after his initiation at the age of 13; apprentice of manaschy Shaabaiy Azizov. Laureate and winner of many national and international festivals (in Baku, Bishkek, Tashkent, Saint-Petersburg, Ulan-Bator, Yakutsk, Astana, Budapest, Song-Köl); participant of academic national and international conferences and symposiums (in Amsterdam, Almaty, Tashkent, Bishkek).*

*Candidate of Philology and Associate Professor at the I. Razzakov Kyrgyz National Technical University. Author of academic publications and journals and text books for “Manasovedenie. Put’ manaschy” (2003), “Svyashchennyiy zov. Mnemonicheskoe tvorchestvo manaschy” (2006), “Shaabaiy” (2006), “Ashymdyn köönöbös murasy” (2006), “Vvedenie v Manasovedenie” (2008)<sup>219</sup>.*

This was November 1999. At the time I taught at the American University of Central Asia in Kyrgyzstan. For some reason I felt very anxious and depressed, I was restless and couldn't find my place, I didn't know where to go. My soul was longing for my native village. My supervisor, the head of the organization I worked in, Gulnara Aitpaeva, noticed my nervous state and gave me two days off. I was very thankful for her understanding. That same day I left Bishkek and went to my village Karakol, in the Ak-Suu district. There I felt the urge to go to the shore of the river Jyrgalang, where I pastured sheep in my childhood. Only then I realized that I had come to exactly the same place where long ago I had received my inspiration, the priceless gift that has healed my soul. This place cannot be compared to any other.

In the evening I put on my father's fur coat and told my mother where I had been and finally I went to a sacred place. My mother understood my feelings, and only asked if my younger brother could follow me. After a while I sent my brother back. In half an hour I was at the place where that I was hurrying to. The place looked as it ever did: an old white poplar, a spring, and sea-buckthorn bushes. For a few minutes I sat in silence. That was my greeting, then I read few sutras from the Qur'an, asking for peace to the spirits from the world of Manas, afterwards I lay down under the poplar and fell asleep.

I awakened to a piercing hiss and saw in front of me a snake, holding its head up and looking straight into my eyes. I was frightened and afraid to make a move, but I tried to pretend to be calm. It was impossible to tell how much time passed, but at some point the snake appeared to be shining blue, and then the snake turned into white frog, the size with of a pot. Watching me carefully, the frog from time to time blew up its throat, and croaked unpleasantly, moving slowly the creature sat on my coat. I started sweating, not knowing what to do. And then at a distance of five to six metres a red Moskvich drove past me. I was shaking. I turned to look at the frog, but it was gone. Apparently the sound of the car had scared the creature away. I turned back to look at the car and saw it had suddenly stopped 100 metres away. The lights of the car were on and there was a full moon shining, so the night was very bright.

I could see everything around me, even the numbers on my digital watch. I looked at the watch it was half three in the morning. I came out of the shadow of the sea-buckthorn bush. Passing by the car I saw the driver open the hood and try to fix something, he hadn't noticed me. After walking some distance I suddenly heard the roar of some animal behind me. I turned quickly and saw a creature with shining eyes as if it had candles in them, with twisted long tail and glossy dark fur. It was difficult to see what kind of animal it was. I was shaking all over, but kept walking, then in order to see what was following me, I stopped and it stopped too. I took a few steps, it followed me. Hardly daring to breathe I came to the bridge, after passing bridge the creature disappeared, as if the land behind it was no longer his territory.

When I recall the river Jyrgalang, I remember the first time I found out about the world of Manas. I was pasturing sheep as usual near the northern shore of Jyrgalang not far from our village. It was afternoon and after I ate my simple lunch and I lay down to sleep under the shadow of the sea-thorn bush, suddenly two unknown men took my hands and

pushed me into a large white yurt, which was standing near the shore. Inside the yurt, sitting on my knees, I lifted my head up and started looking around. In the middle of the yurt there was a hearth, but the fire was burning weakly, so it was. But I could still see skins of a tiger, a bear and huge shining saber and black buckler hanging on the yurt walls. Suddenly, two women wearing black took my hands and lead me to the sofa where a little baby lay. The women were of different age: on my right side was the older, and on the left, the younger. It seemed that older one was Manas' mother Chyiyrdy, and the other turned to me with words: "Oh, this is my offspring! You are one of ours too! I am powerless! I lost my Great Manas when I could have been the happiest in the world. Now his gift may become a sign of death of his ethnos, because my Semeteiy is dying and I am unable to save him!". It was difficult for me to understand her words but I was lead by some indefinable power. I sat down on the sofa and started massaging the baby's chest and breathed into his mouth. A ray of violet light left my mouth with every breath. Then foam came out of his mouth. Suddenly the motionless child opened his eyes and started crying loudly. I was exhausted and fell back onto the cover.

The young woman brought me a wooden cup with white liquid and asked me to drink it. I drank, she said: "Now you truly deserve the nomination of *manaschy*. Accept our blessings and tell everyone about Manas! And now we are heading to the sacred site Boz-Uchuk, where Almambet, my husband's friend slept". Saying these words, she disappeared. The yurt and everything in it also disappeared. After that I often saw dreams connected to this place. I saw the tombs of Manas' warriors, once I saw twelve of them, and again seven.

Of course, this mystical episode of my life, connected to this place, might seem strange, or may be seen as the result of fantastical or even mythical ideas. Saying this, I am not trying to prove the opposite or to persuade anyone. In my case this episode is just one of many examples of the historical meaning of the place.

After these events I went to ask a favour from my grandfather for whom I held great respect, he was eighty years old and his name was K b g n Subanov. He told me about my special place, he said, in thirties of the XXth century there was a great hunger in Kazakhstan, and some of the people suffering in the famine had to migrate to the northern regions of Kyrgyzstan, trying to survive. Among them was the mullah Nurgaiy, who came to our village. My grandfather said: "I don't know and can't explain why this person began visiting this particular place, I knew only that for him, this site was sacred".

I don't have a lot of information about this place. I also don't know about the origins and history of it, about its first name and the functions of the sacred site. I only know that, in the fifties of the last century there was a small mill that was often visited by pilgrims near the place.

Geographically the site is located 1000-1500 metres to the south of Karakol village, it is called Tasma-Karanar. It is near the southern shore of the Jyrgalang river and 5 to 6 metres in from the road Bishkek-Karakol. Here. There are two white poplars, sea-thorn bushes and a spring that flows into the Jyrgalang.

There is one more anecdote connected to this place. In the spring of 1995 Melis Ubukeev filmed a movie here called "Manas Universe". Probably many viewers don't know that it was Melis Ubukeev's last film and of course it is little known that the film was shot at the same sacred site, where I met Chyiyrdy, Kanykeiy and Semeteiy. Perhaps, this is just a coincidence. After all there are many beautiful sites where the film about "Manas" could be shot. But I am sure it is not just chance, why am I so certain? I'll try to explain. Firstly because of the director's talent, his creative outlook and his strict creative principles the choice of this site couldn't be accidental. That is the film director's secret. Secondly, Melis Ubukeev always referred to the world of the epic "Manas" as a sacred world, this is clear in his conversation with Leo Gumilev (Ubukeev, p.5), in his relations and tight connections with the great recitors of the XXth century – Sayakbaiy Karalaev (1894-1971) and Shaabaiy Azizov (1927-2004). Following Ubukeev's death I went to Shaabaiy Azizov and asked why director had chosen this site and not any other. My mentor answered: "I recommended the place. When Semeteiy was deadly wounded by Kongurbaiy, his wife Aiych r k, turned into white swan, flew the long distance from Talas to Jyrgalang and saved her husband by jumping over him and returned him to life." According to belief, if a pure woman jumps over the wounded body of her husband this may heal him. I had the great honour to hear this episode of "Manas" performed by Shaabaiy Azizov. To my great regret, his version is not published yet, therefore I will give the example of Sayakbaiy Karalaev's reciting:

Chaste woman Aiych r k

Turned into a swan,

Crossing mountains

Leaving behind wide spaces  
Rushing to save Semeteiy  
Flying through mountain canyons  
Crossing deserted haze,  
Getting close to junctions of rivers  
Echki-Ölbös, Üch-Jyrgalang, Chong-Konguz,  
Aychürök landed (Karalaev: pg 210)

Waiting for Semeteiy's spouse, Bakaiy and Kanchoro put Semeteiy near the strong stream of the mountainous river to stop the bleeding. Flying Aychürök put him on a carpet:

Not stopping for a moment  
With tears in her eyes,  
She asked the Creator for help,  
And jumped over  
Manas' son  
And the same moment a bullet  
Fell out of Semeteiy (Karalaev. pg.212)

Jyrgalang is described in more detail in Sagymbaiy Orozbekov's version (1867-1930):

On the peak of great mountains,  
Near shores of great river  
Kalmyks inhabited there,  
And gaining happy life,  
Called this place Jyrgalang (Orozbekov, pg. 150)

Sagymbaiy Orozbekov's version tells of what happened before Manas arrived in the Ala-Too from Altai near the Ker-Köl on the Ysyk-Köl. Chuiy was under the invasion of the Kalmyk Han Orgo, at Aral and Tasma, not far from Jyrgalang, at the city Kulus. To protect his own town from Manas, Orgo Han fought with the baatyr near the river Jyrgalang.

In Sagymbaiy Orozbekov's version the origins of word "Jyrgalang", come from the word "jyrgal" the direct translation of which is "pleasure, delight, bliss, happy life" (Egemberdieva, pg. 381). According to Sagymbaiy Orozbekov's version, the Kalmyks gave the river its name. Also in the Mongol language the word "Jyrgal" means "happiness", and the word "Jyrgalang" means "happy" (Kyrgyz tililin: pg. 671). It is clear that the meaning of "Jyrgalang" is similar in both the Kyrgyz and Mongol languages, which are in the same Altai language group.

The toponym of the word "Jyrgalang" can be seen in many versions of "Manas". Perhaps the shore of the river Jyrgalang has its own mission in giving the gift of recitation, becoming a manaschy and in saving the traditional art. Between the riverbed of the Jyrgalang and the manaschy there is a sacred connection. The example of the river Jyrgalang shows that a sacred place plays a key role in the becoming of a *manaschy*.

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<sup>218</sup> A Russian "zapovednik" is a nature reserve that severely limits human activity and access. [translation note].

<sup>219</sup> *Manasovedenie. Put' manaschy* [Russian] - Manas studies. The path of *manaschy*; *Svyashchennyiy zov. Mnemonicheskoe tvorchestvo manaschy* [Russian] - Sacred call. Mnemonic work of *manaschy*; *Ashymdyn köönörbös murasy* [Kyrgyz] - Ashym's priceless heritage; *Vvedenie v Manasovedenie* [Russian] - Introduction to Manas studies.

THE SACRED LAND CONCEPT BASED ON AN EXAMPLE  
OF THE KARAKOL NATURE AND ETHNO PARK “ÜCH ENMEK”,  
ALTAI REPUBLIC, THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

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*Altai origin, from the Tödösh tribe.*

*Mission: to be the custodian of sacred land.*

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The aggravation of the ecological situation and the exhaustion of major natural resources has led to the current international popularity of the sustainable development concept. It is no longer simply a case of protecting the environment from the destructive influence of mankind, on the eve of the XXIth century it has become a necessity to work for the preservation of resources and the sustainability of the environment for future generations. Nowadays the issue of awareness of transformations taking place at the global level and the search for ways out of the ecological deadlock, have become especially important. In this path of development educational and training establishments shall have a considerable role.

According to a generally accepted understanding sustainable development means the possibility to meet current needs and to not compromise the ability of future generations to satisfy their demands. The UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro (1992) specified the term highlighting the fact that “the only way to ensure a safer and more prosperous future is to address the problems of environment and economic development in a comprehensive and coordinated way”. The concept of sustainable development is divided into several layers according to territorial hierarchy: global, state, regional, local. However all of them are guided by the same principle and each subsequent level depends on the previous one. Thus, the system of territorial and hierarchic levels forms an inherit unity where a change of one “detail” destroys the integrity of the entire system and causes a complicated chain of compensating reactions.

One of the conditions of acquiring a sensible approach to the use of natural resources of a region is the preparation of a qualified, knowledgeable personnel, who would have a good understanding of the concept of sustainable development and, who guided by spiritual and ecological principles could take decisions important for a region's environmental development.

It is possible to overcome the ecological crisis through education and acceptance of the sustainable development concept. Public education and the dissemination of the idea of sustainable development are most important at the regional and local levels, as people tend to take greater care of their immediate surroundings. This is especially relevant for the indigenous population, whose culture is closely connected with the environment. This is because indigenous communities have the ability to join the existence of the single principle in its variety of natural relationships, balancing consumption with nature's ability to restore itself.

Knowledge and traditions of native people, which are often underestimated by modern society and at best considered to be curiously exotic, are in fact elements of cultures which have for centuries preserved information about living with nature. These emphasize the connection of humankind with the earth and through it with the planet and the cosmos. Generations of people have accumulated this knowledge about the understanding of the laws of nature, the impact of human thought on the environment, connections between people, rules of behavior on the Planet Earth to create a synergy of the spiritual and ecological. This knowledge is passed down from generation to generation as the foundation of all natural interactions. According to the definition of Kuklin V.V. and Shaglamova O.V. (Kuklina V.V., Shaglanova O.V.) this knowledge is called “expert knowledge”. There is also a definition of “profane knowledge”, which describes the way of living of people not acquainted with the worship places and traditions.

Since the existence of humankind and the emergence of societies, people created cultures which were ecologically sustainable meaning they did not exceed the allowable pressure on nature. This way of life is possible even nowadays.

These so called “primitive” societies developed social mechanisms and ethic systems which held the people responsible for taking care of their surroundings and so the environment. However the appearance of “superior cultures” in which people live beyond their means and the means of the environment, has led to the destruction of the harmony between nature and culture and the previously existing ecological balance. These cultures do not strive to attain a rational goal but rather to maximize profits and production and to achieve these goals of increasing consumption there has been a huge acceleration of the use of natural materials. This has caused the premature aging of the Earth that was once so vibrant and alive. It is losing its topsoil; and it’s most important regulating mechanism and so it has lost the ability to protect itself from destruction. Therefore the issue of the future of our societies has emerged. Unless we stop the abuse of the environment and unless we stop ignoring its needs the consequences will be grave. It is necessary to transfer to a sustainable, ecologically acceptable model of growth.

Modern science states that the discoveries of natural, technical and natural-technical systems also cover social systems. Modern science notes that the laws of nature, mechanics and natural-mechanical systems can also be applied to social systems. However as George Soros, a businessman working in the field of science and a financier states: “The doctrine on the survival of the fittest in the form it currently exists in the USA is not true. Evolution is a more complicated process than modern social Darwinism assumes”. A new approach to evolution has been introduced in one of the latest scientific theories, that of the theory of complicated systems (the theory of chaos), however it has not yet been **internalized by social consciousness**.

The principle of unrestricted competition should not be the basis of any public policy neither in domestic issues nor in international affairs. It must be acknowledged that the existence of civilization requires both competition and control..... Competition without control is unsatisfactory. This has been proved in the area of economy, where the lack of a good system of control has led to the collapse of stock exchanges, fluctuations of exchange rates that undermined the economy, uncontrolled merges, purchases and sales destabilizing the entire economy. Control is even more important in international relationships. **In other words – survival of the fittest does not guarantee the survival of the system”** (Telitsyn, Radchenko, Petrovsky).

The system of today’s modern economy can only exist if it endlessly destroys in order to consume. It does not have the capability to become what it should strive to be, a sustainable system with a respectful attitude towards nature and an awareness of the limits of production. This “economic system” is linear it does not see or work with the cyclical processes of nature, as traditional cultures do. Pushing further forward with its putative successes and without considering the necessity of renewal it leaves behind more and more serious ecological damage and as a consequence, social problems. For example the effects of “natural disasters” have been augmented by manmade processes. These disasters are worsened by underestimation of the economic system and lead to damage that insurance will never be able to cover.

In order to find a way out of this deadlock situation, it is necessary to change the approach of the new generation of scientists, economists, and businessmen, to nature. Education should make them aware that nature is not only a life substance (biosphere) but also intellect (noosphere). Spiritual ecology is necessary. The preservation of nature, the study of nature, and knowledge of the laws of nature, will become important not only in science but for the entire society. This is way in which the original biodiversity of nature can be saved and this is proven by examples the life of traditional aboriginal cultures and religions.

Any religious ideas, with the exception of mythological reflection in collective thought, have a cultural and ceremonial side, which constitutes the material expression of the religions. In traditional religions worship objects are part of the sacral space, they act as material embodiment of divine beings, of the “owners” of land and ethnical territories and of various spirits. The sacredness of a place and object is connected with their natural landscape that is why the perception, both imagined and real, of a sacral object is always in the context of its natural environment.

Landscapes deemed cultural, where sacred sites are located, enjoy special consideration in the allocation of specially protected nature reserves due to the complexity of social relationships that they are emerged in and that protect them. The sacral significance of these landscapes can be acknowledged by representatives of various cultures but the way in which they are interpreted are different. The local community is the main unit, which struggles for the preservation of the cultural landscapes and suffers in the case of their degradation. “If we speak only about sacred places located on the territories, where this community lives, this community will be the bearer of “experts”

knowledge, i.e. it preserves the rules of behavior in such places. This knowledge is transferred from generation to generation in ceremonies and other practices, all these are called tradition.

Social groups, which are “external” to the sacred sites under study, are bearers of “profane” knowledge, that is they are the collectors of information, gained from local citizens, from books or from personal experience of living on this territory. Norms and rules of behavior on this territory are classified based on the “profane” knowledge study (Kuklina V.V., Shaglanova O.V.) But the information received by “external” groups is subject to various *distortions*.

Usually local myths accompany a place recognized as “sacred”. The creation of myths is a process, in which any person can participate, who in some way is related to the territory, and has his or her own experience of being at the sacred places and is aware of the rules and norms of the group and believes in them. Sacred sites are located at the crossroads of ecological, religious, social and cultural interests and thus the themes of the myths depend on the living conditions and interests of specific social groups.

There is a necessity to understand differences in interpretations because the outcome of such differences may lead to a lack of understanding between representatives of various cultures and even conflicts. These problems are especially visible in a transboundary environment. If we perceive a transboundary zone in a broad sense it may include all territories located in areas where cultures cross, for instance: the territory of the Republic of Altai.

The rules of behavior at sacred sites and territories adjacent have always been regulated by various social institutions: local communities, tribal groups, the family. Today, the traditions preserve their social importance inside local communities, whose genetical or mythological connection with the sacred sites still exists. For example it is forbidden to leave rubbish, cut trees, break branches and take objects already “belonging” to the **owners** of sacred objects. With the help of this ceremonial practice the sacral importance of the place is underlined and its functions are vitalized. So the norms of traditional behavior are established inside of the worshipping community and relationships between the sacral and profane worlds are regulated.

The traditional perspective of indigenous people does not consider land, natural objects only as a source of resources. This is reflected in their approach to nature and their economic activity. The current re-actualization and attention given to sacred sites is typical not only for territories with developing tourism. There is a general trend of rethinking human relationships with nature and revival of the importance of knowledge accumulated over the centuries. In the forthcoming epoch the problems the world faces and the cause and effect relations, will also be subject to globalization. **This tendency is in accordance with the laws of the planet and the universe.** That is why in order to ensure the “correct” development of ways of treating **sacred land** in the future it is necessary to know the fundamental laws of nature, all of which have a great impact on the life of human beings. Therefore in order to create conditions for sustainable human development on a specific territory it is very important and necessary to know the characteristics of its’ **energetical and informational fields**, that are directly linked to the functional importance of the territory at a planetary level.

The theories of modern science of fine interaction, which takes place between particles of the world and in space, of integrity and inter-connection of “micro” and “macro” worlds has also influenced the change of perception of the spiritual cultures of nomadic peoples. The result of this change is the need emerging in modern society to have greater spiritual and ecological knowledge and to gain the possibility of having a stronger connection with the natural environment. The peculiar acupuncture spots of the Earth are the most active in this respect, and these are marked by the traditional cultures of indigenous people as **sacred places**. These spots have strictly defined rules of impact or activation. They can be compared to the focal points of the human body in the complicated web of millions of cells. A similar system also exists at the planetary level.

Nowadays, in the era of genetic engineering and bio-energy, it has become vital for humankind to have the knowledge of aboriginal cultures that underlines the energetical unity of the Universe and Man. The coming epoch is one in which scientific knowledge has reached such a level of development that it can function in harmony with the wisdom of traditional peoples. This is a time when their knowledge can be understood correctly and used for the purpose of **sustainable development**.

**The dialogue of cultures is a necessity.** The cosmic forces of interaction require the new generation to achieve a deeper level of consciousness, that allows them to understand three concepts of the spirituality of the land of Altai, these are: **Ecology of the Soul, Spiritual Ecology and Ecology of Life**. The Karakol Nature and Ethno park «Uch

Enmek» has been designated to **model** these concepts and the principles and criteria of sustainable development of **sacred land**, as a united area of natural-social-cultural interaction in the modern world.

Comprehensive scientific studies were initiated in the sacred valley of Karakol in order to find the points of contact of the two cultures (“experts” and “profane”). This territory has been considered sacred by many generations and has a large number of ritual sites, archeological monuments (in the form of burial mounds) and petroglyphs.

According to the beliefs of the native population of Altai, the ritual sites and burial mounds are under the constant protection of their builders, they were not designed to be regularly used, in other words they are protected from unlimited visitation. The rules of behavior and recommendations, embedded as local traditions that developed over the course of centuries strengthened the control. As the new research demonstrates the traditional prescriptions about visiting the sites are aimed at their preservation, not only for the safeguarding of the intensity of their physical fields but also to protect the completeness of their psycho-physical information (Dmitriev, Shitov, 1996; Dmitriev, 2003; Dmitriev, Shitov, Gvozdarev, 2006). The anomalous variations of strength of the physical fields in the sacred places can be seen as confirmation that their specific psycho and physical construction was created by some consciousness.

In addition these consciously constructed sacred places also have ecological and dynamic significance in modern science as there are magnetic anomalies (and anomalies of other physical fields) located at the systems of burial mounds that are connected with anomalous variations of the geo-magnetic field as a whole and with the regions geo-magnetic regime in particular (Dmitriev, 2003; Dmitriev, Dyatlov, Gvozdarev, Shitov, 2004; Dmitriev, Shitov, Gvozdarev, 2006). It is interesting to note the results of certain experiments, these were conducted by increasing the level of radiation at the sites and in some cases a ring structure appeared on the surface of the burial mounds but the radiation field intensity does not exceed hormesis norms<sup>220</sup>. Hormesis norms, 2-4 times exceeding the radiation background of a territory, have a positive impact on life processes as a whole (Kaznacheev, 2002; Kaznacheev, Trofimov, 2004). This connection is disclosed not only on the level of physical fields but also at the level of the geological structure of the Karakol Valley. If we study the geological map of the region we can see an interesting pattern of the valleys’ geography and burial mound constructions.

The rocks under the burial mound complex form a natural ring-like construction of *gabbros-diorites*, (layers of rock with high metal and mineral content that differ in colour and are full of magnetite). The magnetic rings are known to create magnetic fields and increase their strength many fold. In other words this is a peculiar point with an increased magnetic attraction. This natural anomaly is defined by traditional culture in the idea of the “umbilical cord” of the planet (*Jerdin kindigi* in Altai), through which the Earth is connected to and communicates with the solar system and other spacial objects. The constructors of the burial mounds must have known about the peculiarities of the territory and in order to strengthen its energy, add to the information it carries and to prevent it from being destroyed, they built the complex.

Even today, due to lack of interest, official science does not know what information and function those constructions bear and how they impact the physiology and psyche of person unprepared for the experience. This is why the native population had a respectful attitude to such places, from generation to generation passing down the rules of behavior, which had to be strictly observed. It was said that by disobedience one could draw the “anger of the Gods”, which in the worst case could bring on that person’s death. In accordance with recommendations stated by the builders of these constructions, people had to come to sacred sites with clean thoughts and intentions, they could visit only in small groups, following certain ceremonies led by a shaman.

Here it is necessary to mention the position of contemporary research on the “historical constructions with hidden parameters that influence a person’s consciousness”. Traditional culture always saw burial mound complexes and their physical and psycho-physical characteristics to be oriented at the translation of bio-physical signals in time (from the past to the future). Now this is becoming more and more evident in the course of a comprehensive study of the phenomena, studies by Dmitriev and Shitov (1996) seem to confirm this. According to the work of Koyokin, whose studies are used by the above mentioned scientists, the system of burial mounds can be considered as an active environment, a special structure of physical fields which has an impact on the consciousness and sub-consciousness of a visitor. Hence there are recommendations and disciplinary prescriptions for all visitors. They protect an unprepared person from slipping from “normal” consciousness to a changed consciousness. The possibility of this transfer is especially high among people with a high degree of intuitive perception (a liability to be affected even by weak physical impacts), where the person is taken into an unusual and frightening “other consciousness”. The constructors

of the sacred places and the bearers of traditional knowledge assert, that this transfer brings on positive results after visiting the sacred sites. But that is why it must be carefully controlled and led by a person who knows the power of a place and can prepare the visitor for the experience. Otherwise there may be a negative impact on the health of an unprepared man. The negative impact is especially strong (and not necessarily immediate) on a person, the vector of whose consciousness is directed against the vector of the force of the burial mound or archeological complex. In this case there will be a “fight of will” of the “visitor and constructor”. As Koyokin states: “certain qualities of a person’s consciousness may be transformed into physical reality directed by thought, this is one of the key moments that allows a person to look at the world from a different perspective and in the long run reconsider perceptions of consciousness” (Shitov, Dmitriev).

But the existence of special rituals and rules for visiting **sacred places** does not mean that a person cannot spend time there. People should always be there as they are the “energizers” of sacred places and their “postmen”. This means that through contact with living people **sacred land** receive information about contemporary life and the environment, and subsequently an energy and information “policy” of the Earth in space is created. Therefore the universe reacts to they way we are living today. That is why forgetting such places by representatives of traditional cultures and even worse, their destruction by inter-ethnic and inter-religious confrontation, may have great global and ecological consequences. I believe, that unfortunately, this is what we are seeing now. **All the above mentioned allows us to state that the attitude of modern civilization to sacred places is an indicator of the level of ecological awareness of people in general.**

### **Geo physical survey of burial mounds complexes**

After much time and labour consuming research of the anomalous phenomenon occurring in physical fields in zones of vertical energy currents and in geo-active regions (Dmitriev, Shitov, 1999; 2006; Dmitriev, Shitov, Gvozdev, 2006) and after the development of our research methods studying geo-physical fields on geological micro-objects we began our research on the study of burial mounds.

The comprehensive expedition team of the Gorny Altai State University conducted a series of measurements of the magnetic field, background radiation and a biolocation survey of some of the burial mounds and places known by local folklore to be sacred (sacral). These were the first stages of the experiment, the aim was to conduct a general geophysical survey of the burial mounds and the sacred valleys.

The result of the work was complete information of geophysical activities in the Karakol park “Uch-Enmek” of the Republic of Altai. The magnetic survey was conducted in the whole area of the valley, and a detailed survey was conducted of the largest unearthed burial mound.

The outcome of the magnetic measurement surveys (with the help of quantum magnetometer MMII-303) shows a complex configuration and intensity of the magnetic field of the valley and the entire electro-magnetic environment. A gradual increase in the intensity of the magnetic fields was recorded, especially across terrace constructions of the valley. The most considerable and unusual variations of magnetic field intensity were noted in the proximity of the burial mounds. An increase (by 20-30 micro-roentgen/hour) of a radiation background was recorded close to burial mounds (fig.2). Here there were also easily observable differences in the composition of vegetation, in comparison to the rest of the valley.

*Kurgans*, are ancient burial mounds however, as noted by archeologists, not all burial mounds contain the remnants of the deceased – these are called **cenotaphs** (burial mounds without remains). The methodology used in the course of excavations allows archeologists to report only about the cultural and historical significance of a burial object, and they have a strict context of their perceptions of the significance of burial mounds. In the traditional archeological model of a study the functional role of numerous cenotaphs is not studied, however for these “magnetic marks” are also identified. Thus, a considerable part of cultural sites is overlooked by archeologists. If we take into account the systematic order of burial mounds and localization of the pattern in certain landscapes, the special conditions of geology and the geophysical environment the assumption can be made that cenotaphs are deliberate constructions that serve a hidden psycho-physical and functional role. It is quite possible that they are used to target the practice and organization of psycho and ecological dynamics of the regions and also to influence the bioeffective regime of local magnetism, the electro-dynamics of an atmosphere and the radioactive background (Dmitriev, Shitov, 2000; Dmitriev, Dyatlov, Gvozdev, Shitov, 2004).

