



# The Sacred Sites of Kyrgyzstan



Bishkek • 2004



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The present book is the result of the Community and Business Forum's work on the pilot project "The Sacred Sites of Kyrgyzstan" implemented in 2004. The project was supported by the Fauna Flora International (UK) and the Christensen Fund (USA).

The information presented in this publication is meant for the general public, including environmental non-governmental organizations and everyone, who is interested in the problem of sacred sites. The publication contains information about various aspects of the sacred sites' issue, including spiritual, historical, ethnographical, philological, musical, sociological, geological and other perspectives on the project's theme.

The articles presented in this publication represent their authors' views. The rest of the information is based on materials collected during the project's work and is to be regarded as research data. The publication also includes "The Strategy and Action Plan for the Sacred Sites of Kyrgyzstan" aimed at preservation of sacred sites and biodiversity in the Kyrgyz Republic.

**Community and Business Forum 2004**

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# ❖ PART I ❖

## Introduction

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*Cholpon Dyikanova was born in Bishkek. In 1974, Cholpon graduated from the Department of Foreign Languages of the Kyrgyz State University. In 1987, she defended her degree of “Kandidat Philologicheskikh Nauk” (Ph.D.) at the Institute of Linguistics of the Academy of Science (Moscow). In 2000, Cholpon obtained a Master’s degree in Ecology and Natural Resources Use from the International University of Kyrgyzstan (IUK).*

**Cholpon  
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**S**acred sites have always played an important role in the history and culture of the Kyrgyz people, influenced forming of folk traditions and rituals, promoted preservation patriarchic traditions of honoring the ancestors, their spirits and graves. Thousands and hundreds of thousands of people went in the past and continue visiting sacred sites these days, believe in their ability to help a human being in his troubles and aspirations, hope to get salutary impact on health and body from visiting sacred sites, and believe that sacred sites contribute to spiritual and moral purification and improvement of human's material life.

Mountains or mountain peaks, stones and rocks of unusual sizes and forms, lakes and springs with the purest water are usually considered sacred sites. Trees and bushes of specific kinds, remains of ancient settlements and fortresses and worshiping installations can also be considered sacred. Some of the brooks, mineral springs and hills have also turned into the objects of worship and pilgrimage. Location of sacred sites was passed from generation to generation; their sanctity and significance were consolidated in the people's consciousness and psychology during a very long period of time and were solidly preserved, perhaps forever.

Sacred sites are mysterious and multifaceted and many of them are situated in mountainous regions, which are difficult to access, where one can reach only by feet or by horse.

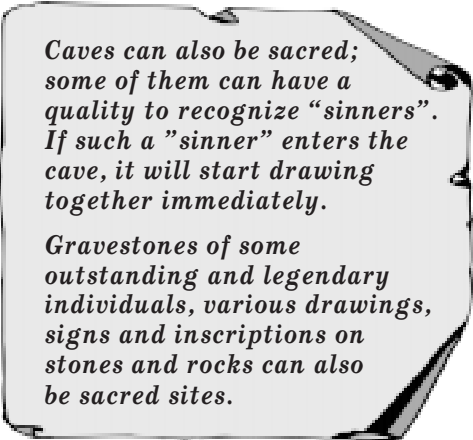


***At the Ak-Kyrchoo Mazar in Naryn Province***

While visiting such places, one experiences special spiritual calm, feels soothing quiet, time and space alienation from everyday vanity and anxiety, although it is difficult to give some rational explanations to such state of soul and body. One also feels big responsibility not only for each of his words said aloud at mazar<sup>1</sup>, but

<sup>1</sup> «Mazar» – a sacred site, a place of worship and pilgrimage.

also for the thoughts in his head. Since one has to go to mazar only with good thoughts and intentions, it is important to cleanse not only one's body but also his soul, and always remember that each sacred site has its own special sanctity protected by spirits-guardians; it is a great sin to provoke their wrath and disturb them.



*Caves can also be sacred; some of them can have a quality to recognize "sinners". If such a "sinner" enters the cave, it will start drawing together immediately.*

*Gravestones of some outstanding and legendary individuals, various drawings, signs and inscriptions on stones and rocks can also be sacred sites.*

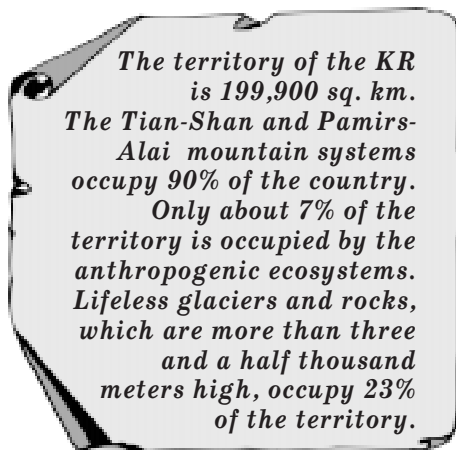
During the implementation of the pilot project "Sacred Sites of Kyrgyzstan", I was able to visit some of the sacred sites of Issyk-Kul, Chui and Naryn Provinces, have a conversation with pilgrims, among whom there were both common local people, as well as practicing healers.

At the seminars and meetings organized by us, we often asked healers and local residents about location of sacred sites and their peculiar qualities. At first, not all of them responded, many were not willing to share their knowledge being afraid that wide dissemination of information about sacred sites would only bring harm to these places and increase the number of visitors, who could pollute sacred sites. We had to talk to them about their fears for a long time and explain the importance of our work for attracting public attention to the protection of sacred sites.

***Sacred sites are not only the valuables and reliquiae of the past centuries, which could be protected by means of conservation, but they are also functioning live valuables, which could be and should be protected by means of development and revival, in accordance with the present time demands.***

There are many sacred sites on the territory of Kyrgyzstan; there are more than 30 of them in Chui Province alone, and, as it was reported to us by the local mullah Kachkyn Asanbekov, there are more than 15 of them in Kochkor District. The abundance of

sacred sites in Kyrgyzstan is explained by peculiarities of the natural and climatic conditions of the country. All native zones, which are typical for the Northern hemisphere, with the exception of the tropical zone, could be found on the territory of the republic. There is a total of 22 ecosystem classes. The greatest variety of ecosystems is observed in the mid-mountain zone between two-three thousand meters. The climatic conditions of Kyrgyzstan are characterized by the sharp continental zone, significant intensity and duration of sunshine, horizontal and vertical zoning and great difference in landscapes. Such natural climatic conditions have led to the specific diversity of ecosystems, which are naturally connected to the forming of the spiritual world of the people, who have rich traditions of sustainable interrelation with nature.



*The territory of the KR is 199,900 sq. km. The Tian-Shan and Pamirs-Alai mountain systems occupy 90% of the country. Only about 7% of the territory is occupied by the anthropogenic ecosystems. Lifeless glaciers and rocks, which are more than three and a half thousand meters high, occupy 23% of the territory.*

The sacred sites' honoring and worshiping could not be connected to a definite religion. Many national and world religions have their own sacred sites. In Demidov's opinion, even the most ancient among the so-called traditional religions – Buddhism and Judaism – are not older than two and a half – three thousand years. Christianity is even younger – 2000 years. The youngest

world religion, Islam, is 14 centuries old. As for the age of the ancient beliefs, which existed in the past or have wide dissemination today, on the basis of which the aforesaid and other religions were formed, it is much older – many thousands and even tens of thousands of years (Demidov 1988, p. 109).

S.N. Demidov describes the case, when the same object is considered sacred by the followers of various religious doctrines, which view it in their own ways. Thus, on the island of Ceylon, there is a stone to which both Christians considering that the footprints

of the first human – the forefather of the human race Adam were imprinted, as well as Buddhists confident that these are the footprints of the Prince Siddhartha Gautama, who later received the name of Buddha, make pilgrimage. As for Muslims, who come here, they believe that these are the footprints of the highly honored Prophet Ali. The followers of God Vishnu – the Vishnuites pray by the stone, as well (p.12).

Such examples can also be found on the territory of Kyrgyzstan, where almost all of the early and late forms of the world religions were cultivated: Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam. The stone plates and the remains of flooded towns on the southern seashore of Lake Issyk-Kul opposite Kurmenti under the waters of the Tyup Creek are considered sacred for Christians, Buddhists and Muslims alike causing disputes among the scientific researchers to this day. "Much from the legend about Chingiskhan's treasure in Issyk-Kul has been proved by practical work," – writes V. Ploskih (Ploskih 2004, p. 20). In his opinion, there are documentary proofs that one of the Christian monasteries was situated on the shore of Lake Issyk-Kul. Relics of St. Mathew, one of the followers – Apostles of Jesus Christ are connected specifically to this place (p. 20).