The research included the study of the human nervous system. It was discovered that by staying on one of the Scythian ritual burial mounds of the archeological complex has an impact on the functioning of the automatic nervous system (ANS). The subjects' energy field and state of consciousness was measured with the help of Gas Discharge Visualization (GDV). While standing on the burial mound and after coming down from the mound changes in the energy field and the functioning of the ANS of the subject were noted<sup>221</sup>. The reaction of the tested subject differed in respect with certain individual qualities, character, gender, age and even nationality (Voronkov, Shitov and others., 2006). The question of why and how the ANS is influenced remains unanswered. Modern medicine and this stage of knowledge does not identify the main factor that directs and regulates the main physiological processes of the entire organism in the case of shock or disturbance. The reactions of the ANS are not always clear and I am inclined to believe that the magnetic component of the sacred sites initiated the variations shown in the test results.

Therefore the necessity of taking into account of this new generation of facts, held by traditional knowledge and now once again disclosed through study of the geophysical and psycho-physical changes that can be noted in the vicinity of burial mounds and the functional role of these places, should be used in the to develop the ecodynamics of Gorny Altai and this direction should be considered a priority.

The complicated magnetic, radioactive and biolocative structure of the researched burial mounds, as well as their general composition with regard to the geo-structural peculiarities of the landscape show a hidden meaning of the construction. We may further assume that some functional psycho-physical sense was involved in the building of these places. To decode and understand the intention of the constructors requires a deep and comprehensive approach to the task. During the excavations and research the archeologists destroy part of the complicated organization of the physical fields: of their magnetic, electrical, radiation and bio location. It is important to note that the level of radiation at the burial mounds measured did not exceed the level deemed safe for people. It is possible that the archeological complexes themselves can participate in the organization of special ecological spheres and the informational and bio-physical time change.

## **Conclusion**

Today a large number of burial mounds are being excavated. Our magnetic survey of one of the largest burial mounds, demonstrated the existence of intensive "magnetic marks" and identified strong differences in the structure and intensity of the magnetic field of the excavated and not excavated burial mounds. The work of the archeologists led to the destruction of the integrity of a complicated web of physical fields and especially of the magnetic field, bonded by the underground rings of magnetic minerals.

Looking at a not-excavated burial mound, in the center of the crater (fig. 1) there is a minimum of magnetic field intensity whereas on its sides it reaches the maximum. Breaches in the magnetic field intensity structure and the emergence of magnetic anomalies of anthropogenic origin can be seen on the map of contour lines of the excavated burial mound. Let us highlight that according to modern biophysical studies (Biophysics, 1995), people's blood sensitive to magnetism, which in combination with the influence of other physical fields inevitably impacts a person's organism and the specific "magnetic mark" of burial mounds is a peculiar psycho dynamic factor.

Human beings have a complicated electro magnetic structure, which is currently being intensively studied (Kaznacheev and others, 2002). The long-term impact of the "exceptionally magnetized" burial mounds on a person and his or her health remains unknown. It is only said that based on the experience of local residents this influence exists. And for some people the influence is positive while for the others it is negative. In order to better understand this influence it is necessary to refer not only to biophysical studies but also to the traditional knowledge of the indigenous population, which was developed over the course of centuries and is encoded in epics and legends.

According to the initial studies, the spiritual, emotional and physical preparation of a person has a considerable impact on the way of worship at sacred sites. According to some studies (Dmitriev, Shitov, 1999; Biophysics, 1995; Dmitriev, Shitov, 2000; Dmitriev, 2003) the emotional condition of a person has a considerable impact on the magnetic field in the sacred places, increasing or decreasing the intensity of the magnetic field. This is also confirmed by the discovery that cities build more than 200 years ago, were built in areas with low magnetic field intensity. There have been many cases observed when a persons' state of health was negatively influenced in geo active zones, leading to loss of consciousness and even cardiac infarction. (Biophysics, 1995; Global ..., 2002; Kaznacheev and others., 2002; Trifonov, Karahanyan, 2004).

Very unusual results were noted in summer expeditions to Altai in 2003-2004 headed by Dmitriev A.N. Close to the complex of burial mounds a “magnetic dipole”<sup>222</sup> (fig 3) was discovered, the field was small but had high intensity and was located not far from the twin burial mound of a group of Bashadarski burial mounds. The magnetometer located at the maximum point of the “dipole” showed that the magnetic field changes from time to time— with macro variations of an amplitude of up to 10 thousand nT<sup>223</sup> (as comparison the change of a field in case of magnetic storms on the surface of the Earth does not exceed 1000 nT) and the changes take place only in one spot. In addition it was discovered that the “dipole” reacts to the **presence of people** — after the operator left the zone the field intensity gradually fell down to 800 nT within 10 minutes.

Explaining this kind of phenomenon from the point of view of “substance physics” is very difficult, therefore the results of the observations have been interpreted with the help of a model the modified physical vacuum of V.L. Dyatlova. In other words it is assumed that a vacuum domain was created in a certain place, which created the magnetic field. In such a case the macro variations can be explained with the movements of the vacuum which can be caused through interaction with a person or storm processes. It seems the model is effective - there is a compliance of results of calculations of field distribution with field measurements.

*However there is another interpretation of the phenomenon, which confirms the idea of native people of the role of the “Spirit” of a place, the “Spirit” of the burial mounds. Traditional indigenous culture speaks and has always spoken of the presence of life in everything, the existence of life in all substance. This phenomenon is the fixation of the spirit of the burial mounds that is spoken of in the heroic epics passed down by word of mouth from generation to generation.*

It is important therefore to underline the significance of remembering and preserving the rituals of honouring **sacred land and nature**. The protection of these places is necessary not only for the local culture and community, as part of their spiritual uniqueness, it is also necessary to maintain the well-being of the planet and the universe and for the sustainability of the environment which we call ECOLOGY.

Fig. 1. Magnetic field of an archeological object “Nijnee soru”

[Dmitriev A., Shitov A.]

Left: Not excavated burial mound

Right: Excavated burial mound

Fig.2. The Magnetic Dipole – the anomalous creation  
of the Bashdarskan Kurgan

[Dmitriev A., Dyatlov V.L., Grozdarev A.J., Shitov A.]

Fig. 3. The natural radioactive background

[Dmitriev A., Shitov A.]

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<sup>220</sup> Hormesis phenomenon means a favorable impact of ultra small doses of some factors, which is harmful in big doses and especially evident in cases when the factor under study (in this case radiation) is constantly present in the environment. It accompanies all the stages of evolution of life organisms and a developing biota can adjust to the natural levels of the factor, using it for its wellbeing.

YSYK-KÖL AND *MANASCHY*  
(FROM THE STORY OF HOW SHAABAIY AZIZOV'S  
"MANAS" RECITING WAS RECORDED)

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The Kyrgyz are one of the ancient peoples from the Turkic language group. They went through long and difficult path of development, which is presented in oral history, in their many different epic tales. The nation's oral history reflects the philosophy of life and worldview of the indigenous Kyrgyz people.

The artists who have preserved this precious knowledge, transferring it orally from person to person are tellers of the epic "Manas": *manaschys*. They are people with special abilities: unique memory and consciousness; extra sensitive perception and individual narrative talent.

According to oral history and other sources of information there are three main branches of *manaschys*.

The first branch is that of the legendary *manaschys*, whose names have been remembered through the centuries. Perhaps, they are *manaschys*, which created the foundation of the art of *manaschylyk* the narrative tradition. In the XVIIIth century, these were Keldibek Karboz uulu (1800-1880), Balyk Bekmurat Kumar uulu (1799-1887), Nazar Bolot uulu (1823-1893), Choodan (1835-1900).

The second branch includes *manaschys*, who lived in the second half of the XIXth century: Tynybek Japyiy uulu (1846-1902), Kenjekara Kalcha uulu (1859-1909), Naiymanbaiy Balyk uulu (1853-1911), Akylbek (1840-1920), Choyuke Ömür uulu (1863-1925), Sagymbaiy Orozbek uulu (1867-1930), Jangybaiy Kojek uulu (1869-1942). There were also *manaschy* who wrote down their versions of the epos: Togolok Moldo (1886-1942), Shapak Rysmende uulu (1893-1973), Dungkana Kochuke uulu (1886-1961) and others.

At the end of XIX century and the beginning of XX century there appeared a third branch, here the *manaschy* are: Moldobasan Musulmankul uulu (1883-1961), Ybyraiym Abdyrahmanov (1888-1967), who first created a written aggregate version of "Manas". Later the tradition of *manaschylyk* was continued by Sayakbaiy Karala uulu<sup>224</sup> (1894-1971), Shaabaiy Azizov (1927-2006), and Kaaba Atabekov (1924-2007).

All the *manaschys* listed above, influenced each others' creativeness and each contributed to the development of oral poetry and the "Manas" epic, in particular. Every *manaschy* interpreted and told "Manas" differently. Today the versions of Orozbekov and Karalaev are considered classics. Their successors are Shaabaiy Azizov and Kaaba Atabekov.

Most of the *manaschys* are from Ysyk-Köl region. Tynybek Japayiy uulu and Choyuke Ömür uulu were the first of many *manaschys* from the Ysyk-Köl oblast, and Shaabaiy Azizov and Kaaba Atabekov are also from Ysyk-Köl. The narrative gift (*manaschylyk*) is passed from ancestor to descendent: for example, one of the most outstanding *manaschys* was Choyuke Ömür uulu. His younger brother, Aziz, inherited his talent, and the son of the Aziz is Shaabaiy. That is how the dynasties of *manaschys* appeared. On the other hand, the genius of *manaschy* Sayakbaiy influenced Shaabaiy's "Manas" reciting, during the time when they both worked in the National Philharmony. As Shaabaiy remembers, being near Sayakbaiy helped his talent and knowledge to grow and develop. In this article I want to talk of my personal experience of work with Shaabaiy Azizov.

Shaabaiy Azizov was born in 1927, in Uch-Kainar village, Ysyk-Köl region. His family was from the middle class, a farmer family. His father was the brother of Choyuke and he learned to recite "Manas" in early childhood, although he never recited in public. He encouraged his son Shaabaiy to recite "Manas", after noticing that his son had

great skills of listening and memorizing and that he expressed an eager interest in “Manas” at an early age. Later Shaabaiy became one of the most talented traditional *manaschys*.

While working in the Kyrgyz National Academy of Sciences, I was lucky to meet one of the talented sons of the Kyrgyz land, Y. Abdrahmanov, who was the collector of Kyrgyz folklore and creator of the aggregate version of “Manas” epic. Abdrahmanov recorded the best versions of this ancestral oral legacy in the “Golden Collection” of Kyrgyz National Academy of Science archive, and these include many different versions of “Manas”. Scientist presented factual material on how “Manas” reciting by Sagynbaiy Orozbekov was recorded. The significance of the recording is that it was started by Kayum Miftakov in the Tatar language, and Abdrahmanov continued and finished it. Abdrahmanov told of the experience of recording Orozbekov’s “Manas” and said it was difficult, the *manaschy* recited so fast that it was difficult to record him, and many lines were skipped. And the *manaschy* had a bad temper as well.

All stenographers face similar difficulties. One of the first Kyrgyz female journalists, Kurman Kydyrbaeva recounted her experience recording Sayakbaiy Karalaev’s reciting, even though she was an expert stenographer she still had great difficulties and the *manaschy* was hard to get along with. “Usually great *manaschys* have bad tempers; they are harsh with words and not nice to people. Every time I asked him to stop and repeat something, Sayakbaiy Karalaev would get mad, however we managed to record the three-volume edition of “Manas” “Semeteiy”, “Seiytek”, - Kurman Eje said.

I had to face similar situations, it was very difficult to follow the *manaschy* and record Shaabaiy Azizov, to find a common language and get along with him. *Manaschys* differ from ordinary people in that they have a unique memory. Not everyone can memorize 500, 000 lines of poetry or more. They often live in the creative world, full of characters of epic, they communicate with spirits from the epic. I understood this, being close to Shaabaiy Azizov for six months, and living in his house for some time.

Here is the story of my recordings. It was the middle of April, 1995. As always April by the Ysyk-Köl was cool and rainy. Flowers of the apricot trees had just started blooming. I went from Karakol to Üch-Kaiynar carrying a recorder and paper in order to meet Shaabaiy Ata and his version of the “Manas”. It is fifteen kilometer from Kemin to Üch-Kaiynar. At that time the country had just gained independence and was economically in a very poor condition. There was no transportation to go to villages and moreover, it was even difficult for people to get groceries there. The main transportation going to Üch-Kaiynar was *at-araba*<sup>225</sup>. I waited for a car or the horse cart, but when none came, I decided to walk. On the way, I got tired and sweaty, and started cursing Shaabaiy Ata, remembering that he would recite only if he wished. “If he would be younger, it would be so much easier to persuade him. He would just recite for me, not telling to come the other day every time. And I would finish my work fast and get home earlier”, I was saying to myself.

When I finally got there, Shaabaiy Ata was standing near his fence, waiting for me. I greeted him, but he did not reply. “Why are you coming here, cursing me so badly, I didn’t ask you to record me, if you were a guy I would beat you up for such words”, he said. Then he said “Come in!” but did not move to go in himself. I was already tired, now after hearing him yell at me, I also felt ashamed and wondered how he found out that I was cursing him. I was invited to tea by his wife, when he came in and said: “Stubborn girl, stay here tonight, we will record the whole night if the candle does not burn down”. This happened in April of 1995.

The subject of my doctorate dissertation which I wrote in 1994 was “The image of the horse and methods of its depiction in the “Manas” epic.” Later my interest was occupied by the *manaschy* phenomena and I researched *manaschys* and their special abilities.

In 1995 there were big preparations for the “Manas 1000 anniversary”. My Institute assigned me to write an article about how Kydyrbaeva recorded Karalaev’s version of the “Manas”. I went to interview Kydyrbaeva, who then was in her eighties. We met several times; she shared her experience with me. What she told me, revealed new interesting facts of *manaschylyk* and of Sayakbaiy Karalaev and *manaschys* in general, and this further inspired my work.

She shared her observations of *manaschy*’s lives, and individuality with me. I started to realize that *manaschy* phenomenon is still undiscovered. That’s how I identified the direction of my scientific work.

The symposium devoted to the “Manas epic”, which took place in 1994 was an important turn in my life as well. These all effected my decision to record Shaabaiy Azizov’s version. The Kyrgyz National Academy of Science

organized a symposium, where Raisa Zaitovna Kydyrbaeva presented her lecture. In her lecture, among other problems she mentioned the urgent need to record Shaabaiy Azizov's "Manas" reciting version. A few months later, Maiyram Akaeva (1994, November) organized the celebration of Shaabaiy Azizov's 70th birthday and said that she will finance the recording. Simultaneously the Kyrgyz Government organized the governmental directory to the "Manas 1000 anniversary" and director of it became Sh. Sharsheev.

A. Asankanov, PhD of History was assigned the director of the scientific-propagandic "Muras" project. With the financial support of these organizations the recording of Shaabaiy Azizov's three-volume edition started. I was assigned the recording.

I started meeting the *manaschy* and recording his reciting on April 11th 1995. Before I had read the "Manas", watched TV translations, and radio translations of reciting, but life gave me the greatest opportunity to see live "Manas" reciting and to share the personal experience of *manaschy*. If back then it was just a question of completing my task properly, later I was grateful to have had the opportunity to enter the world of "Manas" and I fully understood what a blessing it was.

In the six months from April to October 18th 1995, I recorded one part of the book on a 90 minute tape. When I wrote the reciting down it turned out to be 985 pages long. In total, I have recorded 34 tapes of reciting: 21 tapes of "Semeteiy", and 12 tapes of "Seiytek".

Here is the brief analysis of the content: The part about Manas consists of traditional stories, but the second part "Semeteiy" is twice as long as the first part and the reciting was especially colorful and powerful. While reciting "Semeteiy" the *manaschy* really proved his outstanding talent.

Shaabaiy Azizov hadn't recited "Seiytek" for a long time, that's why comparing to "Semeteiy" it seems less colorful and brief, although it also consists of all the traditional stories as does "Manas" and "Semeteiy". The plot, structure and poetry are very similar to Sayakbaiy Karalaev's reciting.

Much can be said about the originality of Shaabaiy Azizov's version. It can be seen in the way that the *manaschy* adds to and renews the epic. The majority of *manaschys* start reciting by telling the story of Manas' family tree. All the *manaschy* use the formulaic epic style. Every *manaschy* recites it differently, but the content is pretty much the same. Shaabaiy Azizov is not an exception to the rule of use of formula but he adds motivation to the same story, which made the reciting completely original. The story of the epic tale begins like this:

"In ancient times Orozdu and his tribe owned a lot of land, spreading from the mountain Oion-Sayan to the Chylama, which is near the river Sylama. Then the Chinese, Kalmyks and Jungars attacked them. They invaded the land and forced Orozdu's ten sons away. Some of his sons ran away to Kangai, some to Altai, some to Seren, some to Sayan and to other lands. The sons of San deprived the Orozdu's of their property and occupied their land. San had three sons: Shortek, Alooche, and Chingiz Khan"

Shaabaiy's version sounds:

Alooche, Shortek, Chigiz Khan -

Sons of nobleman San.

They are everywhere.

Raise your hands and pray.

Kalmyks, and Chinese be cursed

For everything they have done.

Whole world hears our cry.

"Month to month, and year to year, the Chinese charged taxes, which Kyrgyz people were not able to pay. The Chinese took away Kyrgyz goods. A long time had passed, before Manas grew up. When Manas was old enough to ride a horse, his grandmother told him about Orozdu's grief. Manas heard the story, and swore an oath to cleanse his ancestors' land and unite his own people, to take revenge for his family."

Shaabaiy Azizov, based on the traditional plot and structure, developed his own unique style, filling the epos with colorful language and interesting characters. He is a traditional *manaschy*, who in the frame of traditional story presents his own individual viewpoint and improvisatory talent. It is also significant, that Shaabaiy's version consists of seven melodies, which all sound like mourning songs: *koshok* [q.v.]. Perhaps, similar versions were told by ancient *manaschys*.

It is especially noticable in the episode, when Manas notifies his wife Kanykeiy about death of his loyal knights and his war horse Akkula. The name of the episode is called “Death of the heroes”. Shaabaiy is very specific in describing details of horses in the epic, horses were his favourite topic.

During the recording process, my interest towards the epic and reciting rapidly grew. Usually, I wrote down everything and then analyzed it at home and compared the text to Sayakbaiy’s and Sagynbaiy’s version. Later I learned to identify, when the *manaschy* is automatically repeating the traditional patterns and when he is interpreting and improvising. I got very much involved in the process and wanted to continue my study of *manaschy*’s unique memory and poetic language.

I recorded “Manas” the way the *manaschy* wanted. Sometimes he would want to go to different places to recite. Once he said: “Daughter, today I would like to recite, at the place were my grandfather Choyuke is buried”. And we went to the cemetery.

Choyuke was buried near Chong-Köktü, at the east side of the mountains. There was no tomb or mausoleum, it was just a gentle mould. It was almost unnoticeable and probably no one paid attention to it, but I thought to myself, there should be a tomb, so that people would know the great *manaschy* Choyuke is buried here, otherwise, the place will soon be forgotten. Shaabaiy Ata as if hearing my thoughts said: “It would be nice to build a gate and a tomb here, so people would come and pray, say the Qur’an, every person is born from the land and goes to the land”.

He sat there for a long time, reading Qur’an, praying as if singing a song. That day, he recited “Manas” with special force; the words flowed from his mouth like pouring rain. Shaabaiy was telling the story of Almambet, how he killed his father and went to the Kazakh Khan Kökchö. He told of the betrayal of Kökchö’s wife, Ak-Erkech – and as he recited he cried, streams of tears flowed from his eyes, as if it was his own father who had died.

He grieved the betrayal of Ak-Erkech, who accused Almambet for no reason. Shaabaiy Ata described how Almambet the hero, tired after a long walk through the empty Kazakh steppe, lay down to rest in a place where with no one was around. Then he saw a bird flying in the sky, and cried out: “Fly away, don’t make me shoot you down, you are just as lonely as I”. Desperate tears and sorrow filled the hero’s soul; he felt the loneliness and isolation of the world.

In everyday life, Shaabaiy Azizov was an unpredictable person. Sometimes, his temper was sharp and hasty, he could be sarcastic and sharp with words. Other times, he was humorous and liked to joke around, laugh, and tell funny stories. He was an open-hearted, kind, and responsive person. He was like other people, and didn’t really boast of his talent.

The recordings were done in the University studio in Karakol city, at my sister’s house, in the Jeti-Ögüz resort, in the villages Kyzyl-Suu and Barskoon. The *manaschy* recited well in public. When he had a large audience, he acted like a professional actor, gaining inspiration and his reciting became ever more powerful as he continued. Everywhere we stopped, people always gathered to listen to the true *manaschy*. I came to realize that every Kyrgyz person is instinctively drawn to the “Manas”.

Besides the trilogy, Azizov uniquely recited small epics, which we, sadly, did not manage to record. At that time, the governor of Ysyk-Köl region was Tokon Shaiylieva. We wrote to her an official letter asking to finance the recording, but she didn’t reply. The same happened, when we asked the parliament. One of the officials said: “Who needs your “Manas”, your folklore? It’s not the right time for it.” I was very disappointed, that I couldn’t make the recordings of “*Altyn barmak Akayar*” [Kyr.: Golden-handed Akayar], “*Arstan tüstüü Ak Jol baatyr*” [Key: Leon-like hero Ak Jol], when Shaabaiy was alive. He took his songs with him to the grave.

In conclusion I would like to tell one more interesting story about Shaabaiy Ata. In 2000 I received a proposal to write the screenplay for a film about *manaschys*. It was a documentary about *manaschys*. Together with the filming team I went to Azizov’s house. We also filmed Kaaba Atabekov, Urkash Mambetaliev, Talantaaly Bakchiev and Murat Jumaliev. According to the script, we were supposed to shoot Shaabaiy Ata’s episode at sunset near the lake. We told him our idea, and he agreed to come with us. We chose the place between Karakol city and the river Jyrgalang. Shaabaiy Ata went out of the car and walked to the lake shore, we followed him. He sat down by the waterside and started reciting.

He sank his hand in the water ,  
And washed his hands,  
He sank his face in the water,  
And washed his face,  
He sank his leg in the water,  
And washed his legs,

Great as mountain Ala-Too,  
Leopard, brave Manas,  
Opened his palms,  
Prayed to Creator.  
For the sacredness of the lake  
Spoke, brave Manas.

Then he continued in prose: “In ancient times our ancestors, searching for the proper place to live, came to Ala-Too. They admired and praised the beauty of *jaiyloo* Karkyra and the lake Ysyk-Köl”. Shaabaiy Ata smiled and washed his face and hands with the lake water. He continued: “Now it is early to swim, but if I was young like you, I would jump into water and hug the lake”.

The Ysyk-Köl is acknowledged for its beauty, the amazing depth and clarity of the water. The lake has preserved the secret history of Kyrgyz people throughout the centuries. It heals people’s souls from sadness, sorrow, and illnesses. That is, why, the *manaschy* greeted the Ysyk-Köl in a special manner and recited this part of the “Manas”. This is where the connection of time and space in centuries-old history appears. Maybe the *manaschy*’s behavior seemed funny to the others, but I admired it.

The fact that we have recorded the full version of “Manas”, from the *manaschy*, himself became a great achievement in Kyrgyz folklore. Shaabaiy’s version has become one of priceless treasures of Kyrgyz oral legacy.

Shaabaiy Azizov’s version of “Manas” is recognized as a great work of art. It is one of the last versions of the XXth century. We have to respect and acknowledge this genius and we should publish the three-volume edition to honour the memory of Shaabaiy Azizov, so that people could know and remember one of the greatest *manaschys*, the holder of precious knowledge of the great epic tale, who lived in our times.

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<sup>221</sup> The changes were notably the insufficiency of reserve capacities of a sympathetic system and relative prevalence of a parasympathetic tonus.

<sup>222</sup> A magnetic field with two magnetic poles.

<sup>223</sup> Contour intervals of nT used to measure the intensity of magnetic fields [ed.].

<sup>224</sup> Sayakbaiy Karala uluu is the original Kyrgyz form of the russified surname Karalaev. *Karala uluu* lit. tr. means son of Karala [ed.]

<sup>225</sup> *At araba* [Kyrgyz] - horse cart [ed.].

### ISLAM’S DIVERSE PATHS: SEEKING THE “REAL ISLAM” IN CENTRAL ASIA

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What is Islam? At first glance this may seem like a simple question. Islam is, of course, one of the world’s great religions. The faith of 1.3 billion people, it is the youngest of the three great “Abrahamic” monotheisms - the trinity of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. It is the religion whose adherents affirm that there is no god but God (*La illaha ilallah*) and that Muhammad is the Prophet of God (*Muhammadun rasul Allah*). On these two shared pillars of belief

all Muslims stand united. But despite this shared belief in God and Muhammad, Islam is a religion of vibrant diversity. The religion of Islam grew and prospered well beyond the land of its origins on the Arabian Peninsula becoming the religion of the majority of the population in a massive geographic arc spanning from North Africa to Southeast Asia encompassing hundreds of cultures and ethnicities and speakers of dozens of languages and hundreds of dialects. And Muslims constitute the majority of the people of in the former Soviet Central Asian Republics of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and, of course, Kyrgyzstan.

However, Islamic diversity is not only cultural and linguistic. It is also religious and theological. There is a lengthy history of internal debate, discourse and struggle over the proper meaning and expression of Islam. Muslims not only align themselves within the general categories of Sunni, Shi'a and Sufi each containing numerous communities of interpretation, they also express their piety and religious identity in many more personal and individual ways.

Despite this tremendous diversity there is nonetheless an important sense of unity. Some argue that this unity can be found in the sphere of religious law or *shariah*, especially ritual law; most particularly in “the five pillars of Islam.” Muslims share a common Arabic *adhan*. Muslims from all parts of the world read *namaz* in Arabic performing similar prescribed physical movements. The Ramadan fast and the Hajj are also unifying, differing only in details even between Sunni and Shi'a.

While there is validity to this perspective, it is not entirely accurate. Islam is more than its ritual practices. Many people who identify themselves as Muslims simply not pray or fast; some out of a combination of neglect and regret (*maybe when I'm older I'll start praying*). Others have consciously chosen a secular lifestyle, rejecting the performance of ritual as a necessary or crucial component of their Muslim identities. Still others belong to communities like the Ahl-e Haqq or the Anatolian Alevis that have denied the necessity of these practices on religious grounds, substituting vernacular rituals and traditions for the classical Arabic *ibadat*.

No one can deny the importance of the *shari'ah* as a magnificent achievement of Islam, nor should one ignore the fact that the *shar'iah*, and especially ritual law, is a primary way in which millions of Muslims express their devotion to God. But while adherence to the *shariah* is one of the most significant responses to the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad, it is not the only way that Muslims have responded to them.

For example, the Qur'an is not only read as a source of law. It is also divine and mystical presence, providing clues to the mystery of the Divine --as one Pakistani Muslim put it to me, it is a love letter from God to be read and re-read as a lover carefully examines letters from his or her earthly beloved. Similarly the life of the Prophet Muhammad arranged thematically in *hadith* collections for the purpose of constructing Islamic law should not diminish the importance of the dramatic narrative of the Prophet's life as a means of evoking his presence. For most Muslims Muhammad is more than just a lawgiver. He is *habibullah* (the beloved of God) for whom the universe itself was created, a focus of devotion and a model of ethical behavior.

Debate of over the nature of the “real Islam” has been especially poignant in the former Soviet republics of Central Asia. For nearly a century the Muslims of Central Asia were governed by a Soviet political system that actively denied the validity of religious belief and sought to discredit and dismantle religious institutions. University students were forced to take courses which affirmed the official “scientific” atheism of the Soviet state. Muslims shrines were bulldozed and otherwise destroyed, the bricks of *mazars* used in the construction of secular buildings like movie theaters. Works of medieval Islamic literature in Farsi and Chagatay Turkic were “re-translated” into the modern languages of Uzbek, Kyrgyz, Kazakh and Tajik and published without crucial references to God, the Prophet and Islam. Sufi institutions were banned disrupting the chain of *pir* and *murid* (master and disciple) that had provided a continuity of tradition for hundreds of years. More directly, under Stalin hundreds of people with both local and textual knowledge of Islam - *pirs*, *shaikhs*, *ulama*, Islamic intellectuals—were executed in a brutal attempt to break the connections of future generations with their Islamic past. Many people stopped going to *masjid* and visiting shrines for fear that it might ruin their careers or draw the unwanted attention of the government. Many parents stopped teaching their children how to pray in order to protect them from persecution. With the coming of *perestroika* and the end of the Soviet Union in 1992 the Muslims of Soviet Central Asia were hungry to recover and reconstruct their Muslim past.

But the past can be notoriously difficult to reconstruct. As Muslims in Central Asia have sought to recover their identities they have not done so in a vacuum. Both inside and outside of the region numerous voices have risen up

claiming that they (and sometimes they alone) represent the “real Islam” that had been disrupted by the Soviet experience. Among other external voices Salafis, Wahabis, Nurcus, Gulencis, Tablighis and Pakistani Naqshbandis have sought to reintroduce their own particular versions “the real Islam.” Many of these voices emphasize the formal legal aspects of Islam and for many Central Asians their voices sound especially authoritative because of their knowledge of the Arabic sources of the Muslim legal tradition. At the same time within the region persons with pieces of crucial local knowledge -knowledge of texts in Farsi and Chagatay Turkic, knowledge of rituals at *mazars*, local vernacular poetry, and songs and epics - have also asserted their voices as purveyors of real and legitimate Central Asian Islamic traditions. At times these voices conflict with each other. This is especially visible in the context of *mazar* visitation as many of these new voices argue that visiting *mazars* - or at least some of the practices connected with it - lie outside of the legal Islamic tradition.

Much of this debate is reminiscent of the old Islamic story of the three blind men attempting to describe an elephant. The one touching the trunk argues forcefully that the elephant is like a snake. The one touching its leg argues with equal certainty that the elephant is like a tree trunk and the one touching its body is convinced it is like a wall. None can see the entirety of the elephant so each one defines it solely through his own experience. And as each argues from his own immediate experience he is thoroughly convinced of the legitimacy of his position. Similarly for some Muslims trained in classical Arabic textual knowledge of Islamic law Islam is *ibadat* and *shariah* law. But for others immersed in the Sufi tradition Islam is about spiritual experience. For others Islam is about social and historical identity. Islam like the elephant in the story cannot be reduced to any one of its dimensions. It needs to be seen and understood from multiple perspectives.

Islam has always been about more than just Islamic law. Law is on only one of the ways which human behavior is governed in Islam. *Akhlaq* or ethics, and *adab*, or proper etiquette, are arguably equally important elements in determining proper Islamic behavior. There is a famous *hadith* of the Prophet that states: “The greatest among you is the greatest in *akhlaq*.” And *adab* which is intimately connected with the Sufi tradition is a crucial aspect of Central Asian Muslim culture.

*Akhlaq* is a matter of character and virtues rather than law. Virtues of humility, courage, forbearance, voluntary poverty and hospitality are universally praised. These virtues are - like *shariah* - rooted in the Qur’an and the life of the Prophet. They are seen as the essential characteristics of Muhammad and beyond him they represent the character of his cousin and son-in-law Imam Ali, the other Shi’i Imams and - of crucial importance in Central Asia - the great saints (*auliyah*) of the Sufi tradition.

The words used to express these characteristics in vernacular languages often have their origin in the Arabic of the Qur’an. For example *sabr* is no longer only the Arabic or Quran’ic word for “patience” it is also the root of the Persian, Urdu and Turkic words for “patience” as well. The same is true for terms like *faqr* (spiritual poverty), *ishq* (love), and *tawakkul* (trust). Thus the terms used to describe human virtue in vernacular languages are intimately connected to and evoke a common Islamic tradition.

A primary way in which these ideals are communicated is through narrative. Stories of the Prophet Muhammad abound, including both classical narratives as well as more popular and apocryphal accounts. And stories of Sufi masters in both oral and written forms can be found in nearly every corner of the Muslim world. These narratives are mechanisms for communicating and encouraging the Islamic virtues associated with *akhlaq* and *adab*. Such narratives teach humanity (*insaniyyat*) by providing paradigmatic human models that inspire our devotion and imitation and lead people to behave in truly “humane” ways.

The notion of humanity (*insaniyyat*) is central to Islam. The first *shahadah* affirms there is no God but god, while the second affirms that Muhammad is the Messenger of God. Thus along with *tauhid* (the unity of God), Muslims are commanded to publically affirm the necessity of human guidance (*nubuwwat*). Quran’ic narrative consistently affirms the centrality of humanity. The Qur’an tells the story of the creation of Adam no less than seven times. In that story Adam is formed from clay, and the spirit of God (*ruh*) was placed inside him.

The angels are asked to bow down before Adam and all do except Iblis who is forever cursed as the Shaytan for his disobedience and his arrogance towards humanity. In the Qur’an we alone in all of the universe have accepted the world as an *amanat*, a trust from God. According to the Qur’an generations of Adam were brought forth from his loins on the day of creation and asked “*Ana Alast-o Rabbikum?*” - Am I not your Lord? Humanity replied in the affirmative. In the world view of Islam human beings are, indeed, forgetful and at times unjust. But our humaneness -

our humanity is also seen part of our original natures - and thus a major theme in Islam is the necessity of the remembrance (*dhikr*) of our original state as servants of God. We need reminding, but we are God's vice-regents in the world.

There is clearly a deep humanism in Islam. Human beings matter. God teaches us through the agency of human beings called *nabis* and *rasuls*. In the Sufi tradition, that guidance is maintained through Sufi *pirs* who trace their *silsilahs*, their chains of transmission, back to Muhammad. Elsewhere I have referred to this phenomenon as devotional allegiance - the idea that Islamic piety requires a personal allegiance to Muhammad and those who are considered his legitimate successors. This concept is of course particularly strong in Shi'i Islam where devotion and allegiance to the Imams and the *ahl al-bayt* is crucial. But devotional allegiance also has deep roots in Sunni Islam where the Prophet is a focus of love and devotion, and especially in the Sufi tradition devotion to the Prophet and his son-in-law Ali extends to include devotion to the *auliyah-i Allah* as the mirrors who reflect the light of God onto this world.

This Sufi tradition was an essential element of Islamic piety in pre-Soviet Central Asia. Several of the great transnational *tariqats* including the Naqshbandiyyah, Kubrawiyyah and Yasaviyya originated in the region. Belief in the *auliyah* as the spiritual successors to the Prophet was part and parcel of the Islamic worldview of ordinary Muslims. Like Muslims elsewhere Central Asians believed that the *auliyah* were privy to secret knowledge and possessed miraculous powers. The *auliyah* constituted an invisible hierarchy which served as the spiritual government of this world.

In Central Asia as throughout the Muslim world, believers encountered the *auliyah* in a variety of ways. The first and most immediate way was through contact with living Sufi *shaykhs*. The fullest articulation of this mode of piety was the institution of *pir-murid* within the context of the institution of the *tariqat*. But living *auliyah* were also sought out by ordinary persons for more mundane reasons such as blessings and healings. The *auliyah* were also encountered through *ziyarat* to Sufi shrines or *mazars*. Although entombed *auliyah* were not "dead" in an ordinary sense; rather they were seen to continue to exist in a spiritual form within their tombs and could be visited by their devotees. This phenomenon was of course not limited to Central Asia but can be found throughout the Muslim world.

Contact with *auliyah* - both as living *pirs* and through shrine pilgrimage - was an important aspect of Islam in pre-Soviet Central Asia. The Naqshbandiyyah and Yasavi *tariqats*, in particular, were crucial religious and cultural institutions, and living *shaykhs* of these traditions played important roles in the society. Similarly, tombs of the most famous *auliyah* were important sites of pilgrimage not only for Central Asians but for Muslims from throughout the Islamic world; similarly numerous less well-known local shrines served as regional centers of pilgrimage. These traditions were deeply distorted and damaged by the Soviet experience. *Pir-Murid* was largely completely destroyed. *Mazar* pilgrimage was also discouraged. Many *mazars* were destroyed and many of the traditions associated with *ziyarat* were forgotten.

Perhaps the most common way in which the *auliyah* were encountered was through oral and written narratives about their lives. Through stories of the *auliyah* ordinary Muslims became aware of their moral and spiritual teachings, as well as the general worldview of Sufism. Through these narratives belief in the *auliyah* became part of the culture at a basic level, providing individuals with paradigmatic models of human behavior. In Central Asia this was true both at the level of "high culture" - through the Chagatay poetry of Navoi and Mashrab and the highly sophisticated Persian *tazkirah* tradition, and perhaps more importantly at the "popular level" through countless oral narratives about the *auliyah*.

Stories about the great Central Asian saint Zangi Ata provide good examples of these kinds of narrative. Zangi Ata is an important figure in the Yasavi tradition, whose tomb located near the city of Tashkent is popular site of local and regional pilgrimage. Narratives of his life contain many of the basic themes in Sufi narratives both in Central Asia and the larger Muslim world.

Zangi Ata is connected the spiritual lineage of the great twelfth century Khoja Ahmed Yasavi, whose *mazar* in the town Turkestan in Kazakhstan is perhaps one of the most famous spiritual sites in all of Central Asia, in fact, the entire Turkic speaking world. According to one account, one day while acting as *imam* [q.v.] during *namaz* for a congregation of 99 famous *shaykhs* Ahmad Yasavi purposely broke with proper religious practice by emitting strange sounds. The majority of the *shaykhs* praying behind Ahmad Yasavi doubted him and said that he had broken his *taharat* (purity) and broke off their prayer, but Hakim Ata and one other dervish prayed with him through to the end.

Following the prayer Ahmad Yasavi revealed to his disciple Hakim Ata that this had been a test of his allegiance which he had passed by continuing to follow his *pir* even though he seemed to violate the *shariah*. Having been appointed as Ahmad Yasavi's *khalifa*, Hakim Ata, following the directions of his *pir*, mounted a mysterious white camel which carried him to the area near Khurasan, where it suddenly stopped in his tracks. As he struggled with his camel, he was attacked by troops of the Turkic ruler, Bughrakhan, but with the miraculous help of God he easily defeated them. When Bughrakhan learned that Hakim Ata was a *khalifa* of Ahmad Yasavi he invited him to the court, and married the saint to his beautiful daughter, Anbar Ana, who at first resented him because "he was as ugly as she was beautiful." Hakim Ata, being one of the *auliyah*, knew her internal state and chastised her stating that one day she would marry one "even blacker" than him. (Faizeyav, Usmanov, pp. 9-13)

Zangi Ata was Hakim Ata's favorite disciple. He is described in narratives as "black and ugly". He was brought to Hakim Ata by his dervish father as a child so that he could be educated. Once he had reached to the "level of being able to perform miracles" he returned to his hometown of Shosh (now Tashkent) where he worked as a cowherd - charming the cows with his *dhikr*, and performing many miracles. (Interestingly in contemporary Kyrgyzstan the *pir* or spirit guardian of cattle is called Zangi Baba.) Following the death of his *pir* the dark-skinned Zangi Ata married Hakim Ata's widow, who accepted his proposal after he reminded her of the earlier statement Hakim Ata had made to her concerning her marriage to one who was physically ugly<sup>230</sup>.

Within this simple narrative there are a variety of important Sufi themes. First and foremost is the importance of obedience to one's spiritual master. It is an axiom of the Sufi path that one presents oneself before one's *pir* with an attitude of absolute compliance--like a corpse being prepared for burial. Sufi narratives are replete with cautionary tales of *murids* who doubted or disobeyed their *pirs* and paid the consequences for their arrogance. Also prominent in this account is the ability of Sufis to perform miracles (*karamat*). Ahmad Yasavi uses his miraculous power to arrange for the mysterious white camel to carry Hakim Ata to the exact place he needs to go in order to encounter Bughrakhan so that he can establish his *tariqat* in the region. Hakim Ata is able to see into the hidden thoughts of Anbar Ana and predict her future. Miracles are presented as proof of the authority of the *auliyah* and evidence of the truth of Islam.

Another important theme is the necessity of making judgments on the basis of inner realities rather than on outward appearances. This theme is intimately connected to the concept that Sufis know and rely upon that which is hidden (*batin*) rather than that which is manifest (*zahir*). Those who give the appearance of being temporarily insane--as when Ahmad Yasavi utters strange sounds during *namaz*; or those who seem simple unsophisticated cowherds--like Zangi Ata--may not be at all what they appear. Following on this theme, there is a tendency in this literature to praise the poor and the simple and criticize the haughty and well-educated. Even physical beauty is seen as an illusion and source of false pride. Zangi Ata--as his title implies --is described as "black and ugly" in his external appearance, while internally he is one of the *auliyah*.

Another crucial theme in this work is the superiority of esoteric (*batini*) knowledge over exoteric (*zahiri*) knowledge. This theme, as well as the aforementioned theme of the absolute necessity of a *murid* to respect and obey his *pir*, is addressed in the stories of Zangi Ata's disciples--Uzun Hasan, Sayyid Ata, Sadr Ata, and Badr Ata. These were four young men who had attended to best *madrasah* in Bukhara, but decided to seek the *tarikati yoli* and set out to Tashkent to find their *pir*. When the cultured and erudite young Bukharans first met the rustic cowherd Zangi Ata they did not recognize him as one of the *auliyah*. Uzun Hasan introduced them as students from Bukhara Sharif who were seeking a perfect *pir*. Zangi Ata replied that if they were willing to wait he would look around to see if there was such a person. He left them for a long time and returned saying: "Other than myself, I looked and was unable to find another perfected soul to act as your guide". At that point they recognized him as one of the *auliyah* and Uzun Hasan and Sadr Ata took him as their *pir* and became his *murids*. But the other two young men secretly kept doubt in their hearts. After a long time the first two young men made real spiritual progress, but the other two were not as successful in their quest. Finally with the help and intercession of Anbar Ana, they admitted their sin of doubt and were forgiven (Faizeyav, Usmanov, pp. 16-24). It is only when the young men who were well-educated in *fiqh* and *kalam* fully submitted to their spiritual master who appeared as a humble cowherd and manual laborer--that they could make progress. Their skill in exoteric learning was, in fact, a source of pride which endangered their spiritual progress.

This theme is also prominent in narratives of Najmuddin Kubra, the great saint of Khorezm who lived during the time of Chinggis Khan. Kubra is presented as who began his career as an intellectual, proud of his scholastic

achievements and knowledge of texts. When his *pir* ordered him to leave behind his scholarly pursuits he initially disobeyed. One day when he saw his *pir* make an error in the performance of *wudhu* he thought to himself that he knew shariah better than his *pir*. At that moment he fell unconsciousness and awoke in the fires of hell, only to be pulled out by the hand of his *pir*. When he awoke he was a changed man, obedient to his *pir* and later demanding similar obedience from his *murids* (Kamilov, pp.14-15).

The themes in this hagiography are ones that are common in Sufi hagiography throughout the world – the superiority of the *batini* knowledge of the *tarikah yoli* over the *zahiri* knowledge of the *madrasah*, the ability of *pirs* to know the secret heart of a person, a tendency to privilege the poor and the downtrodden over the wealthy and the powerful.

Such narratives were common in pre-Modern Central Asia. The themes of these narratives are remarkably similar to those found in narratives throughout the entirety of the Muslim world - the authority of the *auliyah*, the necessity of obedience to one's *pir*, the ability of *auliyah* to work miracles, the danger involved in showing disrespect to the *auliyah*, the need to seek humility and not judge people by outward station or state. But as with the traditions of *mazar* pilgrimage and *pir-murid* this narrative tradition was deeply impacted by Soviet policies. Few people can read the pre-modern texts in Farsi and Chagatay that record the literary versions of such stories. And the oral traditions were also deeply disrupted. But such stories were integral to Islam in the pre-Soviet period and any reconstruction of Islam in Central Asia needs to take them into account. They were primary mechanisms for teaching *akhlaq* and *adab* to each succeeding generation.

For some in contemporary Central Asia because these stories are not part of the Arabic stories they remain suspect as potentially “unIslamic” phenomenon. The same is true of *mazar* pilgrimage. For these Muslims, who see themselves as part of the “reform tradition,” local knowledge - knowledge transmitted in Turkic languages and Farsi has been devalued. But seen in the larger historical perspective *mazar* pilgrimage and Sufi narrative are clearly part of the larger global Islamic experience. They draw on and resonate with Islamic concepts that can be found in the classical Islamic sources. These phenomena have been part of the Islamic world for centuries. They are part of the ongoing discourse of Islam.

## Conclusion

In the Talas region of Kyrgyzstan near the village of Aral, formerly known as Communism, there stands a remarkable *mazar*. It sits in a remarkably beautiful natural environment surrounded by green fields and snow-capped mountain peaks. The mausoleum has four sides with four doors facing in the four cardinal directions. It was likely built between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries and one scholar asserts that it was likely built from the bricks of earlier Karakhanid buildings. It is thus an Islamic building constructed from earlier Islamic buildings. The name of the *mazar* is “Zulpukor” from the Arabic Zulfikar, the name of the double bladed sword of Ali b. Abu Talib, the son-in-law and cousin of the Prophet Muhammad who is seen by the Shi'i Muslims as the first Imam and by most Sufis as the Shah-i Auliyah, the king of the Sufi saints, and the gateway to the “city of knowledge” that is the Prophet Muhammad. According to some the building marks the place where a splinter of Hazrat Ali's sword fell. But according to others the sword is that of Manas Baatyr, the hero of the Kyrgyz. His sword is also called Zulpukor and was, like Ali's, double-bladed (Aitpaeva, pp 49-51).

For me the Zulpukor *mazar* is a metaphor for Islam in Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia. Sitting next to a village called once but no longer called Communism it is once again a place of pilgrimage that incorporates numerous local and global Islamic notions of sacrality and spirituality. It is built in a place of stunning natural beauty like many of the natural *mazars* of the region, thus incorporating Kyrgyz notions of the sacrality of nature. Like most Sufi shrines it is believed to be tomb - although it is not clear who--if anyone--is buried there. It is connected by its name to Hazrat Ali and is thus clearly an Islamic shrine. But it is also identified with Manas and thus tied to an explicitly Kyrgyz identity. The *mazar* thus links the larger globally shared elements of Islam, through reference to narratives of its formative period, with local narratives and traditions. The *mazar* evokes both Ali and Manas - heroic figures who share virtues of courage, patience, and forbearance common both to the Muslim and pre-Islamic Kyrgyz traditions.

Located next to Communism, the “reality” of the shrine is shrouded by a loss of historical memory. Interestingly the structure itself may have been rebuilt using the bricks of an earlier Muslim building. Thus even the medieval structure at Zulpukor is a reconstruction, a stark reminder that Islam is an historical phenomenon that has experienced

change over time. Like the elephant of the aforementioned story its meaning is contested. The people who come to the shrine are mainly Muslim. However there are some Muslims who would reject the efficacy of coming to the *mazar* altogether. And even among the Muslims who come to Zulpukor there are some who feel that at least some of the rituals that take place there are unacceptable in Islamic law. Others disagree.

Although Zulpukor is a Kyrgyz *mazar* for me it is interesting how similar Zulpukor is to *mazars* in other parts of the Muslim world. People come to Zulpukor for the same reasons that Muslims come to *mazars* everywhere. They want blessings. They want to be healed. They want children. They want to be close to God. Even the controversies about pilgrimage to Zolpokar are similar to the controversies in the rest of the Muslim world where “reformers” have arisen to criticize the entire tradition of *ziyarat* as non-Islamic.

I find it particularly interesting that Zulpukor has four doors. The metaphor of four doors is an important element of the Alevi-Bektashi tradition—an Anatolian tradition which has ties to Central Asia through Hajji Bektash and Ahmet Yasavi. This tradition specifically venerates Ali, the owner of Zulpokar. According to the Alevi-Bektashi tradition Islam has four doors. The first is *shariah* which is Islamic law, the exoteric element of Islam. The second is *tariqat* the mystica yol. The third is *marifat* or mystical knowledge or gnosis. And the fourth is *haqiqat* or reality. Islam is comprised of all of these doors.

Some would deny that *mazars* are a part of Islam because elements of *mazar* practice are not found in *shariah*. But *mazars* are indeed part of the *tariqat* tradition affirming the existence of the *auliyah*, pointing people towards esoteric understandings of the religion, and leading them to mystical knowledge (*marifat*). They are seen as signposts to reality (*haqiqat*.) They are physical manifestations of the spiritual realm pointing from the *zahir* to the *batin*. Seen in this way they resonate with and articulate core concepts from the Islamic tradition. It is only when Islam is limited to the first door of the *shariah* that *mazar* can be seen as outside of Islam.

I began this paper with a question. What is Islam? One simple way to answer this question is Islam is what Muslims do to respond to their belief in God and the Prophet. Islam in Central Asia includes both local and global expressions of piety. Belief in the *auliyah* and *mazar* visitation has long been part of Islam in Central Asia. Despite the presence of voices that attempt to paint them as alien to Islam they will likely continue as powerful expressions of Islamic diversity.

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### ANCIENT SACRED SITES IN YSYK-KÖL AND BORDERING REGIONS

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#### **Ak-Chungkur, a sacred site of the Stone Age**

Nowadays, it is impossible to recreate the rituals that accompanied the ancient ceremonies practiced in caves. Without a doubt in the summer and spring months people climbed up to the mountain caves from the Ysyk- Köl lowlands. Besides ritual food, they brought with them ohra – mineral paint, with which they painted orange and brown pictures on the walls of the cave. Ohra was mixed and prepared in the horns of the mountain goats. The process of carving into the stone and then applying the paint was a part of the ritual of the ancient visitors.

The drawings (carvings) were studied twice. First, in 1953 by the alpinist B.I. Ratsek, archeologist H.A. Alpysbaev and painter L.B. Urasov. Researchers made 13-15cm. copies of the rock carvings. There were images of mountain goats, snakes and bulls. The second study was in 1978 when the art historian L.M. Mosolova copied images of the female figures painted in the cave. These compared to the earlier studies.

The images repeat the themes of most ancient carvings in Eurasia. Fat female figures, called the “Paleolithic Venera” were the first sculptures of the early Paleolithic. The images in Ak-ChunGkur are ancient Veneras. The images reflect the important role that women played in the beliefs of the primitive people, who conducted their ritual ceremonies in caves. The artifacts, such as stone tools, are proof of presence of people in the caves. Even though the monuments are recognized as Neolithic drawings from 6000-4000 B.C., according to Mosolova, “most probably the Ak-Chungkur drawings are from the Mesolithic period 12000 to 6000 years B.C.E. when cave painting was going through changes and new traditions appeared”.

This is the first monument on the territory of Kyrgyzstan, which testifies of the spiritual life of primitive people and their religion. Judging by type of drawings, the rituals were conducted in the Bronze Age and in early Iron Age.

All this shows, that the in pre historic times, the first ceremonies were conducted at specific sites between high mountains. Studying the images, we can assume that the painters connected the idea of birth or origin of their ancestors with the cave. Such mythology continued until the early Middle Ages. For example the Turkic tribe “Ashina” claimed they are children of the female wolf, whose image was found in one of the caves of Central Asia. Every year the Turkic Khan with his noblemen came to the cave to perform a sacrifice in honour of the Spirit of the Sky.

500 metres to the west of Dugin, there is a mountain with no trees or plants on its peak, named Bodyn-Inli (which translates from Chinese as “Spirit-Protector of the nation”). This place has three features which were connected to the beliefs of Turkic people: 1) **a cave** where sacrificial rituals devoted to ancestors were held; 2) a place of sacrificial ritual **near the river** which was dedicated to the spirit of the Sky: Tengir; 3) the third site was located on the **peak of the mountain**. According to the history of the place the Spirit-Protector of the nation dwelt here, but it is unknown which rituals were specifically devoted to him. Echos of this rite might be found in the “Tashtar-Ata” cult of the Bronze Age and early Iron Age. The cults’ rituals were held on mountain peaks and accompanied by engraving images on cave walls.

Nowadays the caves and grottos still draw believers and non-believers, the former continue to pray at these sacred places. But the modern rituals may be completely different from the ancient ones. In the northern regions of the Talas oblast, in the cave of Nyldy-Ata in Chong - Üngkür, visitors say prayers and eat the food they have brought as a form of sacrifice (The *Kasiet* of Nyldy-Ata, Aigine). Nearby, there is another cave named Ajydar-Üngkür. On its walls there are two images, drawn with ohra; one is a zigzag line and the other the image of a bird (perhaps a rooster). In the same caves there are arabographic engravings. Pilgrims often visit the Barataiy-Üngkür grotto, located in the Toktogul raiyon, near one of the right tributaries of the Naryn river, in the upper reaches of the river Tuluk (Tuuluk, Kelte). According to the report of Boobekova, professor of the Kyrgyz-Turkish University “Manas” and researcher of the cults of the caves, women who cannot have children visit Barataiy-Üngkür to ask for a baby. They often conduct ritual sacrifice, cook meat and share it with others participating in the ceremony, spend a night in the grotto and ask the Spirit of the Cave for a child.

Some of the grottos or caves did not have any specific religious meaning and were used for rounding animals or as refuge for hunters or cattle-breeders for example in Southern Ysyk-Köl, Kyzyl-Üngkür.

Ethnographers research the caves, visited by pilgrims. Their observations and analysis of the rituals bring important ethnographical discoveries. Stationary archeological excavations of these grottos give valuable findings, which reflect the material and spiritual culture of the ancient citizens and visitors. Therefore, the study of the cave monuments has great prospects, it may help to find the connection between ancient traditions and ethnographic modernity.

### **Ancient sanctuaries and their petroglyphs**

In Central Asia there are numerous archeological findings of ancient sacred sites. In Kyrgyzstan the most vivid rock carvings are of Antiquity and the Middle Ages. They are researched not only by archeologists, but also by researchers of ritual activity. The archeologists and researchers reckon that the images engraved in the rocks, are products of religious rituals and ceremonies. That’s why parallel study of them as objects of both graphical and religious activity is necessary.

Rock carvings are connected with alpine sites, with pre-mountainous zones, where stones and rocks appropriate for carvings can be found. The most famous site is the gallery of rock carvings at Saiymaluu-Tash, located in the

Fergana spine (Martynov, Maryashev, Abetekov). The earliest images there are dated as far back as the Eneolit period (3000-2000 B.C.E.), a large part of the images are dated to the Bronze Age and Early Iron Age. Some engravings of Gunn Times and the Middle Ages were identified but there are only a few from these epochs. There are no recent engravings, so called “folk inscriptions” from the latest centuries. But there are engravings made by random visitors that renew the old images. The engravings bring to thought the age-old tradition of pilgrimage to this sacred place, show that pilgrims always visited Saiymaluu-Tash to perform ceremonies and rituals. Perhaps in the Middle Ages, there were no great rituals with systematic rock carving. Nowadays this site is rarely visited by pilgrims as a place of prayer.

In the Ysyk-Köl region there are rock carvings in the mountains of the Teskeiy and Küngöiy Ala-Too, especially in the delta of the rivers, which flow into the lake. Among them, there are sites with a significant number of rock carvings (Vinnik T.D., Pomaskina G.A., pp.87-101). The petroglyph complexes usually have carvings from only one time period. There are many rock carvings of the Scythian and Usun period, 1000 years B.C.E.

Every year brings new discoveries of rock carvings from the Bronze Age and Middle Ages. According to research, the cult of the bull and sun played an important role in belief of the Bronze Age and Early Iron Age. In the Ysyk-Köl area, near burial grounds, many different images of the solar cult were discovered – varying from simple circles to complex sun symbols: the Sun-Bull, Sun-Deer, Sun-Goat, Sun-Man.

The rock carvings of the Alabash are of great importance for the research of ritual activity. They are located in an inner valley of the Tong district. In the central part of the valley there are several cone-shaped mounds named “Besh-Alabash”. On the eastern side of the biggest mound, there are rock carvings of the Bronze Age and early Iron Age. There are not many of them, but all of them are bright and dynamic, all depict movement. There is one engraving of a mounted knight, which is particularly colorful.

Near the foot of the mountain, the ruins of ancient constructions of the Stone Age and Middle Ages can be found. The area is comparatively warm and dry, and for this reason it was chosen by the people of those times for their settlement. In the late Middle Ages the Kalmyks held their rituals of Lamaism<sup>226</sup> here. The engravings “Om Mani Padme Hum” give proof of this.

In two places of the mound there is a concentration of the stones and rocks. Researchers think this is not accidental, perhaps these stones were used for rituals. On the mound-sanctuary, where the rock carving ritual was usually held, people brought stones and placed them on heaps. These stones had specific religious meaning. Later on the mound a heap of stones was formed. In places such as this systematic rock carvings of the Bronze Age and early Iron Age have been found. Similar heaps of stones can be found at sacred sites in the western part of the Teskei Ala-Too range, near another the rock carvings of Kyrgyzbaiy-Bulung.

In “Kyrgyzbaiy-Bulung” there are anthropomorphous images with raised hands – worshipers, which are typical for the Bronze Age. There are some engravings of horsemen. The majority of the images are of mountain goats. After examining the site and the images we discovered that the engraved stones are located around one mound and the stone heaps are here too. When approaching the peak, people conducted different rituals, and then chose rocks near the peak to stamp images of animals. Some of the images were engraved skillfully and artistically, with consideration of the real proportions of animals and people. Out of all the images the most impressive are the hunting animals. There is one image of a lynx, a mountain goat and a camel, and another rock carving depicts a realistic image of a snow leopard with a long tail. There are images of dogs, horses and camels.