The Soviet ideology considered the worshiping of sacred sites the vestige of the past, the sign of backwardness in development and limitedness in world view, tried to suppress the spiritual potential of the people destroying the value system, which had been formed for centuries based on historically conditioned conceptions. Meanwhile, it were the so-called vestiges, which made up the body and the blood of the culture, moral and people's spirituality, presented evidence of its spiritual maturity and served as the platform for further moral perfection.

The Muslim clergy also openly came forth with prohibitions against the worship of sacred sites. Muftis, mullahs, imams and other representatives of the canonic Islam did not like the Sufis, tried to show them as ignoramuses and charlatans on any given occasion and methodically destroyed for insulting the true faith (Krutikov 2004, p. 113). Today, an active advancement of the Orthodox Islam and pressing by the Muslim clergy on the pagan



elements, as they call sacred sites, are also observed. In their opinion, honoring sacred sites and worshiping their spirits-guardians undermine the position of Islam as a whole.

Although during the islamisation of the local population in Central Asia, the Muslim priests included a big number of the shamanism elements in Islam, as well. For example, in Sufism and the Sufi Orders, Hoja Ahmed Yasavi created a new Sufi Order – Yasaviya, in which one comes across the greatest number of the shamanism elements compared to other Sufi Orders (Demidov 1988, p. 3).

The last research on shamanism demonstrates that it successfully continues its existence within the world religions.

Sacred sites, places of burial of especially honored Muslim spiritual ministers, which are especially protected and guarded by spiritual ministers, present a different issue. An imam, who is responsible for reading the Koran to pilgrims, introducing them to history of the locality and the person buried there, maintaining order and cleanness and observing the rules of visiting, is usually appointed to such a place. Imams often give instructions to youth; tell different stories from the Saints' lives. The biggest Muslim sanctities of Kyrgyzstan: "Tahti-Suleiman", "Arstanbab", "Azret-Ayub" and "Sofid-Bulyand" are known for having collective and individual readings of the Koran and prayers there.

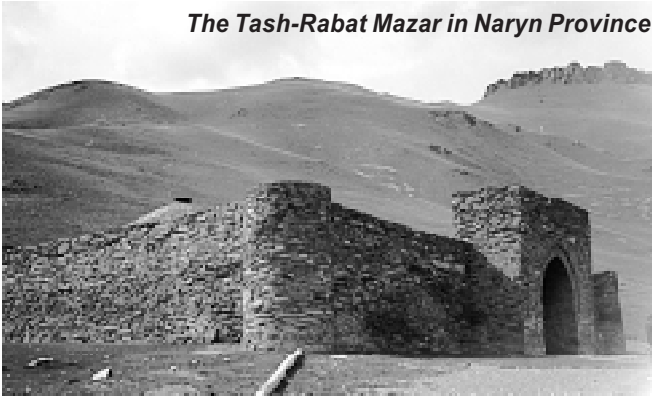
In conversations with pilgrims, I could hear different stories and legends about the origin of sanctity, strength and help of sacred sites in recovering from illnesses and diseases. In the past, the town of Osh with the Mountain Suleiman was called the "Mecca for non-Arabs". There used to be stories that three pilgrimages to Suleiman Too<sup>1</sup> in Osh were equaled to the Hadj to Mecca.

Nobody has conducted a scientific research of the sacred sites' problem in Kyrgyzstan. There are only separate fragments and pieces of information in the works of S.M. Abramzon and Ch. Valikhanov. In the Soviet period, the worship of sacred sites was described in the works of T.D. Bayalieva, S.A. Tokarev and S.M. Demidov.

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<sup>1</sup> "Too" – "mountain" in Kyrgyz language.

*The Tash-Rabat Mazar in Naryn Province*



S.M. Abramzon calls the worship of sacred sites the natural cult (Abramzon 1990). S. A. Tokarev calls the worship of mountains, springs and trees the family cult (Tokarev 1990, p. 153). In his opinion, inhabitation of a clan on a specific territory creating of thousands of economic and domestic links of humans with the natural environment significantly locks their mental horizon by the narrow limits of their close landscape (ibid.).

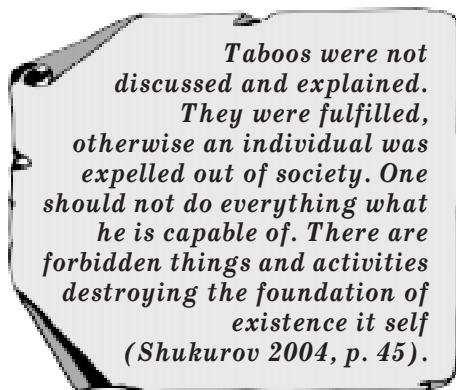
In our opinion, traditions of sacred sites' worship existed among the Kyrgyz people within the framework of the ancient system of the world vision, from the realization of their unity with the surrounding world, where all of the natural environment (mountains, lakes, the world of animals and plants) is in certain hierarchical order, it being known that it is always above the human society. The worship of sacred sites, as well as the cult of specific animals, which are the keepers-masters of sacred sites related to it demonstrates that the Kyrgyz people did not estrange themselves from the live nature and the world of animals.