We can say that this was a place much visited, because the composition of the rock carvings on some sites was destroyed and replaced with later images. Some of the images were renewed later. It is probable that most of the images were carved during religious rituals. Some of them are modern carvings.

Nowadays, there is a request for the documentation of the data gathered at archeological excavation and the continuation of research of petroglyphs as art and as objects of the religious cult.

### **Burial mounds, commemoration structures and sites of ancient nomadic rituals**

One of the sites connected with the belief of ancient nomads is the “eight-stoned” commemoration site. These are dated back to the 1000 B.C.E. and found in the delta of the Sary-Jaz river. Similar sites can be found in different valleys of the Tien-Shan. The “eight-stoned” commemoration structures were constructed in different places. Some of their groups have been constructed near burial mounds from the Scythian period. Archaeological research of the burial mounds and commemoration frames might bring light to many unknown aspects of the life of ancient nomads. The

archeological research requires a complex approach. It includes the study of: burial mounds, ritual areas, treasures (bronze artifacts buried in the tombs). New discoveries provide proof of D.F. Vinnik and G. Pomaskina’s theory that “nomads’ burial mounds were not only a place of burial, but also of the religious cult” (Vinnik, Pomazkina, pp. 87-101).

In the 20th century, several treasuries of bronze items were discovered in the Ysyk-Köl area. Some were dated to the Bronze Age, and others as early as the Iron Age. The treasure includes armour, these were the belongings of rich men and rulers. In the case of these findings the focus of research is the early nomadic treasure. The most famous findings are the Chelpek treasury and Kyrchyn treasury. The treasures are copper cauldrons and sacrificial altars. A group of burial mounds of Scythian and Usun times were found near the Chelpek treasure. Judging by the location, the copper excavations were found at the places, where the rituals were conducted. These items of the cult could be connected with the burial and commemoration rituals. After a ritual, they were buried at the place of worship.

This information for research of the Kyrgyz commemoration ritual was collected by the anthropologist Kuchumkulova E. and presented in August 2008 on the first Regional Conference of the Central Eurasian Studies Society. Her lecture talked of the commemoration ritual in the Ak-Suu district. According to field observations of E. Kuchumkulova, Kyrgyz people would finish the funeral ceremony with mourning songs and wailing. This ritual was repeated a year after a person’s death. Afterwards, the participants of the ceremony, mainly men, turned a copper *kazan* upside down and left it at the place of burial, where the ritual was being held. The overturned *kazan* should be the same *kazan* in which meat at the funeral was cooked. This version of the ritual is also confirmed by archeological discoveries found at the Scythian monuments in the Ysyk-Köl area. It seems the funeral rites that are practiced today in some ways continue elements from the ceremonies of the early nomads.

### **Engravings of the Middle Ages are now a place of worship**

Burial mounds, commemoration fences and places for the rituals of the ancient nomads are also an endless source for research of ancient beliefs. The engravings from the Middle Ages have become objects of worship nowadays. In the Teskeyy Ala-Too, in the upper branches of the river Tosor, there is a site with petroglyphs called Kulbak (Kulbak Tamga-Tash<sup>227</sup>). There an arabographic engraving was discovered on an enormous stone. The writing was published in Ch.Jumagulova’s research (Jumagulov, pp. 70-71).

We visited the site in 2007. Kaiyrat Belek worked on the translation of the writings and he discovered two different handwritings. According to his translation, the text could be categorized as a juridical document.

1. I, Kara Hasan Sökmen.	1. Мен Кара Хасан Сүкмен.
2. I will give the army to Hakan, The Army, which is large and strong.	2. Х(а)канга с%о бериман, карам (у)луг с%о беран.
3. Tengri blesses you.	3. Сени сыгдым ыдыкга Теңри.
4. I, Mas ud-Alp have received.	4. Мен Мас’уд-Алп алдым.
5. Tengri blesses you, Amen.	5. Теңри кутлыг кылсун, Амин.

The sign says that Sogmen Kara Hasan gave a large army to Musud Alp, and on accepting the army, they mutually blessed one another. The sign is an original document confirming the transfer and acceptance of an army.

The text was written by representatives of the high hierarchy. They were Muslims and at the same time, followers of the pre-Islamic cult of the ancestors, who worshipped the sky God – Tengri (Chimitdorjiev, pg. 90).

It is interesting that Mahmud Kashgari<sup>228</sup>, an expert of the humanitarian studies also mentions the name Kulbak: “Kulbak is name of the Turkic ascetic, who visited the mountains of Balasagun. They say, that he himself wrote on black stones: *Tangri Kuli Kulbak* which means Kulbak is the slave of Allah”, and the appeared engraved in white. He also wrote on the white stones, and there appeared black words which can be seen to this day” (Mahmud al-Kashgari, pg. 440). However on the Kulbak sign the words “Kulbak is the slave of Allah” which Kashgari wrote are not engraved. According to local sources, there should be two more signs at the site, but they have not been discovered yet.

We also have one more oral testimony about the pilgrimages of people, who perceived the stone with the sign as a sacred site.

### **The Buddhist chant “Om Mani Padme Hum”**

In the upper reaches of the river Tamga there are three massive boulders with Tibet mantra: “Om Mani Padme Hum”- “There is no grace more divine than the lotus” or translated literally - “Oh! The Pearl in the Lotus flower!”. Votive rags are tied to the branches of bushes that grow near the big stone. The details of the religious procedures that took place here are as yet unknown, but it seems these votive rags are proof of the popular belief in the sacredness of the stone. This Tibetan Buddhist writing is proof that although religion may change the object of worship doesn't. This site was and is visited by pilgrims of the pre-Islamic and Islamic faith.

In many conversations with the locals we discovered that they believe it is very important to tell of these hidden places of worship, they believe it is their responsibility to continue the practice of visiting these places. These chosen objects of worship are a part of nature, they can be springs with healing powers, trees, mounds or hills with uncommon features. The great stone with ancient original writing attracts the attention of visitors. It has a special status among sacred sites and has in the recent past become a place of worship. However according to our respondents, many of them did not know the traditions of pilgrimage to Tamga-Tash and the procedures of tying votive rags on branches before they came to the site.

Researchers identify two stages of the diffusion of Tibetan writings on the territory of today's Kyrgyzstan – the first between the 7-9th centuries and the second from the 17th to the beginning of the 18th centuries (Mosolova, pp. 141-143). Tibetan engravings were left by the western Mongols (called the Kalmak-Oiyrots). The Mongol Khan's ruling in the 12-13th centuries worshipped Buddhism, and due to their influence the Tibetan Lamaist branch of Buddhism spread rapidly in the second half of the 15th (Chimitdorjiev, pp. 70-71). Early cartographical documents show the territories of the Oiyrot people, that were sporadically invaded by the Kyrgyz between 1643-1757. It is there that Tibetan writings of Lamaist Order were found. They were found on the territory of Southern and Northern Ysyk-Köl. Many of these stones bear the Buddhist Tibetan Mantra: “Om Mani Padme hum”.

Another sacred place for the Lamaists was a mountain, which stands near the high mountain pass of Kesken-Bel (near Kyzyl-Too). On the narrow plateau of the mountain pass, there are around ten monuments with the Tibetan Mantra inscriptions. There are also other writings of the same tradition. From this spot, the view of the mountains on the one side and the lake on the other is magnificent. This place was chosen as the last resting place of the Tibetan Lamaists and other people of the Middle Ages.

### **“Tashtar-Ata” mountain cult**

In the upper-reaches of the river Kadji-Saiy there are mountains called the “Tashtar-Ata”. In Jumgal and Alaiy there are other high mountains that bear the same name. In Alaiy we collected data from local citizens about independent groups of people visiting the sacred places. People climb up the mountain to pray, hold the ritual and come back. According to written sources, worship of mountain peaks was also practiced long ago.

The great humanist Mahmud Kashgari was a true follower of Islam. In his work “Divan Lugat at-Turk” he gives two meanings of the word *Tangri*, he writes: “The Unbelievers, may Allah the Lord on Highest destroy them, call the sky *Tangri*. They also call *Tangri* everything that seems great to them, for example, a high mountain or a big tree. That's why, they worship such things” (Mahmud al-Kashgari, pg.1022).

In his works the Persian geographer of the XIth century, al-Gardizi, also speaks of the Turkic tribes of the Turgeshes and Jikilies, and his observations are similar to those of Mahmud Kashgari: “One of the villages is located near mountain. The Turkic people worship the mountain and curse with its name, they say: This is the house of the Lord in the Highest. Lord save us from such belief” (Gardizi, pg.62)

We think that al-Gardizi’s findings and the information we collected about sacred sites at which rituals are practiced are connected. According to our research the mountain cult is connected to the name given to the mountain range that it “Tashtar-Ata”.

Tashtar-Ata is in its turn connected to the *Oboo* cult. *Oboo* are sacrificial mounds of stones. *Oboo* are typical monuments of the Central Asian peoples. According to locals, the *Oboo* are usually located behind difficult mountain passes, after successfully crossing the pass, people would throw a stone of thanksgiving, and so the heaps grew. People believed that the spirit of the mountain lives in such places as these (Bayalieva, pg.10). The term “oboo” comes from the Buratiyan “oboo” and Mongol “onoo”, it is understood as: a heap of the stones, which stands at the place where the religious rituals were conducted, dedicated to the patron of the place or to another idol e.g. the spirit of a dead shaman, a powerful ancestor, a mythical personage and others (Abaeva, pg.676). The ritual was widely spread among all nations of Central Asia (Tibetans, Mongols, Turkic peoples and others) long before the appearance of Buddhism and even Shamanism.

Similar stone piles can be found on the highlands in Kochkor valley and in the Alabash valley of the Tong region, where there are also rock carvings of the Bronze Age up to 1000 century B.C.E. Is there a connection between the Oboo cult, Tashtar Ata and the heaps of stones located near the ancient rock carvings? To answer this question it is necessary to visit the sacred mountains named “Tashtar–Ata”, to talk to the old people living there who preserve traditional knowledge and then to compare and analyze this information.

Traces of the ancient rituals can be found preserved in local culture. The ethnographer T.D. Bayalieva has collected important information connected to the cult of mountains, from the Kyrgyz people. According to her information the Kyrgyz people from At-Bashy valley have worshipped the mountain Chech-Döbö (Chesh-Döbö, Almambettin Chesh-Döbö [author]) since antiquity. According to local legend, a lone tree used to stand on the peak, people came there to pray and tied votive rags to its branches. At night sometimes a fire was lit on the mountain, gun shots could be heard. The patron of the mountain was believed to be Ak-Taiylak<sup>29</sup>. During the Khokand rule in the XIXth century a mosque was built on the mountain peak and a grave of some “Saint” was constructed. The grave was marked with a ritual staff with horse tail hair and mountain goat horns. Later all the constructions were destroyed by weathering, but as before the Kyrgyz people continued to go to the mountain peak to pray (Bayalieva, pg. 10).

The above research is some of the first ethnographical research on ancient rituals conducted using written sources, local knowledge and archeological data. This kind of research is needed in the future to trace the evolution of faith and worship of natural objects, the change of the spiritual cultures of different communities, starting from the Bronze Age and reaching contemporary ethnography.

### **The graves of saints**

Some of the sacred sites in Kyrgyzstan are connected to the cult of ancestors and saints. This cult was an important part of the Pre-Islamic system of beliefs, it was strong and wide-spread. It is based on the idea of the real existence of spirits of the ancestors and holy people that are able to affect and influence people’s lives. The spirits demand the attention and care of their descendants, it was believed that a person’s happiness and prosperity depends on the will of these spirits and therefore it is ever more important to honour them. The sacred sites in question are the graves of famous ancestors, heroes of the nation, tribe leaders and tribe cemeteries. Some of these sites are still places of pilgrimage.

For example, at Manjyly-Ata sacred site one of the most revered people of the Ysyk-Köl was buried: Muiyt Ake. Although the site was always considered holy, this being the place of Muiyt Akes’ burial has made it even more important for the people. Muslims come here to fulfill various rituals and ceremonies. People visit the site if they are sick or childless, to make a ritual sacrifice and ask for health and children. The site has a unique natural microlandscape, there are springs among small trees and hills, there is an amazing view of the lake. It is possible that in Pre-Islamic times this was a ritual site and that after renowned people were buried here its importance grew.

Sacred sites are also places that were honoured with the presence of legendary heroes. An example is Ak-Terek in the Tong district, where the legendary hero Er Tabyldy stopped to rest and heal from his wounds. In the delta of the river Ak-Terek, poplars grow in a narrow picturesque canyon. There is a small spring here, according to popular belief, the water from the spring has healing qualities, local people come here to worship the spring and the trees.

### **Ancient and modern sacred places**

What does all the information provided above strive to prove? That the worship of mountains, trees, holy people and heroes graves that is practiced among the Kyrgyz and Turkic peoples comes from times of Antiquity and the Middle Ages. These traditions and rituals were later integrated into Islam and gave the faith its local character: the syncretism of Pre-Islamic beliefs with Islam. The integration of shamanism and Islam was already recognized in the XIXth century by Ch. Valikhanov and the development of this process can be seen even now.

The lake, which has always been at the center of religious attention deserves an independent study in itself. The lake is a wonder of nature and undoubtedly was considered such by the inhabitants of its shores. There are many monuments, myths and legends that speak of the lake and the rituals connected to it.

The importance of the lake is preserved in etymology of the name of the lake. Besides, the modern meaning of the name Ysyk-Köl – warm lake, there is another meaning used in the Middle Ages Ydyk-Köl or Yyyk-Köl – **Holy Lake**.

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<sup>230</sup> Anbar Ana's tomb is located near the tomb of Zangi Ata in the same complex in Tashkent. It is a popular pilgrimage site for women and the walls of her tomb are covered with supplications in both Russian and Uzbek.

<sup>226</sup> Lamaism - a Buddhist order, prevalent in Tibet and the Himalayas [ed.]

<sup>227</sup> *Kulbak Tamga Tash* [Kyrgyz] - branded stones [ed.].

<sup>228</sup> Mahmud Kashgari - the 11th century Turkic scholar and humanist from Kashgar [ed.].

## BELIEF AND KNOWLEDGE IN HEALING PRACTICES

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### **Introduction**

One of the shamans of the Altai, Nina N. said “Knowledge is not possessed by an individual, it lies on the earth, in a place”. This means that a person possesses knowledge on the basis of the environment where she or he lives. There are lots of different cultures with different social environments, and accordingly knowledge varies from place to place, culture to culture. Even the way of obtaining knowledge differs: some people get knowledge from school, while others get it from their parents or grandparents by experience, and some get knowledge from the spiritual world. The last one, more often than not, is not accepted as knowledge, as not everybody practices and believes in it.

The aim of this article is to analyze the role of belief and knowledge in viewing the environment where one lives. The range of meanings of these two terms is very broad, so I limit their sphere to the framework of traditional ways of healing, with a focus on Kyrgyzstan. However, I will not look at the symbolic aspects of traditional healing practices such as actions and rituals, but I will discuss the invisible parts of these actions, that is, why traditional healing is practised today, who possesses knowledge and who believes in it, whether there is a difference between knowledge and belief and where the boundaries or maybe the intersections of the two lie. In order to contextualise these aspects of traditional healing practices I also consider what traditional healing is and how it is explained in the academic world.

### **How are belief and knowledge understood in the academic world?**

Good, in his book “Medicine, rationality, and experience: an anthropological perspective” shows that the term belief became important and central in the discussions of scientists and that they also got interested in comparisons of belief and knowledge. He says that the meaning of the term “belief” shifted with time. For example he cites Locke who “characterized “belief” along with “assent” and “opinion” as “admitting or receiving any proposition for true, upon argument or proofs that are found to persuade us... without certain knowledge” (Good, pg.16). Then in the nineteenth century belief became closer to doubt. And he says that “today it suggests outright error and falsehood. Knowledge requires both certitude and correctness; belief implies uncertainty, error, or both” (Good, pg.17). So, we see here how the meaning of the term “belief” changed and how the gap between belief and knowledge got wider. And when one mentions the terms such as “spiritual world”, “traditional healing”, or “supernatural power” the gap between what one knows and what one believes gets even wider. My further analysis will be based on Kyrgyz culture where belief and knowledge have shifting meanings.

### **Belief and knowledge for Kyrgyz people**

When it comes to the term “traditional medicine” belief and knowledge about it greatly differs among Kyrgyz people. This is firstly because “traditional medicine” in Kyrgyzstan is directly connected to “spirit possession”, which is itself a much-argued and multi-faceted notion in different cultures. And secondly, materialist ideology of the Soviet era followed by rapid “Islamization” after gaining independence influenced Kyrgyz culture and gave birth to negative points of view concerning traditional medicine. Those who hold “pure” Islamic religious beliefs are totally against the practice of visiting sacred sites or conducting pre-religious rituals, which are one of the main components of Kyrgyz traditional healing. On the other hand, one can find a unique mixture of both Islamic and “pre-religious” beliefs, which are accepted as contradictory ones. Most Kyrgyz traditional healers read Qur’an, worship one God in the name of Allah, but at the same time visit sacred sites and invoke the spirits of fire, water, stone or tree. Another group of people call themselves Muslims but they also visit sacred sites and turn to traditional healers. Yet, there is a third group of people who were greatly exposed to Soviet atheism, although the majority of them are not atheists now, they don’t believe in traditional healers and call them charlatans.

However, my experience over the last years shows that the number of people turning to traditional healers is growing and even those, who were initially against this type of healing, also started visiting healers to obtain

treatment. I argue that this is happening because of the change of the concept of belief and knowledge in both biomedicine and traditional medicine.

### **Belief**

Kyrgyz people say that belief is a powerful treatment, if one believes this will bring the cure. Before visiting a sacred place a person should believe in the power of that place and cleanse his or her inner world. As Adylov puts it: “Traditional healing is something so customary and so natural, that its’ effectiveness does not require any proof or explanations; people just believe the methods of folk healers. Belief is supported also by positive effects of therapy at *mazars*, which have been described frequently in histories about miraculous healings” (2007, pg. 378). These “miraculous healings” strengthen people’s beliefs and attract more people to traditional medicine.

In Kyrgyzstan, the terms “belief” and “knowledge” have shifted very dramatically within both the scientific and traditional world. Today knowledge in biomedicine does not have as strong a power and credibility as before. As for belief, it is working such wonders for many people that they cannot help believing in miracles. Kyrgyz traditional healers are sure that they possess knowledge that they have received from the divine and that they have an ability to cure people. They believe in their power and they are sure that their patients will be cured, all they need is to believe. An example can be that Kyrgyz healers ask their patients to be prepared mentally and to believe in the power and sanctity of the sacred places they are going to visit. This is one of the main rules of visiting a sacred site.

Whenever a patient feels ill, he or she turns to medical practitioners rather than traditional healers. They go to a doctor, get checked, get prescriptions and start taking medications. They believe it helps, and it does help. However, it seems this belief is getting weaker because the trust in the knowledge of doctors is getting weaker and people are more concerned about the true effects of medications. Finkler (1994, pg.187), states that “while physician’s clinical judgement entails uncertainty and is grounded in the process of exclusion, the spirits treat patients with great certainty. Spiritual healers are as sure of their diagnoses and course of cure as patients are certain of their pain. Spiritual healers do not doubt that the spirits possessing their bodies in “the service of mankind” are omniscient, that the spirits know the person’s pain and also the required cure”. The balance of the healers and doctors’ authority has shifted, because of the belief in the knowledge that they possess. People’s uncertainty in biomedicine arose because of lack of sufficient knowledge in the medical world. And there are several reasons for that, which I consider further in the knowledge section.

### **Knowledge**

The first reason for the lack of enough medical knowledge in biomedicine is that technological development takes the lead over the test and application of it in practice. We all witness dramatic changes and continuous innovations in terms of technologies, new medications, and new methods of treatments. As soon as doctors master one new method, another more advanced method is soon developed. And the situation in the medical world cannot formulate certitude in their methods of treatments.

Secondly, there are many diseases widespread today that the medical world cannot find a cure for, nor a way to diagnose unanimously. It also shows insufficient knowledge of doctors in patients’ opinion.

Thirdly, if we look at the developing countries, then the poor economy of the country also affects the low level of knowledge and skills gained by medical personnel, preceded by a poor educational system. This also influences the weakening of the belief of patients in the knowledge of medical practitioners.

Fourthly, the poor economy also gives a good excuse for contemporary doctors that they do not have good equipment to check the patient properly, which also leads to the patients asking themselves whether it is worth turning to doctors. Even if they turn to doctors, they doubt the diagnoses and treatments that they get.

And finally, again, the poor economic condition and the growing prices for medications also compel people to turn to traditional healers more often than to official doctors. They know that it is cheaper. As for the question whether that is better will depend on how strongly they believe in traditional medicine and what kind of traditional healer they come across.

Stating these points, however, does not mean that people consistently turn away from biomedicine. Biomedicine is indeed one of the effective and popular ways of getting treatment. What I have indicated above are factors that show the doubt of getting full treatment from biomedicine today. On the other hand, there are things like surgeries or

preventive injections that traditional healers cannot provide for their patients. Also there are illnesses that traditional healers admit that they cannot treat and they send their patients to hospital to get medical care. I see complementary sides in both biomedicine and traditional healing practices. And I also see the necessity and usefulness of the cooperation of traditional healers and medical practitioners in health improvements today.

Another point that I want to mention is that in Kyrgyzstan there were cases when patients were removed from hospitals and told that their disease is incurable, but they were healed by traditional healers. One may ask whether that was the traditional healer's doing, or was that the last hope of a patient which cured him. Waldram points to an important aspect in healing processes that the efficacy of treatment may greatly depend on how the patients themselves accept these treatments. He states that "this is perhaps, the most common means of assessing efficacy... Expectations, of course, are developed by the individual patient based on prior knowledge of both healing specifics and broader cultural understandings" (Waldram 2000, pg.614).

The plus for the biomedicine is that in some point, for most of their activities, there are facts that can prove the efficacy of biomedicine. For example medications and injections do have chemical effects on the body and they work for the treatment of disease, whether a patient believes or not. The presence of such evidence itself makes people believe in the efficacy of biomedicine. In case of traditional medicine, it is only connected to a patient's belief. In some people's understanding that would serve as a placebo effect, which works in biomedicine as well. In the case of Kyrgyzstan, all traditional healers tie the efficacy of healing to supernatural power. Whether it is a placebo effect or the real power of spirits, the recovery of a patient depends on belief. Today the situation in Kyrgyzstan is such, that poor economic condition of the country does not allow biomedicine to provide full treatment to patients. People look for cheaper ways of getting treatment. And they turn to traditional medicine. But again, not all people believe in traditional healers and their true capacity to treat people.

The weak belief in biomedicine is the result of the poor economic condition in Kyrgyzstan and the lack of enough knowledge of doctors in their fields. The weak belief in the healing capacity of traditional medicine can be explained by little information and knowledge among Kyrgyz people about supernatural power or spirit possession. The Kyrgyz healers know and believe in that. However, they cannot prove it, with tangible facts, to those who do not believe. There are also cases, when some people, who are themselves involved in spiritual world, accept themselves as abnormal and ask themselves whether what they are feeling, seeing, and being involved is really true. This shows the lack of enough information among Kyrgyz people about how, for example, supernatural power or spirit possession is practised and understood in other cultures. In the following section I will look at how Kyrgyz traditional healing is considered and explained by academics.

### **The explanation of Kyrgyz traditional healing**

Following Kyrgyzstan's coming to independence with the collapse of the USSR in 1991 Kyrgyz religious and traditional beliefs and practices experienced a revival after the rule of the atheistic ideology of the Soviet period. Along with independence traditional healing became influential and emerged like mushrooms after rain. There appeared lots of traditional healers, practitioners, people who receive visions and clairvoyants. Also the number of people visiting sacred places drastically increased.

Traditional healing is not a commonly practised phenomenon that all cultures shape in their everyday life today. However, it is also not rare and is practised in many countries. And it has been a subject much researched in the scientific world for a long time. Many anthropologists have conducted their research in Africa, Asia, and America and came across these traditional phenomena in different cultures and turned their observations and findings into scientific works. For example, E.E. Evans-Pritchard's "Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande" is a classic. Good, by stating that "irrational beliefs became the central, pragmatic issue", points out that "any human science, historical or anthropological, must deal with problems of translation, of different world views and understandings of reality" (1994, p.20). Good raises a very important issue because the efficacy in some healing practices is debated not only by "outsiders", in this case foreign researchers, but also among the local people who practice this a lot.

Below I will discuss two main characteristics of traditional healing: shamanism and spirit possession. The reason for my choosing these two characteristics is that the rituals conducted by most Kyrgyz traditional healers can be academically understood and categorized as shamanism, although shamanism is differently accepted among Kyrgyz people themselves. Shamans were accepted as charlatans and were persecuted during the Soviet period. So, contemporary Kyrgyz traditional

healers would rather categorize themselves more as healers who deal with spirits, and there are reasons for that, which I will consider further. Some academics differentiate spirit possession from shamanism, while others believe that these two are similar. This will also be considered further.

### **Shamanism**

The term “shaman” came from Tungus people and means “one who is excited, moved, or raised”. It is a person “of either sex who has mastered spirits and who can at will introduce them into his own body” (Lewis, pg.51). Some scholars consider shamanism as a feature of people with mental disorder, while others believe in the sanity of shamans. Atkinson states that “by and large, however, shamanistic behavior has been moved from the category of abnormal psychology to the category of universal psychobiological capacities” (1992, pg.310).

By comparing shamanistic initiation in different cultures I have found that all shamans undergo similar steps at the early stage of this “profession” no matter what culture they belong to. For example, Kendall talks about shamanism in Korea and notes that “in Korea, shamans are both born and made: fated from birth to suffer until they acknowledge and accept their destiny, initiated, and then trained by a superior shaman or ‘spirit mother’” (Kendall, pg.17). In Kyrgyzstan traditional healers, whom academics would categorize as shamans, fall ill and they will be sick until they accept what is given to them from “above”. Both *bübü-bakshy* (healers) and *manaschy* (Manas tellers) in Kyrgyzstan undergo initiation, and almost all Manas tellers have their supervisors, whether it is living or spirit “supervisor”. In the case of Manas tellers, their calling, initiation, the performances and even the capability to cure people would definitely put them into the category of “shamans”, however, they are not. While *bübü-bakshys* are treated by Kyrgyz people with suspicion, Manas tellers are celebrated and respected. What is interesting, even those, who do not believe in traditional healers, do believe and appreciate the capacity of Manas tellers. It might be because people strongly believe in the spirit of Manas and pray to his spirit. Manas is for them a great Kyrgyz hero who united Kyrgyz people and protected them from enemies. Moreover, people possess great knowledge about Manas from the epic, from school, where Manas is taught as a part of the school program of the lessons on culture or heritage.

The academics underline the importance of the acquisition of the shamanistic skills through training, which Grim (2003) calls “shamanistic art”. He states that in a Nanandawi society, a young shaman develops his or her healing art in a “traditionally accepted manner” (Grim, pg.94). This shows that even among shamans there are proper steps and skills that should be acquired by a young shaman. However, this art requires not only physical preparation; in order to become a shaman one should also be prepared psychologically. Kendall (1993) gives the example of one Korean woman’s failure to become a shaman in her first two initiations and says that it is because she could not “clear her mind” and was not spiritually ready. So, the whole “shamanistic art” requires not only knowledge or skills, but also the preparation of a persons’ inner world and inner feelings.

### **Spirit possession**

For Kyrgyz people the spirits of ancestors are very important. They pray and pay respect to the memory of their ancestors on particular holy days and at their everyday meal. However, when it comes to a person being possessed by a spirit, they are considered mentally ill. And according to local beliefs when Kyrgyz people are possessed by spirits they become ill until they accept that calling. The calling urges people to become either healers, clairvoyants, shamans, guardians of sacred places or Manas tellers. Yamada (1993), who conducted research in Tibet, also shares this point by stating that spirit possession in Tibet is also considered a calling to becoming a healer. She gives some characteristics when a person is possessed by a spirit by noting that spiritual possession “is recognized by its frequent occurrence in the evening, by repetitive yawning, weird grinning, trembling and changes in facial colour” (Yamada, pg.218).