In nature and motives of worship of sacred sites, one can feel the most important priorities of social life of nomads: their inalienable connection to the world of animals and sanctity of the heroic ideals of the constant readiness for struggle. Since the struggle for pastures, frequent raids on cattle from the direction of neighbors, conflicts between tribes and clans always haunted nomads, the Kyrgyz people valued fighter's qualities in humans: heroism,

courage and selflessness. Military glory, boldness and honor were valued above all, which is witnessed by the names of many sacred sites connected to the name of the legendary Manas, Almanbet, true and courageous warriors "Kyrk Choro".<sup>2</sup>

There are stones near Son-Kul Lake, which have become sacred, on which supposedly the warriors of Manas and Manas himself sat some time ago. There are stones with imprints of feet and hands of legendary heroes and their horses at the Idris-Paigambar-Ata Mazar, which is located in Chatkal District of Jalalabad Province.

Each natural habitat and landscape had their spirit-protector; there were specific and strictly regulated rules on how to visit sacred sites, and in order to become part of nature, one's own natural habitat, it was necessary to perceive it through animation and strict and obligatory observance of taboo. We were told about it by pilgrims, imams and bakshy, with whom we met at sacred sites. Pilgrimage to sacred sites is performed when one feels absolute necessity; one should not visit them out of idle curiosity... One cannot disagree with E. Shukurov's opinion that our primeval ancestors laid deep foundations of culture, which made a human – human. Already at that time, they understood the menacing threat of life regulated by instincts and introduced the notion of taboo.



*Taboos were not discussed and explained. They were fulfilled, otherwise an individual was expelled out of society. One should not do everything what he is capable of. There are forbidden things and activities destroying the foundation of existence it self (Shukurov 2004, p. 45).*

In his opinion, the taboo system, from the categorical prohibition of what should not be done under any circumstances turned into the corner stone of the survival of the human race.

There were such taboos among the Kyrgyz people with regards to visiting sacred sites, as well; it was prohibited to pollute, pick

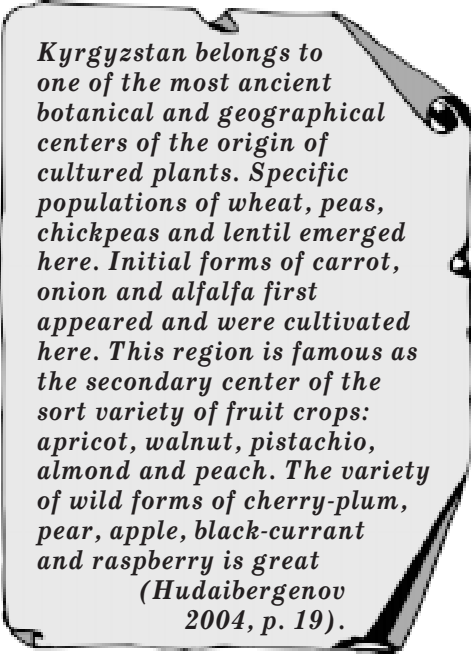
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<sup>2</sup> "Kyrk Choro" – "Fourty Warriors" (in Kyrgyz language) of Manas.

flowers and pull out grass and cut trees there. They spoke of inadmissibility of pulling out grass with roots explaining that grass was the earth's hair, and the master of the locality would get angry because of the pain caused to the earth. He punished those, who were guilty for cutting young trees. It was prohibited to pollute the "flowing water" of rivers, brooks and springs with different kinds of sewage and garbage because the "master of water" does not tolerate it and sooner or later punishes the violators by different troubles and diseases (Potapov 1991, p. 96).

During hunting in a forest or mountains, it was prohibited to scream, whistle, sing, laugh and talk loudly. These prohibitions were based on the rules protecting the peace of spirits. Behind these prohibitions one can also see solicitous attitude of the Kyrgyz people towards other living creatures, their right for calm and peace. The rules of an individual's stay out in the nature, which were created on the basis of unconditional obedience to nature and honoring sanctity, and created a basis of moral ethical norms of behavior and way of life of the Kyrgyz people.

Sacred trees and bushes were especially worshiped among the Kyrgyz people, among which there were rare, endemic plant species threatened by extinction. Sacred sites with such trees and bushes naturally gained status of forbidden areas and became original micro-reserves, where activities causing harm and destruction were strictly prohibited. Moreover, sacred sites with trees and bushes of rare



*Kyrgyzstan belongs to one of the most ancient botanical and geographical centers of the origin of cultured plants. Specific populations of wheat, peas, chickpeas and lentil emerged here. Initial forms of carrot, onion and alfalfa first appeared and were cultivated here. This region is famous as the secondary center of the sort variety of fruit crops: apricot, walnut, pistachio, almond and peach. The variety of wild forms of cherry-plum, pear, apple, black-currant and raspberry is great*  
(Hudaibergenov 2004, p. 19).

sorts and those threatened by extinction served as special areas for seed ripening and their further spreading on vaster neighboring territories. The uniqueness and diversity of biological resources with high concentration of species and degree of endemism were noted by many researchers.

It is better to attend sacred sites accompanied by knowledgeable people, who can protect from an incorrect action. Upon bringing harm to sacred sites, for example in case of pollution of sacred springs and brooks, protectors and guardians of sacred sites can make a negative impact on an individual, sometimes even send an illness. Any misfortune or illness was considered a punishment. A shaman helped to determine which one of the spirits sent it and why, how to alleviate the punishment or to get rid of it, what sacrifice has to be made to redeem one's fault. For example, all possible children's ear illnesses the Kyrgyz people connected to a thoughtless pollution of a spring by a child. For doing so, the master of the spring inflicted an illness upon him. In order to win over the spirit – the master of the spring, a child's mother had to perform a certain ritual. She prepared seven flat cakes, treated women and children to bread, burnt small torches made of cheegrass and cotton wool and saturated with animal fat. Then, a mother threw a bead or a coin into the spring to perform a kind of an exchange repeating special words of forgiveness and requests while doing so. A child, in whose presence this entire ritual had to be performed, had to bow down to water and ask its forgiveness. In ancient times, the Kyrgyz people connected ear illnesses to kidneys, which have a similar shape. There used to be a special ritual promoting quicker healing of ear illnesses; they stuck forty short sticks into the fresh animal kidney, usually the one of a lamb. The sooner the kidney dried out, the quicker the recovery came about.

Various magical actions were performed for banishing illnesses or their spirits-masters: the strength of fire, water and burning-hot metal objects were used.

The ideological catastrophe of Marxism and the political economic crisis of the Soviet system seriously undermined the widely implanted materialism and caused an explosion of superstitions at different

levels of intellectual development. Kashpirovskii and Chumak with their shaman rituals on television emerged exactly with this wave. During the post-Soviet time full of economic and social problems, when many were left without jobs and ideological reference points, the cases of visits to sacred sites became more frequent among the population, some of the forgotten old traditions were revived, the number of foretellers, healers and clairvoyants increased.

So who performs pilgrimage today?

Pilgrims to sacred sites present a diverse group of people; it is difficult to single out their main age or social status. Pilgrimage is performed by young and old people alike; there are highly educated intellectuals and peasants with elementary education among them. They are more frequently visited by women; however, in the last years, the number of young men has increased. Sometimes, pilgrims live at sacred sites for a long time, sometimes for weeks, months and, even, years. At sacred sites, which are visited often, there are places for pilgrims' night's lodging; household quarters with household equipment necessary for preparation of a sacrificial meal, such as a cauldron, tea kettles and cups are added on to them.

During a visit to the Manjly-Ata (This place is situated in Issyk-Kul in Ton District. The sanctity of this place is in its ability to cure infertile women), I was able to meet with a great variety of people, who came from both nearby villages, as well as faraway towns. One of the women came from Naryn with her husband, with whom she had lived for more than ten years. They did not have any children but she and her husband did not lose hope; they consulted with many doctors and were treated by traditional healers and wise men. They lost their last hope two years ago, when one very famous doctor told them that they would not have children. The words of this doctor killed their last hope; their further life together lost its sense; there was nothing to wait for. Then, recently, she heard from her relative about one miraculous place healing women from infertility. Something perked up in her soul; a joy of hope returned; she wanted to continue living again. In her opinion, sacred sites have special magical power giving people faith in life, inspiring them with hope, and present them with one more chance for making a long-awaited miracle come true. Visits to sacred sites have another quality making them an attractive place, – it is the

communication with people experiencing difficulties and pains similar to yours, the possibility to share especially personal feelings with people, who will understand you. Common pain and experiences, open conversations about the inmost, understanding and support of the people similar to yourself, their empathy and readiness to listen did their work, persuaded you that people with the same kinds of problems live and look for cure.