Visions are something that all Kyrgyz traditional healers have and clearly differentiate from ordinary dreams. Roseman, in her book “Healing sounds from the Malaysian rainforest”, talks about Temiar healers of Malaysia and how they treat people through songs and rituals. She says that “during dreams...the relationship is confirmed through bestowal of a song from spiritguide to the dreamer. Later, singing that song during ceremonial performance, the person becomes imbued with the voice, vision, and knowledge of the spiritguide. Singing the song links person and spiritguide; thus transformed into a medium for the spirits, a person can diagnose and treat illness” (Roseman, pg.6). This is very similar to what Kyrgyz people call “zikir chaluu” [q.v.]. This is singing that is performed by traditional healers throughout the night till dawn when they cure their patients. Roseman explaining the healing songs in Malaysia also states that “songs are paths that link mediums, female chorus members, trance-dancers, and patients

with spirits of the jungle and settlement” (1991, p.9). Manas tellers, whose main goal is to recite Manas and not heal, also get knowledge and a capacity to recite Manas in their dreams from the spirits. And they also have a capacity to drive away evil and treat ill people by reciting this epic.

Although these spirit possession and healing practices are shared in the same way, the process of “spirit possession” itself is explained and viewed differently by different cultures and individuals where the words “trance” and “spirit possession” replace each other. This poses a big challenge for academics, for whom no difference is seen from outside, to explain spirit possession scientifically. Lewis, in his book “Ecstatic religion: An anthropological study of spirit possession and shamanism”, compares two cultures where the same act is interpreted differently. As an example he mentions body shaking in the Samburu culture in Kenya where only young people from age fifteen to thirty shake their body and go into a trance, but later, when they get older, they stop doing it and it is no longer accepted as spirit possession. However, this same action is accepted in a “mystical way” by the Indian Shakers of Washington state as a “manifestation of Holy Spirit”, and they believe that this is “distinctive vital force or power” (Lewis, pg.45). The observer who watches these acts in both cultures might accept and describe them similarly. However they turned out to be two different things and people share totally different values concerning this particular act. As Good (1994) mentions, this confirms that the role of academics is very important when they do observations in foreign cultures and one should “go native” (Turner 2003) and interpret from the point of view of insiders.

Spirit possession has a broad meaning. This might be either the state when the soul leaves the body or the state when a spirit possesses body. Also there are beliefs, for example in Tungus culture, that a body can be possessed not only by one but by many spirits. This discussion engenders among academics contradictory opinions about shamanism and spirit possession. Eliade holds the notion that shamanism and spirit possession are not the same thing. He says that unlike spirit possession, “shamanism is ...the ecstasy provoked by the ascension to the sky or by the descent to Hell: the incorporation of spirits and possession by them are universally distributed phenomena, but they do not necessarily belong to shamanism in the strict sense” (Eliade, cited in Lewis, pg.49). However, Lewis does not agree with this idea and he says that “shamanism and spirit possession regularly occur together. He enforces his argument by noting that the term “shaman” originally describes possession and that shamans become a “master of spirits” which he incarnates (Lewis, pg.51).

I agree with Eliade in the sense that those who are possessed by spirits are not necessarily called shamans, like in the case of Kyrgyzstan. But I do not agree when he takes these two terms as opposing each other. In my opinion, both of these terms can overlap. The juxtaposition of Eliade and Lewis’s arguments leads me to the idea that we should add a third state of spirit possession. It is the way Kyrgyz healers deal with spirits. They neither lose their souls nor are they possessed by a spirit, instead they communicate with spirits. These spirits are accepted as their patrons, who follow them all the time, protect them and help them. There is an importance in including this third group into the general notion of spiritualness, because this practice of Kyrgyz healers does not fall into either of the groups discussed by academics and the position of the Kyrgyz healers may be misunderstood. Moreover, the lack of academic explanation of the practice of Kyrgyz traditional healers engenders doubt among other people. And the fact is that Kyrgyz traditional healers are accepted with scepticism, despite the fact that they possess a strong capability to contribute to the improvement of their patients’ health.

## **Conclusion**

In my opinion, society should search for explanations to any phenomenon, be it on the basis of everyday life or supernatural power. Spirituality, divination, supernatural powers are subjects not only of public debate, but also of scientific concern and study. Like traditional healers, who are mediums between people and supernatural world, academics are the mediums between the truth and people's beliefs in it. Thanks to their work, we know that the connection with spiritual world is not an abnormal thing, but a cultural feature that many countries share. The existing research on symbolic aspects of traditional healing shows that there are many similarities among different countries in practising spiritual healing and becoming a healer. This comparative approach could explain traditional healing practices more deeply which would change people beliefs and introduce the idea of accepting it as universal knowledge.

Through analyzing the academic works above, I conclude that the relationship of human being with spiritual world is a universal phenomenon which is practiced in three ways: spirit possession, shamanism, and spiritual

communication, as is the Kyrgyz traditional healers' practice. It is important to accept the last one as a separate group, because this practice of Kyrgyz traditional healers holds its own unique features that have not been studied yet. The consequences of it can be seen in sceptical attitude of people to Kyrgyz traditional healing practices.

I support the idea that further scientific research should be done on traditional healing practices, which would show the true capability of traditional healers to cure disease. Kyrgyz traditional healers differ markedly from medical practitioners by possessing strong certitude in their treating knowledge and skills, however they fail to convince the majority of people. By holding full and reliable information, it would be up to people to decide whom to turn to, whether to traditional healers or to medical practitioners. Moreover, I believe that the curing capability of traditional healers is not something that would sabotage the development of biomedicine. On the contrary, further research would open the door for intensive cooperation between traditional medicine and biomedicine in preventing disease and improving health.

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<sup>229</sup> *Ak-Taiylak* [Kyrgyz] - white camel foal [ed.].

## **PART III**

### **ABOUT AIGINE**

Aigine Cultural Research Center (CRC) is a non-profit nongovernmental organization, founded in May 2004 on the initiative of Gulnara Aitpaeva, Doctor of Philology, with the participation of Aida Alymbaeva and Mukaram Toktogulova, Candidate of Philology.

#### **Aigine CRC's mission:**

- Study and preservation of natural and cultural legacy and diversity in Kyrgyzstan;
- Investigate unknown aspects of cultural and natural phenomena;
- Seek points of rapprochement and interconnection among esoteric knowledge and science, nature and culture, traditions and innovations, West and East, and other experiences often seen as oppositions.

## SPHERES OF ACTIVITIES

The focus and direction of Aigine CRC's activities follow from its mission:

- Participatory action research
- Education
- Protection and maintenance of cultural and biological diversity

**The strategic goal** of the Aigine CRC cultural research center is to use traditional knowledge for the spiritual, economic and social development of Kyrgyzstan.

Since its first activities, the Aigine CRC has sought to bring people together not on the basis of formal criteria (education or social status), but on the basis of their spiritual experience and knowledge. This principle allows to form new social connections and collaborations. The goal in forging such new linkages and groups is the search for methods of improving life, and for identifying sources for spiritual, economic and social development.

Aigine CRC does not idealise traditionalism or romanticize it, but rather seeks to find within it the potential for improving life for the better. Aigine CRC contends that it is precisely in the inter-connections and inter-dependencies of the traditional and non-traditional, the material and the immaterial, science and religion, east and west that enormous potential for transformative change is contained. For this reason, fundamental to our organisation's mission is the development of collaborations between spheres that are typically regarded as oppositional or even mutually exclusive.

### APPLIED RESEARCH

The key approach consists of research oriented towards solving problems, collaboration with and backing up of holders of traditional knowledge.

The research activities of Aigine CRC are based on the principles of anthropology and participatory action research (PAR). The focus of study is less upon academia than on social needs, less upon the opinion of scholars than on inhabitants who transmit ancient knowledge. These include guardians and pilgrims to sacred sites, healers, those who recite epics, those with expert knowledge of plants, animals, and other "village intellectuals".

Aigine CRC is guided by the following rule: that the research must bring positive changes in the field (region, sphere) where it is conducted. For instance, Aigine CRC not only notes down narratives associated with sacred sites and traditional knowledge, but together with local specialists and elders works to reinforce ancient traditions and to adapt them to the solution of issues facing contemporary society.

### Research themes

#### *Sacred Sites*

At the center of Aigine CRC's activities are sacred sites and the varied complex knowledge and problems associated with them. In 2002, Gulnara Aitpaeva and colleagues first discussed the basic group of ideas, and possible steps towards working in this direction. On the basis of these discussions there emerged a strategic project, according to which all of the regions of the country would be researched during the course of the following 5-7 years. At the start of 2005 The Christensen Fund supported a project for studying sacred sites in Talas region. Since then Aigine CRC has been actively working in this direction. A host of rich empirical material has been gathered relating to the phenomenon of sacred sites in Talas and Ysyk-Köl regions. In the current year, 2009, Aigine CRC began studying sacred sites and traditional knowledge in Jalal-Abad region.

#### *The Protection of Sacred Sites*

Beginning with fieldwork in Talas in 2005, Aigine CRC made its goal to monitor the condition of sacred sites from the perspective of their juridical status. In Kyrgyzstan only two sacred sites are under state protection, and even then, this is not as sacred sites but as memorials of history and culture. These are the Manas-Ordo complex in Talas and the Sulaiyman-Too in Osh. All the remaining sacred sites, and thus all the people whose livelihoods are

associated with these sacred places, are not protected by the law. Aigine CRC is working to provide legal protection for these sacred sites.

#### *Contribution to the Preservation and Development of Pilgrimage Tradition*

For Aigine CRC making practical contributions to the protection and development of traditions and life principles is of fundamental importance. Between 2006 and 2009 we initiated a project to improve the conditions of life in pilgrimage sites and to protect sacred sites. In 2005-2006 in Talas a whole series of activities were undertaken to support the initiatives of local communities: these included building a fence, cleaning springs, and fundamental repairs to ritual buildings. In the summer of 2008, a ritual building was constructed in Akbash-Ata, a sacred site in Ysyk-Köl oblast' that is an important center of ritual activity, both for the Kyrgyz and for the population of Sartkalmaks.

#### *The Development of Networks Linking the Carriers of Traditional Spiritual knowledge*

Local healers, dervishes, reciters of epics, guardians of sacred sites, and pilgrims who have been visiting sacred sites for decades – these are all people for whom sacred sites play a crucial role in their lives. Working with these people, the vast majority of lacking complete secondary school education has demonstrated their mature civic position regarding their cultural heritage. In vigorous discussions about the relationship and inter-relation between the traditional and non-traditional, *kyrgyzchylyk* and *musulmanchylyk*, in their concern to protect sacred sites, they maintain well-balanced ideas and perspectives. However, the opinions of such people are rarely heard in national forums and in public places. From this perspective they are located unambiguously in a marginal position. Aigine CRC works to develop informal networks which can enable such people to work together. Such networks, linking the carriers of traditional spiritual knowledge at regional and international levels, could help to identify and resolve collective problems. The most powerful resource here could prove to be this unique knowledge, and the people who have it.

#### *Biological Diversity*

Aigine CRC is working towards the study and protection of biological diversity in sacred sites and nearby territories. This work is based on the premise that sacred sites have particular characteristics that allow for a particular richness and diversity of flora and fauna. Aigine CRC initiates projects for the study, protection and maintaining of the biodiversity of sacred sites.

#### *Musulmanchylyk and Kyrgyzchylyk*

Both of these concepts have been the object of our attention in sacred sites between 2005 and 2008, during which time we met and spoke with diverse kinds of visitors to these sites. It emerged such sacred places, and the ancient pilgrimage traditions associated with them are the object of intense and often deep arguments amongst people concerning which form of Islam “ought” to be practiced in the country. Sacred sites are one of the most vibrant points of focus for the spiritual and religious life of society.

#### *Transpersonal Psychology*

*Kyrgyzchylyk*, understood as a complex of diverse forms of local knowledge and practices, is both powerfully manifest and developing in sacred places. In the interests of protecting the carriers of *kyrgyzchylyk*, on the one hand, and studying the possibilities for utilizing this complex in order to improve life, on the other, Aigine CRC is developing collaborations with institutes and organizations which work in similar directions. Theories and conceptions of transpersonal psychology carry enormous scientific and spiritual potential for the explanation and positive development of *kyrgyzchylyk*. In this respect, Aigine CRC initiated a seminar on transpersonal psychology in the summer of 2008 and plans to continue activity in this direction.

#### *Resilience*

Another important focus of Aigine CRC is the study of ways of life and adaptation of the local population to the changing condition of the surrounding environment. We have a specific interest in climate change and issues of survival in difficult conditions of life. Thus, in 2008 some basic questions and pilot interviews were conducted on the theme of *kaatchylyk* – that is, the ways by which the local population survived extreme privation periods (Talas and

Ysyk-Köl oblasts). We are looking for the techniques by which society was able to survive on its own initiative, through this the existing potential of society to overcome crises, and methods to activate and strengthen its resilience. This direction of Aigine CRC is important in the context of the strategic tasks - to use traditional knowledge in the interests of spiritual, economic and social development.

#### *The Web-Site as an Instrument for Protecting and Developing Traditional Knowledge*

During the five years of Aigine CRC's work, the organization has accumulated a vast range of field material regarding sacred sites and the traditional knowledge and practices associated with them. An analysis of a portion of such materials is represented in the publications of the center from 2007-2009. In 2009 Aigine CRC began developing a web-site dedicated to sacred sites and traditional knowledge, in Kyrgyz, English and Russian. The goal of this project is to form an electronic archive and to make traditional knowledge open and accessible to everyone who might want to use them. Aigine CRC is seeking to make electronically available material that is currently predominantly accessible orally in the Kyrgyz language, and which thus is liable to disappear along with its carriers. The establishment of such a site is informed by the goal of the organization to develop links between the carriers of ancient knowledge. It also meets the strategic tasks of Aigine CRC to activating the potential of traditional knowledge to solve contemporary problems. The project is realised with the support of The Christensen Fund (USA).

#### *Altai-Kyrgyzstan*

We consider the development of partnership with the Foundation for the Sustainable Development of Altai of critical importance for the strategic development of Aigine CRC. Partnership with Altai is of considerable importance if we consider that the Kyrgyz and Alta languages, cultures and histories have significant similarities. Altai, like Kyrgyzstan, is a post-Soviet republic. At the current time our societies and cultures are experiencing similar influences from life in the open, globalizing world.

The experience of our Altai colleagues in working with sacred spaces, the creation of natural parks and the involvement of local societies in protecting the traditional wealth and biodiversity of the region is of enormous importance to us. Within the framework of this project we plan a series of comparative projects on biological and cultural diversity in a range of sacred sites in Kyrgyzstan and Altai. We likewise see the project as enabling the development of bridges between the cultural and spiritual practices of our respective republics. This project is realised with the support of The Christensen Fund (USA).

## EDUCATION

#### *School Education*

One of Aigine CRC's strategic tasks is its contribution to the reform of education in the country. Specifically, we work to integrate topics concerning cultural heritage and traditional knowledge into the contemporary education. The rich cultural heritage associated with sacred places, together with the historical experience of the country's population in surviving periods of extreme privation, contains within it immense educational potential. Aigine CRC is working to identify paths and methods to introduce this material into the school curriculum.

#### *Higher Education*

A different approach is the development of anthropology in the country and the region. Thus, many members of Aigine CRC have made their own contribution to the development of the anthropology programme in one of the central universities in the country, and the organization includes among its staff several of the department's graduates. At the current time Aigine CRC is involved in a major project for the development of anthropology in the post-Soviet space. Moreover, by involving students and teachers from regional universities in fieldwork, Aigine CRC is also playing a crucial role in transmitting knowledge about anthropological approaches at the regional level. Aigine CRC conducts training and seminars for members of its work groups in three regions of the country.

#### *Other Themes*

It is important to note that the interests and activities of Aigine CRC also extend beyond the field of traditional knowledge and practices. Thus, Aigine CRC has participated in projects exploring gender equality in the NGO sector in Kyrgyzstan and the role of the mass media in the political life of the country. Another focus of Aigine CRC's work are questions associated with the protection and development of ethnic diversity and identity.

## PARTNER PROJECTS

### *The Role of the Mass Media in the Political Activity of Kyrgyzstan*

This two year project (2005-2007) to study the role of the mass media in the political activity of Kyrgyzstan was initiated under the leadership of Dr. Lucy Hribal, a lecturer and research at the Institute of mass communications and media research in the University of Zurich, Switzerland. During this project, research was conducted in all of the oblasts of the country to determine the role of the mass media in informing and forming an audience concerning political and social problems. The focus of the research was the problem of elections and the degree of civic informedness concerning the political situation in the country. Apart from the University of Zurich, the project also involved partners from the faculties of journalism and sociology at the American University of Central Asia. The project was conducted with the support of the programme of scientific collaboration between Eastern Europe and Switzerland (SCOPES).

### *Women's NGOs in Kyrgyzstan, International Financing and the Social Organization of Gender*

This project was conducted in 2007 under the leadership of Dr. Marie Campbell (University of Victoria, Canada). The goal of the project was to determine the degree of influence of international organizations on the life and situation of women in Kyrgyzstan, and to theorise how the idea of gender is understood and functions in the country. The final result of the project should be the establishment of a network of researchers for whom the results of this research will be a stimulus for further research. Apart from the University of Victoria, the other partner in the project is the program is Elena Kim from the Department of Psychology at the American University of Central Asia. The project was conducted with the support of the research council in the social sciences and humanities under the international capacity fund, Canada.

### *The Establishment of Anthropology in Central Eurasia*

In 2006 Aigine CRC initiated a project for developing cultural anthropology in universities across the post-Soviet space. A three year project was developed with John Schoeberlein, a professor from Harvard University (USA), for the period 2007-2010 aimed at university researchers and teachers working in the social sciences and humanities throughout Central Eurasia. The aim of the project is to introduce participants to the theories and approaches of cultural anthropology with the aim of eventually including them in programmes and courses. It also seeks to improve the methods of teaching anthropological courses and the formation of a network of teachers and researchers across the post-Soviet space, united by an interest in anthropology. The participants in the project are 27 teachers and researchers from Universities throughout Central Asia, the Caucasus, Russia, Estonia, Denmark and England. The partners in the initiative are the program for the study of Central Asia and the Caucasus at Harvard University (USA) and the American University of Central Asia. The project is supported by the "Regional Seminar for Excellence in Teaching" (ReSET) of the Higher Education Support Program of the Open Society Institute (OSI), Hungary.

### *The Spiritual Traditions of the Sartkalmaks in Northern Kyrgyzstan*

In 2008 Aigine CRC completed a multi-dimensional project called "The spiritual tradition of the Kalmyk ethnic minority in the north of Kyrgyzstan". This consisted of several interconnected elements: study seminars, research, and the building and presentation of results of the research in a film and research articles. In this respect the project represents a kind of compact example of all of Aigine CRC's activities. The group at the center of the research was the Sart-Kalmyks, who live in the villages of Tashkyia, Chelpek, Burma-Suu and Börübash in Ysyk-Köl oblast'. Field research was directed towards understanding the ethnic identity and ethnic specificity of the Sartkalmaks, and likewise on the relationships between this ethnic minority and the majority Kyrgyz population. As a result of the research, a documentary on the life of the Sartkalmaks was filmed, which was broadcast on KTR and local television channels.

In one of the ancient sacred sites of Akbash-Ata, close to the village of Börübash in Ak-Suu rayon, a site of pilgrimage for Kyrgyz, Kalmaks and people of other nationalities, we were involved in the construction of a ritual building or *zyyaratkana*. The local administration of the village of Borubash was our partner in the construction of this building. Representative of official Islam, the village Imam took part in the ceremonial opening of the *zyyaratkana*. The project was realised with the support of the Culture and Arts program of the Open Society Institute (Hungary).

## PRESERVATION AND MAINTENANCE OF CULTURAL AND BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

The main ways of change what Aigine CRC is developing are:

- a) Bringing traditional knowledge and practices what are currently in a marginal position into the public attention.
- b) Backing up traditional practitioners through involving them into public discussions, newspapers and conferences presentations, TV talks and movies.
- c) Developing scientific paradigms to expound *kyrgyzchylyk*. Many guardians, healers, spiritual practitioners have the idea to be “scientifically” researched and explained in order to establish some legitimacy for their practices.

### KEY EVENTS

#### *First conference on “The Meaning and Role of Sacred Sites Today”*

From November 18-19th 2005 in the city of Talas, we conducted the first conference on the role of sacred sites in contemporary society. This conference summarised the results of the first year’s research in Talas oblast. 150 people participated in the conference, amongst whom were guardians of and pilgrims to sacred sites, along with native healers, school and university teachers, representatives of local NGO administration, students and journalists from both local and central mass media organizations. This event was unique in bringing together people from such diverse spheres of activity, including academics and bearers of traditional knowledge. Precisely this last group, people with little formal education, were the most active and productive participants of the conference. We discussed the reasons why people visit sacred sites, the kinds of sacred sites that exist, the kinds of rituals that are conducted there and the question of the relationship between *kyrgyzchylyk* and *musulmanchylyk*. We likewise explored the rights and responsibilities of the guardians of sacred spaces, and issues associated with these sites’ biodiversity.

#### *Second conference “Putting Traditional Knowledge and Values in the Center”*

From November 6th-9th 2006 in Karakol city we conducted a conference, which aimed to present a wide spectrum of traditional and spiritual knowledge and to illustrate the inter-relations between traditional specialists from different regions of the country. At this conference we also discussed the place of gender in sacred sites, the relationship between nature and culture, and the role of pilgrimage in national identity and nationalism.

The group of participants was formed on the basis of Aigine CRC’s principles: it involved students, scholars and university teachers with academic degrees participating side by side with practitioners with varying degrees of education. One of the benefits of the conference was to give voice to people who had never before been heard in public, but who were nonetheless well known and well regarded in their respective regions. A particularly valuable contribution to the conference was made by the elderly participants of the conference, who worked tirelessly to discuss all of the problems raised in the program.

#### *International workshop: “Major Contemporary Ways of Understanding Rituals (Functions of Rituals, Main Interpretation Techniques, Rituals in Traditions)”*

From June 5th-6th 2006 in Talas city we conducted an interactive seminar on “Contemporary ways of understanding rituals: main interpretation techniques, rituals in traditions” The goal of the workshop has been to search for holistic approaches to interpreter rituals, performed at the sacred sites in Central Asia.

The workshop had an experimental model, first of all, because of the participants’ composition. The western PhD holders and uneducated people; scholars, theorists and practitioners, undergraduate students and elders, connoisseurs

of different religious and ethnic rituals, in particular, the experts in Kyrgyz, Russian, Uzbek, Tajik, Kazakh, Judaic and Muslim rituals, in total, forty five people took part in the gathering. They actively shared the ideas and argued. Within the regime of such a strange workshop the participants had to understand and acknowledge to what extent the world of rituals and connections to it are diverse and multi meaning. This diversity restricts “absolute freedom” and makes impossible to have the only truth. The participants had to recognize the “diversity of truths”. In the conclusion, Dr. Adam Seligman advised to acknowledge the boundaries of own ideas and also the boundaries of our interlocutors and opponents and respect those boundaries.

#### *A series of round tables on the role of the Mullah (Moldo) in contemporary Kyrgyz society*

In 2007 Aigine CRC conducted series of round tables in Bishkek, Karakol and Talas in order to clarify roles and functions of modern mullahs in preserving traditional religious beliefs and practices.

The mullahs of two provinces of KR, the students of Islamic universities, scholars, the representatives of top administration of Islam in the country (Muftijat) and members of NGOs with related mission took part in the gatherings.

The following observations come from the survey and RT discussions: there are very different groups of mullahs act in the country. The main criterion differs them from each other is their positions towards folk beliefs and practices. Aigine CRC observes two big groups, which could be conditionally called “mosque mullahs” (MM) and “fields mullahs” (FM). MM are mostly young (22- 45 years) mullahs studied in Islamic countries (e.g. Turkey, Pakistan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia). They implicitly have shown their “sympathy” for aforementioned countries. Some of MM value Kyrgyz culture for its ability to adhere Islam. There is also small number of mullahs in age of late 40-60 years, without formal religious education, who share the position of MM. This type of mullahs considers a *mazar* (a sacred site) to be of historical importance, but not as a phenomenon is valuable currently.

FM are those who mostly do not have formal religious education, but have long term experience and accepted *moldochuluk* (a *mullah's* way) as a spiritual mission. They regularly visit and practice on sacred sites. Healing stays to be the major practice among the FM. They could be recognized as key stewards of traditional religious beliefs and practices.

#### *The Uлуу Ot Ceremony*

The initiative for re-establishing the ancient tradition of the Uлуу Ot (Sacred Fire) was undertaken by the guardians during the visit of Dr. Apela Colorado, the founder and director of the World Indigenous Science Network (WISN), based in Lahain, Hawaii, while she was in Talas in March 2007. As a result, on February 7th 2008 the first ritual in the sacred site Ata-Beiyit was conducted.

The second Uлуу Ot ceremony was conducted on the night of the spring equinox, on March 21st 2008, in the sacred site of Manjly-Ata in Ysyk-Köl oblast. The time and place of both rituals was agreed with the local experts. The goal of the ritual was to bring together people of different races, ethnicities, religions and countries in one single moment of spiritual cleansing and one prayer for the good of the earth and the whole of humanity. The ritual on 21st March 2008 was carried out simultaneously in several sites across the earth: in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, in the Altai, Peru, Mexico, Ethiopia and in America. In all, the event was marked in 22 places in the world and in 7 places in the country.

The third Uлуу Ot ceremony was conducted on the night of June 21st 2009 on the sacred site of Manjly-Ata in the Ysyk-Köl oblast. The international ritual of the Uлуу Ot has enormous potential to revive feelings of the unity of humanity and the oneness of humanity and the earth. The goal of the ritual is to facilitate the rebirth and revival of positive changes through the revival and development of ancient knowledge and practices. More than 200 people participated in the event, representatives of various countries and cultures together with representatives of local communities of Kyrgyzstan. In the year 2009 the Uлуу Ot ritual was preceded by a three-day seminar on traditional knowledge and spiritual practices.

#### *Festival “Popular Spirituality and Building Resilience”*

The festival has been from June 4th-6th 2008 in the sacred gorge known as Nyldy-Ata in Talas oblast'. The goal of the festival was to bring together people embodying traditional knowledge and practitioners from various regions of

the country with the goal of discussing the most pressing questions concerning the resurgence and development of their knowledge and practices. Particular attention was given to the possibility for adapting traditional knowledge for particular needs facing contemporary society. Over 100 people participated in the festival from all regions of the country, as well shamanic practitioners and representatives of Christianity and Buddhism.

*Series of academic sessions within the project “Building Anthropology in Eurasia”*

During each of its three years of activity, this project has consisted of sessions which bring participants together for group meetings, as well as intersession activities undertaken by each participant in his or her home institution. The first session, called ‘The Growth of Anthropological Knowledge’ was held in Ysyk-Köl between July 15 and August 5, 2007. The aim of this was to explore the theories on which classical social anthropology is founded. The second session, called “Anthropology’s Cutting Edges”, was held in Ysyk-Köl on July 16-August 3, 2008, and was intended to reflect on issues at the forefront of contemporary anthropology. This was followed by an inter-session contact meeting in Istanbul from 6th – 9th March 2009. The third summer session “Anthropology’s Impact” aimed to consider areas where anthropology could be used and can have an impact, including anthropology in applied and advocacy roles and the use of anthropological approaches (theories, methodologies, values) in other disciplinary contexts. It took place in Tamchy, northern Ysyk-Köl between July 17-31, 2009. Members of the resource faculty of the project are among others: professors from Harvard University (USA), including John Schoeberlein, Michael Herzfeld, Laura Adams and Theodore Bestor; Dr. Nathan Light from the Max Plank Institute for Social Anthropology, Germany; Dr. Arienne Dwyer from Kansas University, USA; and Dr. Tsypylma Darieva from Humboldt University, Germany; Dr. Madeleine Reeves from University of Manchester.

*First regional conference of the Central Eurasian Studies Society in Kyrgyzstan*

The Central Eurasian Studies Society (CESS) was established in USA in 2000. Its annual conferences conducted in different universities of USA play an important role in the uniting of researchers from around the world. But not every scholar from Central Eurasia has the possibility to take part at these conferences. Initiating and taking responsibility for the conduct of the FRC of CESS, Aigine CRC has sought to shift conversations on the region to the region itself, and to promote academic diversity. The first Regional Conference was conducted at Ysyk-Köl between 4th and 7th of August 2008. More than 140 scholars from 22 countries presented research from across the social and humanitarian disciplines. One of the important results of the conference became suggestions from four institutions from four countries (Kyrgyzstan, Turkey, Armenia and Tajikistan) to organize the next conference. Besides all logistics and administration, five researchers from Aigine CRC: Gulnara Aitpaeva, Aida Alymbaeva, Zemfira Inogamova, Guljan Kudabaeva, and Baktygul Tulebaeva presented papers based on their research over the last two years. Given that one of the goals of CESS is to further the institutionalization of Central Eurasian studies, the active involvement and capacity-building engaged in by Aigine CRC is one of the many benefits of the FRC.

*Seminar “Transcending Boundaries: Transpersonal Visions and Concepts”*

This seminar was held together with the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology (ITP, USA) in Bishkek between the 20th and 27th of August 2008. The goal of the seminar was to promote transpersonal concepts and visions and to provide the initial background for applying them in clinical and social work, education, and in research on traditional practices. The participants were social workers, university and school teachers, specialists in the mental health sphere and traditional practitioners (healers, reciters of the Manas epic, guardians and custodians of sacred sites). The main lecturer was Dr. David Lukoff. There was a collaborative teaching with several of the experts affiliated with the Aigine CRC. The main focus has been on the relevance of transpersonal psychology, especially theories of consciousness, transpersonal psychotherapy, and spiritual emergence to contemporary Kyrgyz spirituality. The morning sessions were devoted to theoretical study, whilst the afternoon sessions were case studies.

## **RESULTS**

## **PUBLICATIONS**

*Brochure “Ancient Sacred Sites of Talas”*

The first publication, “Ancient Sacred Sites of Talas” was presented along with the first summarizing conference (Talas, November 2005). The brochure included the results of the first field research in Talas oblast: a list, description and map of sacred sites in Talas oblast, as well as the life history of particular guardians and the experience of healers and worshippers.

*Book “Blessed Nyldy-Ata”*

This publication was devoted to a complex of sacred sites located in the Nyldy-Ata gorge, close to the village of Özgörüş in Talas raiyon. In this unique place, the territory of which is around 7 kilometres square, there are over 30 springs, stones and trees regarded by the local population as sacred sites. The publication of the book was presented to coincide with the international seminar on symbol and ritual (Talas, June 2006).

*Book “Mazar Worship in Kyrgyzstan: Rituals and Practitioners in Talas”*

In 2007 Aigine CRC published a book in Kyrgyz and English languages summarizing the research findings of work conducted in the Talas district of the Kyrgyz Republic.

The first part of the book contains information about the experiences of the cultural practitioners acting as traditional healers, *dervishes*, clairvoyants, *kuuchus* and those who recite the Manas epic. Also included are the voices and experiences of the shaiykhs who have a personal and spiritual relationship to the sacred site; those who have accepted a duty of guardianship of sacred sites as their life mission and those who revere the sacred sites. Also included are the words of the pilgrims who come to visit sacred sites from far distances.

The second part of the book contains the thoughts and opinions of scholars who have written about sacred sites. The professional and educational backgrounds of these scholars are varied and diverse. They include, but are not limited to, students, historians, medical workers, psychologists, philologists, physicians, biologists, anthropologists and most importantly, people who worship at sacred sites. This book thus contains both the perspectives of the cultural practitioners who worship at sacred sites and that of scholars who analyze the worship at sacred sites as a cultural phenomenon.

*The textbook “Muras Taanuu” (Heritage Studies)*

Based on rich field materials gathered between 2005 and 2008 in Talas and Ysyk-Köl Aigine CRC developed a textbook called “Muras Taanuu”. It is intended for the 4th - 8th grades of Kyrgyz secondary school. The main approach to creating the textbook has been place-based, particularly using sacred sites as the basis for education. The textbook was approved by the Ministry of Education of KR and the Academy of Education after approbation in a few schools in Bishkek, Talas and Karakol towns. The first edition was again taken through approbation in two schools of Bishkek and two schools of Talas under the leadership of the Bishkek municipal education administration. The textbook “Muras Taanuu” serves as an additional source to use in teaching of obligatory courses such as “Study of the Motherland” and “Traditional ethics”. The book contains completely new information on the cultural and natural heritage of the Kyrgyz and particularly Talas land. We hope that the topics, as well as the style of delivery and approaches for soliciting feedback will promote ecological awareness and critical thinking. To follow up the educational project Aigine CRC published 1000 copies of the textbook and distributed them to the schools of Talas, Ysyk-Köl, Chuiy oblasts and Bishkek, and sent several copies to Murghab province in the Pamir region of Tajikistan where Kyrgyz people live.

*Book “Sacred Sites of Ysyk-Köl: Spiritual Power, Pilgrimage, and Art”*

This book is based on field research conducted from 2006 to 2008 in Ysyk-Köl oblast. Here we find the same compositional principle that guided the first book: in the two parts of the book two “fields” are represented, which can be called, approximately, “traditional” and “academic”.

The Kyrgyz version of the book was published in July 2009 and the Russian version was published in early December 2009. This book is the English version.

**All of the publications are supported by The Christensen Fund and with Aigine CRC's own internal resources.**

## VIDEO AND PHOTOGRAPHIC DOCUMENTATION

### *Video and Photographic Archive of Field Materials*

During the course of its research since 2005, Aigine CRC has accumulated a large archive of video and photographic materials concerning sacred sites and the people in whose lives sacred sites occupy a central place, as well as concerning the rituals and ceremonies conducted in sacred sites. The archive also contains materials on the variety of events conducted by Aigine CRC: conferences, seminars, round tables and informal meetings. The archive is maintained in the form of cassettes and electronic files, a part of which is published in books and in the production of films, including those made both by Aigine CRC and by other TV channels and publications. Thus, on March 28th 2007 as part of a cycle of films called "Open Kyrgyzstan" broadcast on Kyrgyzstan's first channel, Aigine CRC initiated and prepared a film called "*Kyrgyzchylyk* and *musulmanchylyk*: exploring the nature of the relationship". Aigine has also participated in a film broadcast on the fifth channel on sacred sites (*mazars*), produced in 2007, which draw heavily on Aigine CRC's footage.

### *Documentary films "Search for Sacredness, or Melody of Mazars"*

Aigine takes as its mission the task to promulgate little known aspects of the diverse cultural and natural heritage of Kyrgyzstan; 5 TV movies 20 minutes each have been made to fulfill this mission point. One more TV program "Mutual Relationship of Kyrgyzchylyk and Islam" was conducted jointly with "Soros-Kyrgyzstan" Foundation. The main approaches or theories to make the TV program have been:

- To film the interaction of sites and people;
- To get traditional practitioners reflected upon their practices;
- To present the main ideas for and against visiting and worshipping at sacred sites;
- To propose interpretation of particular spiritual practices and knowledge from various perspectives (psychology, anthropology, traditional beliefs, Islam).

Aigine CRC TV movies "Search for sacredness or melody of *mazars*" is the first documentary program in Kyrgyzstan, which has presented the concept of *kyrgyzchylyk*. Generally *kyrgyzchylyk* could be defined as a very broad and diverse complex of traditional knowledge and practices related to many fields of human activities.

The implementation of TV movie became the powerful tool to present and voice the traditional practitioners and their ideas. 12 shayks, guardians, healers, "field mullahs" became the heroes of the TV movie. They reflected upon own experiences and defended their ways to be Muslims. It could be considered as the real merit of the project. However the potential problem comes along with that. Cultural practitioners who took part in documentary movies could be stigmatized as "pagans" who commit "shirk" (sin) by visiting *mazars* and equating Allah to environmental phenomena like *mazars*.

Five documentary movies, produced by Aigine CRC and the "KyrgyzTelefilm" agency have been displayed on State TV and Radio Broadcasting Channel 1, which covers the territory of whole country. The Aigine CRC movies were also displayed on the Public TV Channel, which covers all south provinces as well as Bishkek and Talas. In other words, all Kyrgyzstan's population had a potential opportunity to watch the movies. It definitely worked to raise public awareness and reach new collaborators.

### *Documentary film on the Sartkalmaks*

As a result of the partner project on the spiritual life of the Sartkalmaks in the summer of 2008 a documentary film was made about the group, who live compactly in the villages of Tash-Kyya, Chelpek, Burma-Suu and Börü-Bash in Ysyk-Köl oblast. The film was made by the company EMTV with the direct involvement of Aigine CRC. The goal for producing the film was to protect the spiritual and cultural heritage of one of the most ancient ethnic groups living in the country side by side with the Kyrgyz over the course of several centuries. The film revealed the

unique traditions, dances and songs which the Kalmak people maintain to this day. The film was made with the support of the programme of arts and cultures of the Open Society Institute (Hungary).

## SUSTAINABILITY

As a cultural research center, Aigine has been involved in initiating and bringing into public discussion questions as diverse as the role of sacred sites protecting the cultural, ethnic and natural diversity of Kyrgyzstan; the phenomenon of *kyrgyzchylyk* as a complex of traditional knowledge and practice; and mechanisms for adapting traditional knowledge and practice to contemporary conditions of life, in order to improve it.

In order to bring their activities to public attention, Aigine CRC makes the results of its activities known through the publication of books and textbooks; the making of films and video materials, and the conducting of round tables and meetings in various regions of the country. This work, over the course of five years, is generating significant results. Gradually a varied group of people and organizations is developing around Aigine CRC, who share an interest in the heritage of their ancestors and committed to the renewal and development of these traditions. As a result of this, ideas and projects initiated by Aigine CRC are beginning to take on life in the activities of other groups and organizations. Thus, the first national television channel in 2008 broadcast a series of documentary films concerning sacred sites in Talas region. The country's fifth channel likewise made a programme concerning the role of sacred sites, and involved experts and colleagues from Aigine CRC in its production.

Aigine CRC is committed to conducting all of its activities with people from different regions and forms of occupation. As a result of this there are emerging new unions, which are initiating their activities in the spirit of Aigine CRC's mission, but independently of them. In the winter and spring of 2008, Aigine first conducted

The Uluu Ot ritual with the involvement of a wide circle of practitioners from various regions. In the spring of 2009 several participants from our activities took part in spiritual actions in their respective regions. In the summer of 2008 Aigine CRC conducted the first festival called "Building Resilience". In the spring of 2009 two participants from our festival conducted a large meeting of agents of spiritual knowledge in Ysyk-Köl. In every respect this meeting reflected the format and spirit of Aigine CRC's summer festival. It should be noted that all of these activities were mobilized using internal resources rather than grants.

From this experience Aigine CRC draws a significant conclusion: that projects can be continued dynamically if they are felt to touch real problems and are realised in forms and concepts which are productive for the target audiences.

## PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

### *Local Context*

One of the most important principles guiding Aigine CRC's work consists of the fact that the presentation of books, scholarly works, films, and other results should always be shared with those people who have made their contribution to these results. The books and films are shared, first of all, with the carriers of traditional knowledge, those embodying *kyrgyzchylyk*, and representatives of organizations with related missions. With this goal, Aigine CRC travels to the regions of the country and organizes presentations. In such meetings, as a rule, 50-200 people typically take part. This creates the opportunity for continually expanding and renewing the group of people who have knowledge that can never be repeated and which has never been written down. It also allows for existing knowledge to be deepened and made more accurate.

### *International Context*

In order to share their experiences and the results of their activities; and also to receive new information and skills, the employees of Aigine CRC participate actively in events on an international level. Between 2005 and 2009 the Aigine CRC team has made more than 30 presentations at international conferences, seminars and summer schools in Japan, Kenya, USA, Russia, UK, Germany, Canada, India, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan.

## THE FINANCIAL BASIS OF AIGINE'S ACTIVITIES

As a non-commercial organization, Aigine CRC does not engage in profit-making activities. As a non-governmental organization, Aigine CRC does not have access to state financial support. In order to realise its mission, Aigine CRC works with international organizations whose own activities are concerned with issues of cultural and natural diversity, religion, spirituality, oral arts and education. The basic source of finance for Aigine CRC's activities is thus externally-funded grants.

Our major donors are The Christensen Fund (USA) and The Open Society Institute (Hungary).

Aigine CRC is conducting various activities to allow it to identify possible sources of funding within the country. Unfortunately at the current moment, the spheres of traditional knowledge and spirituality, and educational reforms are of little interest to wealthy people and business organizations. In general this is associated with the weak development of philanthropic activity in the country. For this reason our search for funds at the local level has so far been rather problematic. None the less, we have several positive examples. The University of Central Asia (Kyrgyzstan) dedicated a proportion of resources to organizational issues concerned with the first regional conference of the Central Eurasian Studies Society in the summer of 2008. The laboratory of the "Shoro" company conducted free tests of the chemical composition of water from several sacred sites in Talas oblast'.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

### **LIST OF SACRED SITES OF THE YSYK-KÖL OBLAST**

#### **Ak-Suu Raiyon**

1. Akbash-Ata, Böru-Bash village
2. Ak-Baka, Kerege-Tash village
3. Alma, Ichke-Jergez village
4. Altyn-Bulak, Enchilesh village
5. Aziz, Tegizchil village
6. Bakaluu-Köl, Ak-Bulung village
7. Bala, Karakyz village
8. Balyk-Suu, Ak-Bulung village
9. Kaiynar-Bulak, Üch-Kaiynar village
10. Kaiyrma-Aryk, Kaiyrma-Aryk village
11. Kamanduu-Köl, Sary-Kamysh village
12. Han-Tengir, Peak of the Han-Tengir mountain range
13. Kanaiy-Bulak, Toktogul village
14. Kara-Jal, Kara-Jal village
15. Karakol-Ata, Karakol town
16. Kanysh, Kaiyrma-Aryk village
17. Köiykap, Köiykap pasture
18. Kök-Terek, Enchilesh village
19. Kydyr-Ake, Ak-Suu village (Teplokluchenka)
20. Kyzyl-Jar, Kyzyl-Jar village
21. Maiy-Bulak, Tash-Kyya village
22. Manake-Oluya, Cholpon village
23. Nurgaiy-Ata, Karakol village
24. Nurmoldo-Ata, Cherik village
25. Tal, Boz-Bulung village
26. Tal, Enchilesh village
27. Tulpar-Tash, Summer pasture Bel-Kara-Suu
28. Tuz, Shahta-Jyrgalang PGT
29. Shapak-Ata, Shapak village

## **Jeti-Ögüz Raiyon**

30. Ak-Bulak, Bogatyrovka village
31. Ak-Terek, Tamga village
32. Archa, Ak-Döbö village
33. Archa, Boz-Beshik village
34. Bazarbaiy-Bulak, Tosor village
35. Bugu-Ene, Jeti-Ögüz health resort
36. Bulak, Jeti-Ögüz health resort
37. Chong-Kyzyl-Suu, Chong-Kyzyl-Suu village
38. Chong-Jargylchak, Chong-Jargylchak village
39. Chong-Öston, Ak-Döbö village
40. Enesaiy-Ata, Ak-Terek village
41. Enesaiy-Ene, Ak-Terek village
42. Er-Tabyldy-Tash, Barskoon village
43. Ichke-Bulung, Ichke-Bulung village
44. Jalgyz-Terek, Ak-Terek village
45. Jangak (or Talyp-Akun-Ata) Chyrak village
46. Jarkynbaiy-Ata, Jenish (Chychkan) village
47. Jarylgan-Jürök, Jeti-Ögüz health resort
48. Jetigen, Kichi-Jargylchak village
49. Jyluu-Suu, Saruu village
50. Kaiyrymduuluk, Jeti-Ögüz health resort
51. Kara-Döbö, Darhan village
52. Kindik Döbö, Kichi-Jargylchak village
53. Köl-Bulak, Chong-Jargylchak village
54. Kök-Terek, Jeti-Ögüz health resort
55. Kulagan-Tash, Svetlaya-Polyana village
56. Kümböz of Chong Hazret, Yrdyk village
57. Kush, Jeti-Ögüz health resort
58. Mausoleum of Karga-Ake, Darhan village
59. Mazar on Kulbura hollow, Yrdyk village
60. Tal, Saruu village
61. Oluya Zaur Ata, Jeti-Ögüz health resort
62. Öruk, Jalgyz-Öruk village
63. Öruk, Ang-Oston village
64. Shapak-Ata, Tilekmat village
65. Sokur-Kuduk, Kabak village
66. Tabyldynyn Taly, Barskoon village
67. Tamga-Tash, Tamga village
68. Toguz-Bulak, Ak-Terek village
69. Töö-Tash, Kichi-Jargylchak village
70. Zeleniy-Gaiy, Zeleniy Gaiy village

## **Tüp Raiyon**

71. Ak-Tash, Sary-Tologoy village
72. Alma, Ysyk-Köl village
73. Bugu-Ene, Aral village

74. Bugu-Ene, Toktoyan village
75. Bulak, Sary-Köl (Mihaiylovka) village
76. Chong-Aral, Kööchü village
77. Chong-Tash, Chong-Tash village
78. Chungkur-Bulak, Oiy-Bulak village
79. Dolono bir, Dolon village
80. Dolono eki, Dolon village
81. Dolono, Tasma village
82. Duldul, Kichi-Öröktü village
83. Jyluu-Bulak, Jyluu-Bulak village
84. Kaiynar-Bulak, Korumdu village
85. Karandyz, Kuturgu village
86. Kök-Bulak, Taldy-Suu village
87. Muzdak-Bulak, Kosh-Döbö village
88. Örük, Taldy-Suu village
89. Örük, Balbaiy village
90. Örük, Shaty village
91. Örük, Shaty village
92. Örük, Shaty village
93. Sary-Bulung, Sary-Bulung village
94. Yshyn-Ata, Frunze village

#### **Ysyk-Köl Raiyon**

95. Baiyboto, Chong-Sary-Oiy village
96. Bak, Örnök village
97. Cholpon-Ata, Cholpon-Ata town
98. Cholpon-Ata, Cholpon-Ata town
99. Eki-Tal, Orto-Öröktü village
100. Imindin, Baetovka village
101. Imindin, Sary-Oiy village
102. Kaiynar-Bulak, Kök-Döbö village
103. Kalygul-Oluya, Kara-Oiy village
104. Kasabolot, Chong-Sary-Oiy village
105. Kessengir, Bulan-Sögötu village
106. Kurmanbek, Sary-Kamysh village
107. Kyzyl-Kindik, Toru-Aiygyr village
108. Ortok, Kara-Oiy village
109. Örük, Ananevo village
110. Terek, Jarkynbaev village
111. Tösh, Karool-Döbö village
112. Üch-Bulak, Tamchy village

#### **Tong Raiyon**

113. Ak-Terek, Bökönbaev village
114. Akun-Bulak, Ala-Bash village
115. Er Tabyldy, Kyzyl-Tuu village
116. Jeti-Chöiychök, Kajy-Saiy village
117. Koshoiy Atanyñ söögü jatkan jer, Ak-Korum village

118. Kulguna, Tuura-Suu village
119. Manjyly-Ata, Tong village
120. Tuzduu-Suu, Kyzyl-Tuu village

1. Abdullaeva Tamara
2. Abdyvalieva Baktygul
3. Aitpaev Aman
4. Aitpaeva Gulnara
5. Aiytikeev Kengeshbek
6. Agybaiy uulu Ergeshbaiy
7. Akjoltoev M.
8. Akmatov Kazat
9. Aldakeeva Gulmira
10. Almabekov Kubanychbek
13. Almashev Chagat
14. Amandyk kyzy Maiyram
15. Arykbaev Malik
16. Asanaliev Üsönbek
17. Asanov Tilek
18. Bakchiev Talantaaly
19. Berejnoj Sergeiy
20. Deiyneko Tatyana
21. Erlenbaeva Maya
22. Ismailov Ulan
23. Jakypov Kadyrbek
24. Kasmambetov Saparbek
25. Kereksizov Tashkul
26. Kerim kyzy Maiyra
27. Mamakeev Mambet
28. Mambetaliev Urkash
29. Mambetov Kasymbek
30. Mamyev Danil
31. Mansurov Bektur
32. Molokoev Kadyrakun
33. Mongoldorov Kubanychbek
34. Muktarova Gulnara
35. Murataliev Akylbek
36. Nestereva Natalya
37. Orozobekova Jyldyz
38. Parhuta Julia
39. Sarmanbetov Aiydarbek
40. Schubel Vernon
41. Seiydahmatova Chynara
42. Sydykov Döölöt
43. Tabaldiev Kubat
44. Tulebaeva Baktygul
45. Turdalieva Gulmira
46. Uraliev Namazbek

## **SUMMARIES TO ARTICLES**

## PART 1

### CHAPTER 2. SECRETS OF YSYK-KÖL AND MANASCHYLYK

ALMABEKOV Kubanychbek

*As long as you respect the earth and water, they will give you their blessing*

Reciting the “Manas” epic tale is a gift inherited from generation to generation. In this article the author talks of this gift in his life, in his father and grandfather lives.

ASANOV Tilek

*Manaschylyk has its own world, secret and universe*

The author speaks of the importance of the motherland for the manaschy, he talks of his confrontation with the hero spirits from the “Manas” epic.

ISMAILOV Ulan

*Ayan from the mazar*

Ulan speaks of miraculous, secret visions and inspiration which leads the manaschy to their calling.

KASMAMBETOV Saparbek

*I received a blessing from Shapak manaschy*

The author tells of the blessing he received from the Great Manaschy Shapak Yrysmendiev, and his initiation as a reciter.

MAMBETALIEV Urkash

*What is this force that gives me strength? What is this dream that lets me see?*

Based on his personal experience, the author talks of dreams, visions and other peculiarities of becoming a manaschy.

MAMBETOV Kasymbek

*My father Mambet was the guardian of Manjyly-Ata mazar*

The author relates the story of his grandfather, the manaschy Mambet Chokmorov, of his connection with the sacred place Manjyly-Ata and of his other extraordinary abilities of clairvoyance and healing.

SYDYKOV Döölöt

*Before something happens in reality, it will be seen in a dream*

The article speaks of the importance of dreams and night-visions in becoming a manaschy. The author gives example of signs and omens seen in ayans.

### CHAPTER 3: PEOPLE AND EARTH ARE KIN

AITPAEV Aman

*Bel-Kara-Suu and Tulpar-Tash in the world of the Kyrgyz people*

The beauty of one of Kyrgyzstan’s high pastures; Bel-Kara-Suu and the unique Tulpar-Tash stone are described in this article and on their example the author tells of the dynamic connection and interaction between the Kyrgyz people and nature.

ASANALIEV Üsönbek

*The eldest among akes is Karga Ake*

The author is a direct descendent of Karga Ake and in his article he recounts family history and tales about his ancestor, the nation and the aksakals.

BEREJNOY Sergeiy

*The lake that cleanses...*

The author talks of his spiritual experience at the Ysyk-Köl lake and of his search for self-knowledge through Eastern medicine.

MANSUROV Bektur

*Sartkalmaks*

The Sartkalmaks are one of the ethnic groups living in the Ysyk-Köl oblast, the author speaks of their history, self-identity, sacred sites and traditions of faith.

NESTEREVA Natalya

*How I died and then returned to life*

The author, although of Russian ethnicity, talks of her connection with the Kyrgyz land and its sacred sites, and describes her healing practices.

PARHUTA Yuliya

*The Ysyk-Köl is called the third eye of the world*

The author tells of the Ysyk-Köl as an energetical center and talks of her experience of the power and sanctity of the lake energy.

SARMANBETOV Aiydarbek

*The journey through the universe starts at mazars*

A journalist recounts the history and contemporary situation of sacred sites around the Ysyk-Köl.

SEIYDAHMATOVA Chynara

*Hornness – the sacred power of the Ysyk-Köl*

It is popular belief among the representatives of the Bugu Ene clan, that people with horns may be born in their families and that this is a great gift from the higher powers. The author tells of her faith that developed from childhood to adulthood, through scepticism to belief, she tells of her journey to understanding kyrgyzchylyk.

#### CHAPTER 4: *KUT*: ABUNDANCE OF THE LAND AND TALENT OF THE PEOPLE

AKMATOV Kazat

*The Ysyk-Köl lake is depicted in all of my works*

The famous Kyrgyz writer tells of the role of the Ysyk-Köl lake in his poetry and talks of the necessity to search for the secrets of the Kyrgyz land.

KEREKSIZOV Tashkul

*Aalam-Ordo is the center of spirituality and science*

The author talks of the Aalam-Ordo complex that stands on the Southern shore of the Ysyk-Köl, of the idea and goals behind this project and why he believes the lake is the pupil of the Earth from which information can be drawn.

KERIM kyzy Maiyra

*Ysyk-Köl is a life-giving chalice*

Maira speaks of the role of the Ysyk-Köl in her life, of her talent for poetry and improvisation and of the maturity of her work.

MURATALIEV Akylbek

*Mankind should not be divided by religion instead should be united by the internal faith of humanity*

The author speaks of how the search for poetical inspiration became a search for spiritual renewal in his life. He talks of his experiences at sacred sites and tells of his visions of the future.

URALIEV Namazbek

*My ancestors told me to always carry my komuz with me*

The author a *komuzchu* talks of his musical talent and the road to greatness, he talks of how the musical instrument is made and talks of the need for spiritual vocation.

## CHAPTER 5: SACRED MANJYLY-ATA

ABDULLAEVA Tamara

*I have seen the mystery of Manjly-Ata many times*

The author talks of her experience with *kyrgyzchylyk* and of the meaning of the visions “*aruu karmoo*” and “*chiltenge oturuu*”.

AIYTIKEEV Kengeshbek

*One of the Ysyk-Köl's miracles*

The author tells of a mysterious event that occurred at Manjly-Ata sacred site.

JAKYPOV Kadyrbek

*It is not by chance that God brought me from Darhan to Manjly-Ata*

Kadyrbek is the guardian of Manjly-Ata sacred site, he is also a traditional healer. He talks of his function and role, his experiences and thoughts.

## CHAPTER 6: MODERN FORMS OF ANCIENT KYRGYZCHYLYK

ABDYVALIEVA Baktygul

*I suffered because I could not find the way to enlightenment*

The author talks of her experiences with *kyrgyzchylyk* and how she was shown the way of enlightenment.

AJYBAIY uulu Ergeshbaiy

*My hands would continue to write not letting me stop and stand up*

This article talks of the author's experience of taking up the way of *Kyrgyzchylyk*. He talks of his experience with “automatic” writing.

ARYKBAEV Malik

*We have to be careful in what we think, what we say and what we do*

The author shares his experience of traditional healing and spiritual journeys.

MOLOKOEV Kadyrakun (Dervish Ata)

*It is not easy to be a dervish, only the hardy endure*

In this article the way of the Dervish is discussed and their connection with the Ysyk-Köl lake. The author talks of the role of the *Kyrgyz kasiet* and of the *Kyrgyz* nation.

## CHAPTER 7: MASTER AND APPRENTICE

AMANDYK kyzy Maiyram

*Apprentices of mine*

The author explains the phenomenon of apprentice training, *koldoochu* and some rituals from her personal experience.

AKJOLTOEV M.

*I believe in kasiet of Eje*

An apprentice of Maiyram Amandyk kyzy talks of his experience with traditional healing and how this brought him back to life.

MONGOLDOROV Kubanychbek

*Taking a sacred site seriously*

The author talks of his search for himself and the influence of sacred sites on his life, he talks of the debate over *kyrgyzchylyk* and the need to take up this path.

TURDALIEVA Gulmira

*Who is Kubanychbek?*

An apprentice of Kubanychbek tells of her experience of traditional healing and of her dedication to her master.

MUKTAROVA Gulnara

*Only when the apprentice is ready he will meet the master*

The author speaks of the nature of *kyrgyzchylyk* and traditional healing

DEIYNEKO Tatiana

*Through the ayats of the Qur'an, my master has been returning her apprentices to their source*

The master and his or her apprentice do not always have to be of the same nationality and faith. The example given in this article shows people from different traditions united in healing and belief.

## CHAPTER 8: SACRED CAPACITY AND MEDICINE

ALMABEKOV Kubanychbek

*I have taken the oath of Hippocrates*

The author talks of the interaction of official and traditional medicine, he uses his experience in medical practice as an example.

KERIM kyzy Maiyra

*If you have cancer, do not let it sap you*

In her article Maira speaks of her illness and her experiences with traditional medicine and healers. She talks of the need to have faith and strength in times of sickness.

MAMAKEEV Mambet

*I have my own koldoochu*

Misunderstanding and misinterpretation of dreams and visions can bring misfortune to people. This is discussed in this article as well as the need of the careful use of the gift or *kasiet*.

## PART II: ACADEMIC PAPERS

AITPAEVA Gulnara

*The dispute on pilgrimage to sacred sites among Kyrgyz Muslims*

Among the Kyrgyz people a controversial debate is taking place, on the tradition of pilgrimage to sacred sites and practices of worship. The question under debate is the type of Islam that should be practiced by the faithful. The main experts speaking on the subject are the *moldos* (mullahs), they give themselves the right of voice and it is also granted to them by the people. This article discusses the results of the research project: “Moldolor as protectors and destroyers of tradition”, conducted in the year 2007 in Talas by Aigine Cultural Research Center and students of the Talas State University.

ALDAKEEVA Gulmira

*The role of spirits in Kyrgyz culture*

In this article the author discusses the results of research conducted in the Talas oblast of Kyrgyzstan. The project was called *Arbaktar menen süylöshüü* (lit. tr. talking to the spirits) and talks of the need of traditional practitioners to connect with spirits, how *manaschylyk*, *bübü-bakshychylyk*, *aitymchylyk*, *jaichylyk* and others are based on this communication. The cult of the ancestors in the everyday life of the Kyrgyz people is also discussed, as well as the influence of Islam on this cult and the hot debate that takes place between the two above mentioned directions of faith.

ALMASHEV Chagat, ERLLENBAEVA Maya

*Sacred sites and objects of the peoples of Altai Republic, the Russian Federation*

The article talks of the natural and cultural heritage of the Turkic peoples, living in the Altai mountain regions. One of the most important things for the indigenous Altai people is their Sacred Earth – and natural sites that are considered holy. The authors also discuss traditional ecology – the relationship of the Altai people with the flora, fauna and the environment.

BAKCHIEV Talantaaly

*Sacred sites and manachys*

In his article the *manaschy*, based on personal experience, talks of the connection between the *manaschy* – reciters of the epic tale “Manas” and sacred sites. He also talks of the influence of certain places on the development of the reciters talent.

MAMYEV Danil

*The sacred land concept based on an example of the Karakol Nature and Ethno Park “Üch Enmek”, Altai Republic, the Russian Federation*

The author talks of the role of sacred sites in the social and ecological development of the Altai region. The topic of the mysterious interactions between nature and humankind is discussed on the example of the Karakol Nature Reserve in the Altai Republic of the Russian Federation. The author talks of the necessity to change the contemporary social and economical policy in order to find the path to sustainable development.

OROZOBKOVA Jyldyz

*Ysyk-Köl and “manaschy” (From the story of how Shaabaiy Azizov’s “Manas” reciting was recorded)*

In this article the author talks of the talent of the *manaschy* – reciters of the “Manas” epic tale. She talks of her personal experience working with one of the great *manaschy*, Shaabaiy Azizov.

SCHUBEL Vernon

*Islam’s diverse paths: Seeking the “real Islam” in Central Asia*

Vernon Schubel’s article focuses on the cultural, language, religious and theological diversity of Islam. In all this diversity, it is humanity that unites all the branches of Islam, argues the author. The author analyzes the search for the “true Islam” that is now taking place in Central Asia and connects it to the Soviet experience of the religion in this region.

TABALDIEV Kubat

*Ancient sacred sites in the Ysyk-Köl and bordering regions*

In this article sacred sites of the Ysyk-Köl are described and their meanings discussed. The author talks of sacred sites of Antiquity and of the Middle Ages, of petroglyphs, caves and burial sites, of ceremonies and rituals, all of which have been considered sacred for many thousands of years.

TULEBAEVA Baktygul

*Belief and knowledge in healing practices*

The article is an attempt to explain the reasons for the rise in popularity of traditional healing methods in contemporary Kyrgyzstan. The author analyzes the interaction of tradition and faith in popular methods of healing and compares the perspectives of “official” and “traditional” medicine. The focus of the article is more than the just a description of rituals and ceremonies it is the thought process of the people.

## GLOSSARY

**Automatic writing** [from the Greek: *automatos* meaning spontaneous] – an uncontrollable movement: the process (or result of the process) of writing. The person writing may be in a state of hypnosis, in a trance of medium or meditation, or may be fully conscious and aware but not able to control the movement of the hand (16).

**Adal** [Arabic] - 1) religious: clean, according to the Shariat laws, the opposite of *Aram*<sup>231</sup>; 2) honest (15: pg. 21)

**Ajy** [from the Arabic - Hadji] – an honourable title for a Muslim, who has undertaken the pilgrimage to Mecca, who practices the rituals of the faith (7: pg.15).

**Aiytymchylyk** [Kyrgyz] – in general the gift of clairvoyance, prophecy, sorcery, oracles, soothsaying, astrology, visionary dreams and others. This includes all visions of events from the past, present and future received from higher powers, dreams, inspiration, irradiation and revelation<sup>232</sup>.

**Aitysh** [Kyrgyz] - oral competitions of improvisers - *Akyns*.

**Ak** [Kyrgyz] (*lit.tr.* white) – 1) milk or milk products 2) clean, honest; 3) innocent; 4) truth or truthful; 5) God; 6) sacred, holy; 7) the right thing to do; 8) the chosen one.

**Ak kiiyüü** [Kyrgyz] (*lit. tr.* wearing white clothing) – one of the phases of a person’s life in which he or she takes up the sacred path, the chosen path.

**Ak alyp chyguu** [Kyrgyz] (*lit.tr.* offering drinks made from milk or milk products ) - one of the Kyrgyz traditions of hospitality. The hostess faced by the young women of the house go out to greet the guests or travellers with milk or drinks made from milk products; this greeting is reciprocated by blessing given to the home (1: pg. 60).

**Ake** [Kyrgyz] – 1) in *the south* of the country this means uncle or older brother; 2) in some parts of the country this is the polite way of titling an older man (15: pg.38). In the Ysyk-Köl valley this was used as an honorary title for especially revered people, deemed wise and just by the people, the leaders of the people, tribe or clan.

**Akkula, Kakkula, Ak sur at** [Kyrgyz] (*lit. tr.* light-brown with black mane and tale) – in all the versions of the “Manas” epic tale this is the name given to the horse of Manas, who was born on the same day as Manas and who was killed by his masters’ enemies not long before the great hero himself died (11, vol.1: pg.57).

**Akyn** [Kyrgyz] – a folk poet and song teller of the oral tradition. In Kyrgyz, Kazakh and Karakalpak literature this is the title given to poet-improvisers and singers (*yrchy*), these poets have the ability to improvise and sing any tale without preparation. There are two theories as to the origins of the word “akyn”. According to the historians V. Radlov, B. Bartold, A. Margulan and I. Batmanov the root of the word is “ak” which in this context means “flow” or “stream”. According to K. Yudahin the word comes from the Uyghur word “ahund” which means: wise, literate, educated, a respected person who could write poetry (11, vol.1: pg.71).

**Ak chiltenge oturuu** [Kyrgyz] - the fast of cleanliness and meditation. The time in a person’s life when one fasts in order to cleanse oneself and sharpen their ability of contact with the supernatural and the spirits. In this time a person limits everyday activities, food intake, sleep, movements and does not indulge in entertainment etc. in order to keep in a state of inner harmony, to turn the senses, the mind and consciousness to contact with the spirits. The fast can last from 7 to 40 days (this information is based on the words of the healer, Abduvalieva Tamara from Kichi-Jargylchak of the Ysyk-Köl oblast collected in an interview with Aigine CRC).

**Albarsty, martuu** [Kyrgyz] – in Kyrgyz mythology an evil being that appears in the form of an ugly, foul-smelling woman with long, flowing red hair and a hairy body, she holds a comb in her hands. She has sagging breasts

and long talons which she hides behind her back. The *albarsty* can hide in the form of a goat, fox, dog, cat or a small girl etc. An *albarsty* can bring sickness, nightmares but it can bring most harm to pregnant woman and newly-born children. She steals the organs of pregnant women and runs with them towards water. As soon as she puts them into water the victim dies. At night she rides bareback on horses and plaits their manes. She can have sexual relations with a man. A person can control an *albarsty*, a person with this kind of power is called a *Kuuchu*. The origins of the mythological figure are unclear. The name is thought to come from two words “al” and “barsty” which come from the Turkic to squeeze (12, vol. 1: pg. 58). There is another type of *albarsty* in the Kyrgyz mythology: it comes when a person is sleeping, sits on his/her chest, and try to smother the victim.

**Amanat** [Kyrgyz] – 1) an object given for protection, as a contribution or deposit; 2) often used as an epithet of the soul, to express the frailty of life on earth (especially used in folklore) (15: pg. 55).

**Anttashuu, ant** [Kyrgyz] (*lit. tr.* A sacred promise, or a vow) – an official, solemn vow to fulfil a task, the vow is accompanied by a ritual, where the person making the commitment kisses a sword, the ground, sheds blood etc. The action is accompanied with the words “May the sky and earth punish the one who breaks this promise” or “If I break my promise, let the point of the sword find me”. Vows can be classified as: 1) sincere; 2) a vow to fulfil a task or to achieve a certain aim; 3) in order to elevate oneself from a critical situation. The vow can be made by a number of people and it strengthens the ties of friendship, seals cooperations and secret agreements. It draws the participants to the same responsibilities and obligations (1: pg.152; 9: pg.213). When taking up a difficult task or collaboration in responsible work, those pledging the vow call upon the spirits to be their witnesses of the promise and its accomplishment, the vow is made in rhyme. This song-vow was very important and had a deep symbolic meaning especially in times of a threat to the homeland, the nation. It is undertaken in defense of honour and justice.

**Apapta-** [Kyrgyz] - to cure a child from fright, by drawing the palm of the hand over the back of the neck or pointing to the sky with the second finger thrice (15: pg.60).

**Aram** [Kyrgyz] – the opposite of the word *Adal*: meaning unclean, forbidden, prohibited by religion (15: pg.64).

**Arashan** [Kyrgyz] – a healing source, warm spring (10, vol.1: pg.84).

**Arbak** [Kyrgyz] – the spirit of an ancestor. According to religious belief, a person’s spiritual existence. Both the beginning and the opposite of a person’s physical existence. The cult of the ancestors is an important part of faith among the Turkic-Mongolian peoples, in that also the Kyrgyz people, and is often spoken of in oral folk poetry. This belief in the spirits of the ancestors existed among the Kyrgyz until the time when Islam was introduced. Islam did not fully eradicate the tradition and the practices of honouring the spirits and making sacrificial offerings is still alive today. There is a belief that at the moment of birth the soul is given by the gods to a body and that it leaves it at the moment of death. The soul is immortal and it can live forever in another world. The traditional belief is also that the souls of the dead support and help the living (7: pg.58).

**Aruu karmoo, aruurkoo** [Kyrgyz] (*lit.tr.* epilepsy) – a type of psycho-neurological disorder, where from lack of air and suffocation a person loses consciousness. This illness is more frequent among children. According to folk belief this illness is sent from the world of the spirits, that is when suffering the person afflicted enters the world of the spirits and honours them. The illness is seen as a sign of being chosen by the spirits. In science this illness has also been given the name “the shamans’ illness”. The afflicted people may only be cured by traditional medicine (this information is based on the words of the healer, Abduvalieva Tamara from Kichi-Jargylchak of the Ysyk-Köl oblast collected in an interview with Aigine CRC).

**Asa-musa** [Kyrgyz] – abelia, a plant from the honeysuckle family (15: pg.74), a shrub. This plant is used by shamans and dervishes in magical rituals.

**Ata** [Kyrgyz] (*lit. tr.* father) – a respectful way of addressing an old man.

**Ashram** [Sanskryt] – dwelling place of wise men or hermits of ancient India, located in isolated places in the mountains or woods. In the context of contemporary Hinduism, the word “ashram” is used to talk of a time of spiritual or religious isolation, in which a person meditates, prays, practices rituals and goes through spiritual renewal. The aim of going through ashram is spiritual development (16).

**Ashtoo** [Kyrgyz] (*lit. tr.* healing) – healing from the evil eye. This healing is usually done by women-healers. The healers hold seven pieces of bread in their hands and draw their hands over the body of the afflicted person, the action is accompanied by the charm: “suk, suk, suk”. The bread is then thrown to the dogs to be eaten. Sometimes paper can

be used instead of bread and in this case the pieces of paper are burnt at the end of the ritual. Different healers have different methods of healing.

**Ayan** [Kyrgyz] – as used in this book: it means a vision, sent from above often seen in a dream, concealed knowledge; the gift of clairvoyance (15: pg.87). Supernatural dream or sign orienting a man to do specific actions.

**Bagymdat** [Arabic] (*lit. tr.* dawn) – the morning prayer of *Namaz* in Islam.

**Baiylatma jin oorusu** [Kyrgyz] – a neurological disorder, an illness of the soul, a person possessed, worship of the evil spirits. This illness occurs when a person honours evil spirits [Arabic – jin means bad spirit or demon]. It can be cured by shamans or spiritual practitioners of Islam, who tie up the afflicted person and recite shamanic chants or certain Suras from the Qur'an. The healing may need to be repeated in several sessions.

**Bakshy** [Sanskryt: bhihshi – buddhist monk; considered a shaman] – a mediator between people and the spirits, a prophet, healer who with the help of incantations and tools chases away evil spirits from a sick person. The *bakshy* walk with the spirits when in a trance or in certain rituals conducted with the help of ritual objects, tools that have mystical powers and are connected with the shaman. The *bakshy* is well described in the “Manas” epos (11, vol.1: pg.134). The shamans' powers are thought to be inherited.

**Balbaldar, burkan tashtar** [Kyrgyz] - engravings on tombstones. Carved tombstones are characteristic of the Turkic-Mongolian nomadic peoples of Antiquity and the Middle-Ages. The stones are usually from a metre to four metres high. The engravings show human features, details of clothing, weapons and ornaments. Most frequently these are tombstones of warriors. Balbaldar can be found in Mongolia, in Southern-Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Southern Siberia and in the Altai. The oldest discovered tombstones are attributed to the Scythian, Gunnam, Avar peoples. Others date back to the Turkic nations of the 6-9th century C.E., the Kyrgyz, Oguz, Kipchak. In Kyrgyzstan they can be found in the Talas, Ysyk-Köl and Chuiy oblasts. (7: C.86).

**Bata** [from the Arabic *Fatiha*] (*lit.tr.* giving blessing; wish) – 1) The name of the first Sura of the Qur'an; 2) Condolence to the relatives of the deceased; 3) blessing or wishing (11, vol.1: pg.139). The Kyrgyz people have a saying: “You cannot make a wish if your plate is empty”; this means that a person asking for blessings must show their gratitude to the one making the blessing. It is custom that the blessings are given by the elders, the respected, wise and renowned of society (1: C.197-198). Blessings are given in many circumstances and on many occasions, e.g. when giving respect to the rich, blessing the cattle, blessing the harvest, greeting a newly-wed bride, blessing the cradle and infants, when raising the higher edge of the yurt, when going hunting, when thanking children for fulfilling their tasks. The Kyrgyz people believed in the power of the blessings: after being blessed by the elder Koshoiy, Kanykeiy, the wife of Manas, became pregnant with Semeteiy.

**Bash tengöo** [Kyrgyz] (*lit.tr.* leveling the head) – one of the ways of healing headaches in traditional medicine. The patient is cured by a healers' biocurrents, (most often healers with the ability to work with their biocurrents are women). During the healing ritual certain objects are used, a scarf, a cord or a string. The healer ties the scarf or string tightly around the patients' head and shakes the patients head from side to side at the same time asking: “Tengbi, tengbi?”, which means: is it straight? This question should be answered by all those observing the ritual with the words: “Teng, teng”, which means: “yes, it's straight”. This procedure should be repeated over a number of days depending on the patients' state. (This information was provided by the *manaschy* Ulan Ismailiov during an interview with Aigine CRC).

**Beiyish** [from the Persian: Jannat *lit.tr.* paradise] – in many religions this is the world of eternal life after-death, where peace and happiness reigns and life is good. In Islam a Muslim, who has lived his life according to the laws of the faith, who protects and fights for the belief will have a place in this blessed afterlife (7: pg.98-99).

**Beshik** [Kyrgyz] – a cradle, baby's cot (15: pg.133).

**Biiy** [Kyrgyz] – a judge, one who has the right to settle disputes between two Kyrgyz people according to traditional law (15: pg.133). Up to the first quarter of the 20th century this was an honorary title used by the Kyrgyz people for tribe leaders; tribes were administrative units of governance. When Kyrgyz land became part of the Russian Empire the biiy were given other tasks, among others collecting tax from the people. The title was used since the 7th century. Information on the Kyrgyz biiys can be found in ancient Chinese manuscripts of the Tan dynasty (7-10th c.C.E..) where Giesi Bei (Biiy) and Ami Bei (Biiy) representatives of the Yeniseiy Kyrgyz meet with the Chinese emperor (7th C.E.). Professor O. Karaev attributes the use of Bei instead of Biiy in the manuscripts to phonetics. (7: pg.102).

**Bögöl** [Kalmyk] – a baby.

**Bugu** [Kyrgyz] (*lit.tr.* a deer) - this is the name of one of the Kyrgyz clans of the right wing of the Kyrgyz people. The ancestors of the clan are said to have been connected with the clans' totemic animal, the deer. Among the Kazakh tribes there is a parallel ethnonym, the "Puga". The historian V.I. Bang drew attention to the connection between this ethnonym and the title "pu-gu" used in ancient Chinese manuscripts as a title for the nomadic Hunn or Tele (Töölös) warlords. J. Zuev believes that "Bugu" bugug was the title given to warlords of the right or left wings. There is no clear evidence on the whereabouts of the Bugu clan in the 7th c.C.E., although Chinese manuscripts mention the clan was united with the Ba-e-gu (Baiyrku) and the Do-lan-ge (Telengit) tribes. In the 8th c. the Bugu clan was a part of the Uyghur khanate and before that they were united in the Tele confederation. The second meaning of the ethnonym Bugu is connected with the clans' totemic animal, this tradition comes from the beliefs of the ancient Turkic peoples. S. Abramzon connects the ethnonym with the myth of the Deer-Mother. He believes the deer was not only the totem of one tribe but possibly other tribes that came under the control of the Bugu clan and took on the sign of their conquerors. According to D.I. Haytun "Bugu" or "Buka" is a mythological animal found in the legends of the Turkic peoples of Southern Siberia (7: pg.114-115).

**Bübü, бүbü-bakshy** [from the Persian Bübü] – a woman shaman, *lit. tr.* a mediator between the world of men and spirits, a prophetess, a healer, who with the help of incantations and different tools can expel evil spirits from a person. The *Bübü* prophesise with the help of mutton shoulder-blades. In pre-Islamic times the work of the *Bübü* was a religious function. The gift of shamanism is said to be inherited (7: pg.131).

**Daarat** [Arabic] - in Islam this is the ritual cleansing that is obligatory before *Namaz*, the five daily prayers and before conducting any other religious rites (10, vol.1: pg.229).

**Daaruu from Daary** [Kyrgyz] (*lit.tr.* touched, lightly brushed, visitation of the spirits) – this is a sign (a dream, a vision, inspiration or a voice) given from higher powers that inform of the future events. The *manaschy* are said to have been called to their recitation through these vocation dreams and visitations from spirits. The *manaschy* believe that events from the epic tale "Manas" really took place and through their recitation they tell their audience of the history of their ancestors. (11, T.1: C.174).

**Dastan** [Persian] – 1) a heroic legend, epic 2) in folklore: highly artistic poetry (15: pg.187).

**Dem saluu** [Kyrgyz] (*lit.tr.* to give power, energy) – one of the healing rituals, where the patient is cured with the help of the spirits, incantations and reading Suras from the Qur'an. It can also be used to cure people in a state of great fear.

**Derbish** [Persian – *lit.tr.* poverty-stricken, beggar. Russian - dervish] – a mendicant, wandering Muslim monk. The derbish belonged to different branches of the Sufi order. The aim of their wandering was the renunciation of individual will. This is also a choice of ascetic life, often refusing marriage. In the early middle ages there were two types of derbish 1) the wandering derbish, distinguished by their uncouth behaviour disrupting the social order; 2) Sufi scholars, among them historians, philosophers, poets who criticized the social injustice, hypocrisy and ignorance of the clergy. The official clergy often accused the derbish of heresy (2: pg.135).

**Dolono** [Persian] – a hawthorn tree, a tree with small fruits, that grows at the foot of mountains (10, vol.1: pg. 256).

**Dolononun kasieti** [Kyrgyz] – there is a folk belief that the fruits of the hawthorn tree, and the tree in general, can be used as protection against the evil eye and curses. The hawthorn fruits were used for womens' decoration stuff.

**Duba** [Kyrgyz] (*lit.tr.* prayer, charm, incantation) – a believer's appeal to God, to the spirits or to the higher powers for good blessings and to turn away evil. This is an inevitable part of the religious cult, a compulsory attribute of rituals, divine service or religious holidays. This prayer has been used since time immemorial, since people have believed in the power of the word, which can be used to influence the higher powers. This can also be seen as a form of sorcery coming from primeval magical incantations. The duba has a very powerful influence on persons' emotions and psychic. (2: pg.303).

**Dubana, Duvana, Dumana** [Persian] – a holy-fool, possessed, begging, prophesizing old man, a *Dervish* (15: pg.200). A religiously fanatical beggar, who wanders the land, singing religious songs to draw people to Islam. (10, vol.1: pg.261). The *Dubana* wear peculiar clothes, a tall *kalpak* and a long fur coat and they always carry a staff with beads. Through their way of life they aim to open themselves to contact with God and to fulfil all the laws of Islam. Many of them have healing powers and cure people of their afflictions (9: pg.166).

**Ee** [Kyrgyz] – a patron or protector spirit; see *Koldoochu*.

**Emdöö** [Kyrgyz] – healing, chasing away evil spirits (This information is gathered from the words of the healer Marita Ybyralieva from Tash-Döbö village of the Talas oblast).

**Ene** [Kyrgyz] (*lit. tr.* mother) - this is a respectful way of titling older women.

**Esoteric knowledge.** The term “esoterics” comes from the Greek word “esoterikos” which means internal, innermost, concealed. This term has long been used to encompass secret knowledge, accessible only to the chosen few, holy people. The opposite of the esoteric is that what is open or available for all. Esoterics are always connected with secrets that are revealed only to some people, before the revelation the chosen had to go through a long learning process, achieving self-perfection. Most of the esoterical teachings, traditions, fundamental principles and interpretations were passed down by word of mouth (17).

**Ileeshken, jin** [pronounced *djinn*] – a genie or bad spirit that possesses a person’s soul and can evoke excruciating pain. If the bedevilled person does not turn to a healer in time, this sickness may kill them (This information is based on the words of the spiritual servant of Islam, Keneshbek Murataliev from the Talas oblast, collected in an interview with Aigine CRC).

**Imam** [Arabic] (*lit.tr.* the one who stands at the head) - 1) a Muslim religious leader and mentor; 2) a servant of Islam chosen or invited by the people to lead prayers and worship of the Lord, to conduct religious ceremonies and read the prophecies; 3) the highest position in the Muslim-Sunni hierarchy of the Halifat order; 4) in the VII-IXth centuries the head of the Muslim-Shiite community. Any Muslim can become an Imam after reaching eight years of age (7: pg.189).

**Injil** [Kyrgyz] – The Gospel; early Christian writings, that speak of the legend of the life of Christ and his apostles. The first teachings of the Gospel were passed down by word of mouth (7: pg.191).

**Irege** [Kyrgyz] – the seat beside the door, in a yurt this was the place where the less respected guests or family members were seated (10, vol.1: pg.408).

**Itiyy** [Kyrgyz] – rickets, is a softening of the bones that can lead to fractures and deformity. It is the stunted growth of bones and development of the nervous system caused by vitamin D deficiency and lack of adequate minerals supplied to the body (10, vol.1: pp.411-412).

**Jaiychy** [Kyrgyz] – an enchanter, a person with the power to change the weather with the help of the *Jaiytash* or other objects (15: pg.216).

**Jaiynamaz** [Arabic] – prayer carpet, a piece of material or clean, turned inside out clothes that are placed under the feet at the time of saying the *Namaz*. (15: pg.551).

**Jaiytash** [Kyrgyz] – a pebble, said to be taken from the stomach of sheep, if an incantation is spoken over it and then it is dropped into water can be used to invoke precipitation (15: pg.715). A stone, with magical capacities that can be used to influence the weather (11, vol.1: pg.194).

**Jamakchy** [Kyrgyz] – a poet-improviser, a singer, who performs the smaller national epics, songs and traditional pieces (15: pg.225).

**Jambash** [Kyrgyz] – 1) literally the iliac bone, this is given to the most revered guest at the table; 2) the haunch (15: pg.225).

**Janaza** [Arabic] – prayer for the deceased that is said before the burial, **the requiem mass of the Muslims (15: pg.228).**

**Jar saluu, Jar kötörüü** [Kyrgyz] (*lit.tr.* call, notification, announcement) – the summoning of protector spirits through the recitation of certain Suras of the Qur’an. According to some people the “Jar” is the energy of the universe. *Jar kötörüü* means meeting the Creator, a connection with the higher powers. This ritual is conducted by people who are bearers of *Kasiet*.

**Jebireiyil** [from the Arabic – Jabrail, Russian - Gabriel] - one of the Archangels in Islam. A mediator between God and the prophets (7: pg.165). The name can also be pronounced as Azireyil – the angel of death (15: pg.242).

**Jel kaiyyp** [Kyrgyz] – an invisible being, a spirit (15: pp.324-325).

**Jeti** [Kyrgyz] – the number seven, the number of the universe. It symbolizes completeness and totality. It is a sum of the trinity which is a symbol of the sky and the soul and four which symbolizes the earth and the body. Therefore the number seven is considered the first number to contain both that what is spiritual and eternal and that what is earthly and temporary. This is perfection, certitude, safety, peace, abundance, continuity, synthesis and purity. This is

the number of the Great Mother (8: pp.378-380). Seven is the sacral number of the Kyrgyz people, there are seven fathers (*ata, chong ata, baba, buba, kubar, jete, joto*); seven layers of the earth and seven days of the week.

**Jeti tokoch** [Kyrgyz] – seven loaves of bread. According to folk belief, in the case of misfortune or illness, in the hope of improvement seven loaves of bread are cooked. Pilgrims bake bread and wish that the sacred sites will accept them and their requests (this information is based on the words of the healers, Chachykeiy Chongmurunova and Bübüshaiy Anarbekova from Talas oblast, collected in an interview with Aigine).

**Jyt chygaruu** [Kyrgyz] (*lit.tr.* to extract a smell) – it is custom to prepare *boorsok* (traditional Kyrgyz fried bread) or loaves of bread for rituals, celebrations and funerals. It is believed that the smell of the oil or lard in which the bread is fried feeds the spirits of the ancestors.

**Kaapyr, K'apyr** [from the Arabic - kafara (*lit.tr.* unbelieving); Russian - kafir] – unbeliever, atheist, heretic. It is one of the duties of Islam to fight unbelievers, and one of the interpretations of Jihad (Dzjihad) is the fighting of the holy war of Islam against heretics and atheists. Christians and Jews are not seen as Kaapys. However if they attempt to attack Islam or threaten Muslim territory they are seen to be Kaapys and Jihad should be raised against them (2: pg.219). In all the versions of the “Manas” epic tale the Kaapys are mentioned. If the *manaschy* say the Kyrgyz and their brother nations are Muslims, then their enemies the Chinese, Kalmaks, Oirots and Mongols are called Kaapys. The word ‘kafir’ also has another meaning in the Kyrgyz language, it means: illiterate, impudent, brutal, egoistical, immoral and crude (11, vol.1: pg.251).

**Kabyr** [Arabic] – a tomb, a tombstone or mausoleum (15: pg.311).

**Kaiyyp** [Kyrgyz] – 1) Ghosts or spirits, that unnoticed and invisible, bring help to people (11: C.256); 2) the world in-between, the dwelling place of good protector spirits; 3) the name given to the seven phenomenon called “unexpected” in Kyrgyz folk philosophy that is *ömiir* – birth, *didar* – meeting, *nasip* – desire, *sapar* – the road, *kysyk* – an unfortunate event, *nike* – marriage, *öliim* – death (3: pg.39).

**Kalyska tüshüü** [Kyrgyz] – an ancient folk tradition, in which a dispute is settled by a chosen arbitrator. The decision of the arbitrator cannot be infringed upon by anyone. The arbitrator was always a person greatly respected by his people, considered wise and just by both of the conflicting parties (1: pg.200).

**Kara basuu, martuu** [Kyrgyz] – the threat to the mother’s life that occurs in childbirth or after the birth when the woman loses consciousness due to blood loss. According to folk belief this is caused by a demon being (the *Albarsty*) which attempts to steal the inner organs of the mother and so kill her. This is why a shaman should always be present at childbirth, to chase away the evil spirits with loud threatening screams, shooting a gun or lashing a whip (7: pg.217).

**Kargysh** [Kyrgyz] – a curse, black or evil words, bad thoughts and wishes that are uttered in somebody’s direction (1: pp.191-192).

**Kasiet** [Arabic] – 1) a quality, virtue, attribute; 2) sanctity (15: pg.357). According to folk belief *kasiet* is an extraordinary gift that has been given to a person, land or animal, from above. This gift is given so that its bearer serves man and mankind and brings it to a greater good. There are many different types of *kasiet*. Sometimes this word is used for protector spirits and greater beings.

**Kasyйда** [Arabic] (*lit. tr.* ode) – an incantation against evil spirits and diabolisms. Not all Muslim leaders had the right to speak this incantation and this power is attributed to those with great experience and knowledge.

**Kazyyat** [from the Arabic - kadi] – a regional subdivision of the *Muftiyat*. This is the regional administration unit for Muslims, that coordinates and controls the mosques in a given region of the republic.

**Kelme** [Arabic] - the Islamic symbol of faith (15: pg.371): “There is no God besides Allah and Muhammad is his messenger!”. These words are usually spoken when facing danger or upcoming death.

**Kerege** [Kyrgyz] – 1) the wooden frame of the cylindrical part of the yurt 2) walls (15: pg.377).

**Keremet** [Kyrgyz] (*lit.tr.* a marvel, a wonder) – in religion this is an inexplicable and inconceivable event, that breaks the laws of logic, it happened with the help of higher powers and by the will of God. Testimonies of miracles can be found in the sacred books of all the world’s religions. A miracle is seen as a sign sent from above confirming God’s existence and protection (2: pg.536).

**Kereez, kereez aiytuu** [Kyrgyz] (*lit. tr.* will, last testament) – 1) a special genre of poetical recitation, where the deceased person is spoken of (15: pg.379); 2) the last will and testament of a dying person, directions or advice, the last words of a dying person spoken to their children, kinsmen or people (1: pg.229).

**Kirnelöö** [Kyrgyz] – the same meaning as *Ashtoo*.

**Koldoochu** [Kyrgyz] – 1) patron or protector spirit (a totem, ancestor spirit etc.; 2) a protector (helper or patron). The concept that everything in the world, both animate and inanimate has a soul and a protector spirit came from the ancient animistic beliefs and cults (of hosts, feasts and gods), in which the word has strong magical powers. For example Tengir is a God and the patron of all things that exist and do not exist, *Kydyr* (or *Kyzyr*) – is the patron of happiness, *Umai Ene* – the patroness of children and the hearth, *Ulukman* – the patron of healers, *Shaiymerden* of men, *Baba Dyiikan* the patroness of the land and those who farm it. If one turns to them for help, speaking magic words of prayer and request they will bring prosperity. There is also a belief that inanimate nature and wild and domestic animals have patron spirits, and this belief can be found in many legends and tales. There is for example the spirit of flowing water – *Sulaiyman*, the patron of wild, hoofed, ruminant animals (wild sheep, deer, mountain goats etc.) – *Kaiyberen*, the patron of birds – *Buudaiyyk*, of dogs – *Kumaiyyk*, predators – *Jabyr Bayan*, horses – *Kambar Ata*, camels – *Oyisul Ata*, sheep – *Cholpon Ata*, cows – *Zengi Baba*, goats – *Chychan Ata*. These animistic, mythological images are spoken of in Kyrgyz folklore, in incantations and in the spells of sorcerers. According to traditional belief every affliction has its patron who can be expelled from a person's body with the help of magic words, actions and healing objects. This superstition is the reason for the belief in healers and witch-doctors who act as mediators between the patron of the illness and the spirit of the afflicted person (15: pg.77-78).

**Komuz** [Kyrgyz] – a traditional Kyrgyz three-stringed lute like musical instrument. “Komuz” is an archaic Turkic word and has many phonetical variations: *komuz*, *kopuz*, *kobuz*, *kobyz*, *kovus*, *homyh* and others. There is also a manifold of instruments that were given this title: string instruments, lute instruments and harps. The *komuz* is spoken of in one of the earliest Turkic written documents the “*Kitabi dede Korkut*” dated to the VII or IXth century. The interpretation of the text shows that the musical instrument was played in those times. The popularity of the instrument spread to other peoples and cultures and it is thought it is the origin of the Ukrainian *kobza*. The *komuz* is made from the wood of apricot, pear, plum, pine and cedar trees, it has a pear-shaped form ended with a long fretless neck, it is three-stringed (the first and third string are usually tuned to the same note and the middle string is a quart or a fifth higher). In length it is approx. 850mm long (4: pg.161).

**Korgon, kurgan** [Kyrgyz] – 1) a mound, fortress or city walls; 2) the tall clay enclosure built around graves; 3) ruins; 4) a sheep enclosure (15: pg.406).

**Koshok** [Kyrgyz] – a funeral song, a weeping song; this is a genre of Kyrgyz national oral poetry, it refers to all ritual and traditional songs that speak of the everyday life of Kyrgyz people and their worldview and beliefs. The *koshok* is sung at funerals. The songs tell of the loss of the relatives, gives voice to their sorrows and advice on how to live through the difficult moments of longing, it sings of the great deeds and words of the deceased. The *koshok* is most often sung by special funeral singers, women weepers who improvise the rhymed poetry. The funeral songs have been sung by many generations of *Akyn*-improvisers, and the some of the most renowned songs are remembered and sung still today. Because of the origin of *koshok* this is deemed an ancient genre of poetry, and most of the inscriptions on the Orhon-Jenisei monuments are examples of *koshok* last testaments. These song testaments give witness to the last words of the dying man who leaves his last wishes and advice to his family and friends. *Koshoks* are considered very important in showing respect to the deceased and they were sung by honoured and talented poet-mourners, they often served as inspiration for *akyns* who would weave their poetry on the basis of the songs. An example of this can be the “Last testament of *Kökötaiy*” from the epic tale “*Manas*” (4: pg.82-83). *Koshok* were also sung for a girl before her marriage.

**Köz tiyyüü** [Kyrgyz] – the evil eye. According to folk belief, the stare of certain people can make people and animals can fall ill and objects become worthless. Therefore in order to avoid falling prey to this curse people tried to avoid showing their children, young girls, treasures, racing horses, hunting birds to strangers. People would also dress their infants in old, worn clothes or give them unpleasant sounding names (9: pg.242).

**Közgö konok konuu** [Kyrgyz] (*lit.tr.* a guest on the eye) – leukoma or hordeolum on the eye. An leukoma on the eye is considered a bad sign. It is cured with the help of traditional healers but in order to cure the patient the healer should 1) himself or herself be “marked” with a spot or a stain on the eye; 2) he or she should be an only child; 3) his or her healing abilities should be inherited. In the case of not fulfilling these requirements he or she may receive the affliction of the sick person. In healing hordeolum the healer does not only use incantations but also uses household objects, for example tongs for coal, a hammer, seven corn grains. The healer draws each grain carefully over the

patient's eye and then throws it into a cup full of water. After this procedure the grain should start to foam (this information is based on the words Ergeshbai Ajiybaev, a citizen of Bishkek, practitioner of *Kyrgyzchylyk*, collected in an interview with Aigine CRC).

**Közü achyk** [Kyrgyz] - 1) under the religious explanation: one with the gift to see preternatural beings and powers; 2) sagacious, with the ability to predict the future.

**Közük** [Kyrgyz] – a person or animal suffering from the evil eye (10, T.1: C.564).

**Köz achtyruu** [Kyrgyz] – 1) to uncover a persons' hidden abilities; 2) the discovering of one's ability to see the future and being granted the permission to use this gift.

**Körmöch** [Kyrgyz] – the name given to ritual objects, that are used by *Jaiychy* to change the weather.

**Köchürüü, esitki, tütötkü** [Kyrgyz] – a method of healing a person from evil spirits, evil eyes and evil charms with the help of incantations (This information is based on the words of Toktosh Umetalieva, in an interview with Aigine).

**Kudaiyy** (tamak) [Persian] – 1) a meal prepared with the intention of piety, peaceful offering, as thanksgiving; 2) sacrificial offering of an animal (15: pg.437).

**Kuptan** [Persian] – 1) the last and fifth Namaz prayer of the day, read by Muslims approximately two to three hours after sunset; 2) the hour of the last daily prayer (15: pg.446).

**Kuran okuu** [Kyrgyz, in Arabic “al-Kuran” *lit.tr.* reading, recitation] – reading the Qur'an. The Qur'an is the holy book of Islam. According to Islam, the Qur'an was not created it has existed forever. Allah holds the original and he sent it in fragments to Mohammed through the Angel *Jebureiyil*. The Qur'an is the largest work of prose written in Arabic from the VIIth century. According to legend the composition and editing of the writings of Mohammed and so the Qur'an began under the first Arabic Halifs. The editing continued and was finished under the direction of Halif Osman (644-656 C.E.). There are 114 suras (chapters) in the Qur'an of varying length, 286 ayats (signs in poetry) in the second chapter and from 3 to 6 ayats in the other chapters. The *first sura* the “Fatiha” (Opening) is in the form of a prayer in which there are 6 ayats, the last 114 sura has the same structure. (2: pg.235).

**Kurmandyk** [Kyrgyz] (*lit. tr.* sacrifice) – the sacrificial animal (15: pg.449); the ancient tradition of making a sacrificial offering of an animal, an object, fire, a product or money (7: pg.269).

**Kurmandykka chaluu** [Kyrgyz] - the sacrificial offering. This ritual is an offering of request or thanksgiving, the type of which can be found in all religions. The sacrificial animal is offered to propitiate God, the protector spirits, sacred spirits and ancestor spirits. In antiquity the sacrifice was made by pagan priests, by shamans in special places or rooms. Often the offering was made at sacred sites, at the foot of mountains, by springs, at crossroads etc. The Kyrgyz people in general and each tribe or clan have their own sacred places, sacred animals, sacred birds, trees and *tamga* (brands). The ritual of sacrificial offering is also called the *tülöö* or *tilöö*, which also has a philosophical and religious character (7: pg.269).

**Kut** [Kyrgyz] (*lit.tr.* happiness) – 1) a piece of gelatinous matter, crimson in colour, that supposedly falls through the open roof of a yurt and brings happiness and blessing to the one who can take it. It can be taken only by a good person whose soul is clean, in the hands of a bad person it turns into a piece of faeces; 2) an amulet or charm that is supposed to protect a person or cattle – made up of seven pearl buttons sewn onto a small bag in which a piece of lead is put, this can also a figure of a man made from lead or tin and dressed in blue or red rags, which was dipped in water and used to besprinkle cattle; 3) a small idol (Kalmak tradition); 4) life force, spirit or soul; 5) happiness, luck, blessing (15: pg.452).

**Kut tüshüü** [Kyrgyz] (*lit.tr.* the coming of happiness) – this is a sign of upcoming happiness and blessing sent from God and the heavens. *Kut tüshüü* appears in the form and colour of a small ball of dough or pressed and dried cheese. If the *kut tüshüü* is not recognized for what it really is in can be lost or thrown away and with it the blessing slips away (1: pp.233-235).

**Kuuchu** [Kyrgyz] – a sorcerer or witch-doctor who has subordinated an *albarsty* and controls her magical powers. Knowing the secrets of her magic and using her incantations, the witch-doctor intensifies the chant with loud cries, gun shots or whip cracks, to frighten away other *Albarsty* from women in labour and to save newly-born children. The witch-doctor can capture an *Albarsty* by catching some strands of her hair or fur, her comb or a coin and hiding them underneath the bedclothes. The *Albarsty* is under the command of the person who holds her hair until their powers are exchanged, the witch-doctor is told the secrets of her magic and the *Albarsty* gets back her hair or her

belongings. After this exchange the power to frighten away *Albarsty* will always be with the witch-doctor. In order to keep from warning the *Albarsty* of the *Kuuchu's* presence, neither this title nor his or her personal name are spoken out loud, the *Kuuchu* is usually addressed “*baatyr*” (hero) (7: pg.254).

**Kümböz saluu** [Kyrgyz] – a structure, like the walls or fence built around a mausoleum or tomb. In Central Asia in order to honour rulers, heroes, enlighteners, poets, *manaschy*, spiritual leaders and political activists there is a tradition of building tall structures around mausoleums. Often these structures are built by the relatives or the people (1: pg.313).

**Kydyr, Kyzyr** [from the Arabic – *hizr* meaning green light] – the prophet *Hizr*, supposedly discovered the spring of life. There is a folk belief that speaks of the seventh person the *Hizr*, according to this belief, an object, that has been passed down through many people, brings luck, as one of its previous owners must have been *Hizr* (15: pg.475).

**Kydyr Aleiyki Salam** [Kyrgyz] (*lit. tr.* Greeting with *Kydyr* (*Hizr*)). There is ancient tale of the Turkic and Persian speaking peoples in which one of the main protagonists is a mysterious prophet clothed in a green cloak, riding a white horse. He gave his life to the search for the recipe of eternal life and eventually found the spring of life. In the Central Asian folk traditions the *Kydyr* is an endless wanderer, who brings peace, help and happiness to all those he encounters on his path. He takes the form of a holy old man on whose right hand there is no thumb. If a person meets a *Kydyr*, he should shake hands with him and not letting go of his thumbless hand, speak three wishes and these will be sure to come true. Belief in the *Kydyr* is still strong today (7: pg.275).

**Kyl kyyak** [Kyrgyz] – a two-stringed musical instrument similar to a violin, the drum is covered with camel skin. The instrument is not held to the shoulder but played standing on the ground (15: pg.502).

**Kyrgyzchylyk** [Kyrgyz] – a multifaceted phenomenon, the roots of which can be found in Kyrgyz traditional knowledge about the universe, the world, nature and humankind. In a broad sense, *kyrgyzchylyk* means the totality of traditions and customs thought to be inherent to Kyrgyz people. In relations to sacred sites, *kyrgyzchylyk* is usually understood as a diverse spectrum of extrasensory abilities, which a person receives congenitally and which help him/her heal and help people. Thus, one of the branches of *kyrgyzchylyk* is traditional medicine and in this context it is used as synonymous with *Kasiet*.

**Kyrgyzchylygy bar** [Kyrgyz] – according to folk belief this is a person, who yields supernatural abilities. This person does not need to have received any special education but with the direction of ancestor spirits or other higher powers, he or she can heal sick people, change the weather, predict the future and receive other secret information etc.

**Manjy** [Kyrgyz] – red ribbons, coins, buttons that are considered sacred and are tied onto a shamans' coat, staff, branch or to the sides of a yurt during shamanistic rituals. Sometimes this is the word used for the shamans' coat (7: pg.345).

**Markum** [Arabic] – the peaceful, the deceased.

**Martuu** [Kyrgyz] – see *Kara basuu*.

**Mazar** [Arabic; otherwise *Tovaf* meaning place of interest, visitation, pilgrimage and worship, a sacred place] – 1) this is a place of worship, maybe an ancient tomb, burial mound, cemetery, mausoleum, trees, stones, mountains, springs etc. These places have their own legends and myths. The sanctity of the place is based on age old beliefs, tales of visitation, habits and traditions of worship at the site. Those who believe, say these places help heal people from sickness, bring happiness and prosperity. 2) The structure erected around graves, tombs and mausoleums in the final resting places of Muslim leaders of antiquity (2: pg.272).

**Moldo** [Arabic] – 1) *archaic*. a literate person, seen as a scholar, the title *moldo* was usually given to someone who completed their education in a pre-revolutionary Muslim school and who spoke Arabic; 2) Muslim spiritual leader, a mullah (15: pg.530).

**Muftiyat** [Arabic] (*lit.tr.* speaking their thoughts) – the higher unit of the administration of Muslims in a country or a region, this is a self-governing centralized religious organization, that unites Muslim religious establishments (places of worship and schools) and believers living in the administrative area on a voluntary basis. The administration organizes the faithful into a structure in order to ensure the strengthening and diffusion of the faith. The *Muftiyat* has one leading representative. Each of the CIS countries has its independent *Muftiyat* that controls the mosques of the state. (2: pg.315).

**Namaz** [Persian] (*lit.tr.* prayer) – this is the obligatory, everyday prayer repeated five times in the day. The prayer includes reading the “*Fatiha*” and fragments of other Suras of the Qur'an. The prayer goes through a cycle: the exact

recitation of prayers, accompanied by bowing, then kneeling followed by the bow lying flat on the ground and then kneeling again etc. Namaz can be read in any clean place, standing on a prayer carpet, mat or clothing. On Fridays, the holy day of Islam it is recommended to read the Namaz in the mosque. (2: pg.319).

**Ochok** [Kyrgyz] – the hearth, made from stones or bricks that hold the kitchenware in which food is prepared.

**Oirot-Kalmak** [an ethnonym, the Oirot-Kalmak people] – the indigenous population of the Kalmyk Republic in the Russian Federation. In historical documents and literature this ethnic group is also spoken of as the Oirots or the Jungars. In the first millennium of the common era the Mongolian peoples lived in Southern China and in Inner Mongolia and among them the ancestors of the Kalmyks. In 1758 more than a million Kalmyks were killed by the Mandjurian conquerors. Following this annihilation the Kalmyks were forced to move to the territories of the Volga river delta and become citizens of the Russian Empire. In 1771 a small group of Kalmyks returned to Jungaria. Today some of the descendants of the Oirots – the Sartkalmaks – live in Kyrgyzstan today in the North-Eastern part of the Ysyk-Köl oblast. (9: pg.213).

**Oluya** [Arabic] (*lit. tr.* regent) – 1) Saint (when referring to a person); 2) *met.*: a moral person who has gained great wisdom in life experience; 3) *met.* Prophet (15: pg.567).

**Orozo** [Persian, Turkic – Uraza] – Fast, holding the fast is one of the oldest Arabic traditions. Researchers of Islam claim that in the Arabic countries in the most difficult and hottest months of the year, the nomadic peoples would limit their intake of food and do most of the farming and household work in the evening and at night. The Muslim fast is more rigorous, it forbids eating, drinking, washing, smoking and taking medicine etc., in the hours between sunrise and sunset. (13: pg.260).

**Ölöng** [Kyrgyz] – 1) one of the lyrical genres of Kyrgyz oral poetry; 2) the lyrical songs of the Pamir Kyrgyz, made up of 11-12 verses of poetry (15: pg.592).

**Peri** [Persian] – 1) a mythological being, most often portrayed as a woman, but it can also take the male form. This being is mostly good but some are evil. When a shaman chases the “evil spirits” from a patient, he or she identifies two kinds of Peri: firstly the Muslim Peri which are weaker and less harmful, and the Unbeliever’s Peri (Kafir) which can bring great suffering. 2) A beauty (15: pg.608).

**Perishte** [Persian] – 1) the Archangels of Islam, who act as mediators between God, the prophets and people: Jebireyil, Mikail, Israfil, Azreil; 2) a feature and characteristic of a person meaning beauty and innocence (7: pg.392).

**Pir** [Persian] (*lit. tr.* Old man) - a spiritual advisor, the head or member of a Dervish order (15: pg.609); 2) a protector – see *Koldoochu*.

**Ruh tazaloo** [Kyrgyz] - a cleansing ritual, that cleans the subject from negative energies and evil powers (This information is based on the words of the guardian of a sacred site Jengish Kudakeev from the village of Özgörüş in the Talas oblast in an interview with Aigine CRC).

**Sadaga, Sadaga chabuu** [Arabic] – 1) the propitiation or thanksgiving sacrifice to chase away the spirit of a sickness, the evil eye, it is custom to sacrifice a goat kid; 2) charity, alms (15: pg.620).

**Sanjyra** [from the Arabic: Sajaraiy, Shajarat] (*lit. tr.* the branch or roots of a tree) – genealogy, oral history of the provenance and beginnings of a nation, clan, tribe or family. The Sanjyra tells the genealogical history of a nation, this was passed down from generation to generation by word of mouth and therefore cannot always be accurately placed in chronology. The Sanjyra were often colourized and mythical elements wove into the tales and for this reason cannot always be considered a reliable historical source. However this does not mean that the information is not rooted in any historical fact and *that it* cannot be used to give a more precise picture of historical events and facts. Among the Kyrgyz people the tradition of passing down family history is still very much alive – it is important to know the history of family gatherings, events connected with the ancestors at least to the seventh father. There is also a prohibition of marriage between blood relatives up to the seventh generation (7: pg.403-404).

**Semeteiychi** [Kyrgyz] – a reciter of the second part of the “Manas” trilogy, entitled the “Semeteiy” that tells of the doings of Manas’ son Semeteiy.

**Shaiyyk, sheiyh** [Arabic - Sheih] (*lit.tr.* an elder) – 1) the head or leader of a family, tribe or clan of the Arabic nomadic peoples; 2) the title given to the leaders of Islamic sects, eminent theologians, law makers; 3) the guardian of a Muslim cemetery or a place of rest of Muslims (15: pg.896).

**Shakar** [Persian] – 1) an alkali, obtained from the ashes of an orache tree; 2) soda (6: pg.286).

**Shakar samyn** [Persian] – soup, or a detergent (6: pg. 286).

**Sham jaguu** [Kyrgyz] – lighting a candle. In order to open up the connection with the spirits and to receive information from them, *Bübüs* light candles in certain places, like sacred sites. This ritual can be held at a home which is to be cleaned from negative energies.

**Shariat** [from the Arabic Sharia] (*lit. tr.* the proper way) – a code of Muslim norms, rights, morals, obligations and rituals that include all aspects and moments of life, from the cradle to the grave. The code was developed in the XI-XIIth centuries, in times of the spread of feudalism in the Near and Middle East. In Central Asia and in the Caucasus the Shariat became known in the times of the Arabic conquests (9: pg.432-433).

**Sheiyit** [Arabic] – a person who died in the name of the Muslim faith (15: pg.904).

**Shypaa** [Arabic] – healing or recovery (15: pg.921).

**Soop** [Arabic] – a good, edifying deed, beneficence; the reward for a good and virtuous deed (15: pg.654).

**Synchy** [Kyrgyz] (from the stem *syna* – observing, questioning, criticizing) - a clairvoyant who judges men and animals, with the ability to predict a man character traits and strength in battle and a horse's jumping abilities. Synchy can also tell what kind of children a woman will have and can describe the children's fortunes.

**Syiynuu** [Kyrgyz] - 1) worship, belief; 2) to have hope. Praying to the Gods, the earth, water, mountains, the wind etc. (1: pg.224).

**Tamyrchy** [Kyrgyz] – a traditional healer, who makes his or her diagnosis based on pulse measurements (15: pg.700).

**Temir komuz** [Kyrgyz] – a traditional musical instrument of the Central Asian peoples in English known as the Jew's harp, a lamellophone musical instrument, with a frame and metal tongue, the frame is placed in the performer's mouth and the metal tongue is plucked to make a note.

**Tengir** [Kyrgyz from the Turkic and Mongolian languages] – this is the name of God used by the ancient nomadic cultures of the Turkic-Mongolian peoples. The cult of Tengir is that of worshipping the sky, the sun and the universe. This was the main system of belief of the Kyrgyz people, the Lord Creator. It is certain that one of the first practitioners of Tengrianism were the ancient Huns. Word of their worshipping the sky can be found in ancient Chinese scriptures.

**Tengrianism** (Tengriism) is the belief and worship of the God Tengir, who is a personification of the sky and part of the Cosmos, Tengir can also be the spirit of the sky or the God living in the skies (14: pg.59).

**Tespe** [Kyrgyz] – beads. When praying people count the prayers and recitations from the holy books with the help of strings of beads.

**Topuk kyluu** [Kyrgyz] – to be abstinent, to be undemanding, abstaining from luxuries and bad habits (15: pg.752).

**Tölgöchü** [Kyrgyz] – predicting the future using certain objects, pebbles, *chükö* (a small bone inside of stifle of a goat), a sheep's bladebone, a mirror, a book or beads (7: pg.442).

**Traditional Medicine** includes empirical diagnosis of an illness, information about the possibilities of curing a patient using herbs and concoctions, mineral substances, animals' inner organs. In Kyrgyz traditional medicine common healing methods are: bloodletting, attaching leeches, massage, rinsing and other ritual cleansing using spring water, pulse diagnosis etc. The "Manas" epic tale gives many examples of traditional healing methods, complicated skull operations, information about the inner organs and how to keep them healthy and mending broken bones (11, vol.2: pg.361).

**Trance** [French] – numbness or stupor, this is a special state of consciousness, estrangement, ecstasy that can bring with it clairvoyance and improvisation. (3: pg.98).

**Tumar** [Kyrgyz] – an amulet or a talisman, charm. An incantation or message noted on a piece of paper folded into a triangle and sewn into the clothing. The Tumar is worn around the neck or under the armpits. (7: pg.449).

**Tükürükchü, tükürchü** [Kyrgyz] (from *tükürük, lit.tr.* spit) – a healer, who can save a patient from snake bite and the stings of other poisonous insects. (15: pg.779).

**Tülöö** [Kyrgyz] (from *Tilöö – lit. tr.* entreaty, plead) - after an illness or some unfortunate event, after seeing a bad dream a sacrificial offering is made, to beg for mercy and to call upon the charity of God, the protector spirits, holy ghosts and the ancestor spirits (5: pg.435).

**Tülöökana** [Kyrgyz] – a special room or area where ritual sacrifice can be done.

**Tülöö berüü** [Kyrgyz] – the propitiation or thanksgiving ritual of animal sacrifice (7: pg.269).

**Uchuktoo** [Kyrgyz] – using steam to heal an afflicted person. Water is sprinkled onto heated iron, usually pincers or a sickle are used (15: pg.813).

**Umaiy-Ene** [Kyrgyz] (*lit.tr.* Umai the mother) – a female Goddess, the patroness of children and the family hearth. This is an ancient religious cult of the Kyrgyz people. Kyrgyz midwives, witch-doctors and healers turn to Umaiy-Ene, when assisting in childbirth or when healing a patient, with the words: “This is not my hand, this is hand of Umaiy-Ene”. When seeing their children, even when they are adults, old women, mothers and the elders of the house would say: “I’m leaving you in the charge of Umaiy-Ene”. Thanks was given to Umaiy-Ene in years of good harvest and happiness. After collecting a plentiful harvest and on the birth of the herd’s young people would say: “Milk has fallen from the breasts of Umaiy-Ene” (9: pp.392-393).

**Uruu** [Kyrgyz] – the tribe or clan. The tribe - this is one of the most ancient forms of administration into families. (3: pg.92).

**Ūn chygaruu, öbürüü** [Kyrgyz] (*lit. tr.* to scream or cry out) – the folk tradition of mourning the recently deceased. The mourner weeps loudly or laments, rocking his or her body from side to side while approaching the house or the yurt of the deceased. (15: pg.590).

**Ūrkün** [Kyrgyz] (*lit.tr.* spooked, panicking) – the Kyrgyz uprising of 1916; where the Kyrgyz revolted against the Russian Imperial authority. One of the most tragic episodes of Kyrgyz history.

**Ūchiltik** [Kyrgyz] - the “Manas” trilogy, containing the “Manas”, “Semeteiy” and “Seiytek”. These are the three episodes of the Great Epic, each an independent work, that are united by the chronological succession of the plot and of the main heroes (3: pg.99).

**Yiyman uguzuu** [Kyrgyz] – uttering words of parting and the *Kelme* by the grave of the deceased.

**Yrym-jyrym** [Kyrgyz] - a ritual, ceremony. The symbolic, collective actions done by believers of a faith or idea that aims to open communication with the higher entities or objects. This is one of the most important components of the religious cult. Belief in the higher entities that lies at the base of every religion, brings with it the belief in the possibility of contact with them, the belief in the ceremony that brings contact and the interaction between the entities and the believer (7: pg.345).

**Zeket, sekēt** [from the Arabic - Zjakat] – alms for the poor, according to the Shariat laws each person should give one fortieth of their income and wealth with the poor. Nowadays the Zeket is considered to be a voluntary donation and is collected in mosques (7: pg.183).

**Zikir, zikir chaluu** [Arabic – zikir; Russian - zeal] - the zeal of the Dervish, bringing oneself to a state of ecstasy through the endless chanting of the name of Allah (15: C.290). *Zikir chaluu* is the ritual of praising God, depending on different orders of Sufism it should be done openly or in concealment. The open forms of saying the *Zikir* were practiced among Muslim in Central Asia in the XIXth century. (7: pg.184).

**Ziyarat** [Arabic] – pilgrimage to sacred sites (15: pg.294). According to the pilgrims in order to cure oneself from illness, to bring happiness and prosperity upon oneself, one should worship God at sacred sites ( 8: pg.187).

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Akun-Bulak  
Alma  
Altyn-Bulak  
Archa  
Aziz  
Baiyboto  
Bak  
Bakaluu-Köl  
Balyk-Suu  
Bazarbaiy-Bulak  
Bugu-Ene  
Bulak  
Cholpon-Ata  
Chong-Aral  
Chong-Jargylchak  
Chong-Öston  
Chong-Tash  
Chungkur-Bulak  
Dolono  
Duldul  
Eki-Tal  
Enesaiy-Ata  
Enesaiy-Ene  
Er-Tabyldy-Tash  
Er-Tabyldy  
Ichke-Bulung  
Imindin  
Jalgyz-Terek  
Jangak (or Talyp-Akun-Ata)  
Jarkynbaiy-Ata  
Jarylgan-Jürök  
Jeti-Chöiychök  
Jetigen  
Jyluu-Bulak  
Jyluu-Suu  
Kaiynar-Bulak  
Kaiyrma-Aryk  
Kaiyrymduuluk  
Kalygul-Oluya  
Kamanduu-Köl  
Kanaiy-Bulak  
Kanysh  
Kara-Döbö

Kara-Jal  
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Sokur-Kuduk  
Tabyldynyn-Taly  
Tal  
Tamga-Tash  
Terek  
Toguz-Bulak  
Too-Tash  
Tösh  
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