Sacred site heals people from illnesses, but also purifies them from bedevilment and an evil eye, inspires them with positive energy, foretells the future, makes an individual stronger and luckier, opens and broadens perspectives for future activities. This, probably, explains the great popularity of sacred sites among common mortals and men endowed by power and riches alike. Having spoken to keepers of sacred sites, one can learn, who and for what purpose visits sacred sites, what they ask and hope for.

Sacred sites are also often visited by practitioners, different wise men and foretellers, clairvoyants and healers for establishing a contact with spirits from the other world to receive information, which they need. Sacred sites are also visited for purification and enlightenment, for receiving signs of approval of healing practice, prophecy and receiving a blessing in new endeavors. Walking a traditional circle around a sacred site has a meaning of redemption from sins, as practitioners told us. It is necessary to make an odd number of circles, the number of which is also determined by bakshy.

Traditional ritual "Tule" also takes place at sacred sites. Tule is the Kyrgyz tradition of preparing a sacrificial meal, which is made either to avoid an illness, while expecting good luck, or as a sign of appreciation, when one was able to avoid an illness, death and other troubles. Elderly relatives, neighbors and their children are usually invited for a sacrificial meal. While having Tule at sacred site, one has to feed all, who happened to be there. In accordance with Islamic traditions, Tule is usually organized on Thursdays before Friday, which is sacred for Muslims.

Practitioners are called **bakshy** and **bubu**; they are also known as shamans, who use spirits-protectors, lead them and, at the same time, serve them themselves.

In T.D. Bayaliev's opinion, extraordinary power of a shaman is not in himself but in those spirits, who are at his disposal. It is them, who oust an illness, open shaman's eyes on such things, which cannot be seen by a human, who does not have spirits. Spirits inspire a shaman with answers to questions, which are posed to him by a patient or by his relatives, as well as those present nearby. Shamans had different spirits; the first ones are the shaman's spirits-protectors – arbaks. The second ones are the spirits-helpers; they were called chymyn. The third ones were the spirits-genies (jin), which were the ones bringing harm to ill persons and became the main objects of shaman's pressure (Bayaliev 1972, p. 132). According to the Kyrgyz people's notions, genies live in low-lying spaces, in mountain caves, dark places full of garbage, in puddles covered with slime; that is why the Kyrgyz people always tried to avoid attending such places and it was prohibited to go for water at night, especially for women and children. The Kyrgyz people believed that genies, which made their way into an ill person's body, could be expelled only as a result of treatment by a shaman. While studying treatment methods, which were and are still used today, one discovers an interesting tradition of transferring illnesses into animals or some other objects. Shamans' magical actions and incantations, which were described, were directed either towards illnesses or their spirits-masters asking them to leave the ill person, and performed magical actions to threaten and oust the illness (Bayaliev 1972, p. 108).

The use of sacred sites for treating and ousting illnesses is practiced nowadays, as well. Famous doctor J. Nazaraliev uses the "Freedom Mountain Tashtar-Ata" located in Besh-Kungei village in Chui Province for healing from alcohol and drug addiction. They say that pilgrims got rid off their troubles and sicknesses at the "Tashtar-Ata" Mazar long since by leaving stones, to which they told about their emotional experiences, there. The almighty mountain absorbed all evil, neutralized it, delivered from illness and provided physical relief to those, who left stones there.

Sacred sites also bring spiritual balance, since every person has spiritual essence, the human soul, in addition to the bodily and conscious existence. The Kyrgyz people embodied soul with blood



because the soul of any body is its blood. Compare: **Jan tartpasa da, kan tartat** (proverb). The Soul does not draw, but the blood (spiritual kinship) draws.

However, the Kyrgyz people had a notion about two souls, the bodily and the spiritual ones. The bodily soul (*jan*) was related to human life, death and illnesses. Compare: **jany bar** – *alive*, **jany jok** – *dead*. The word **jan** is used in many proper names being part of personal names. Compare: **Bekjan** – *strong soul*, **Januzak** – *long soul (life)*. The word **jan** is used at the end of personal names as an endearment suffix: **Asanjan** – *darling Asan*, **Cholponjan** – *darling Cholpon*.

The spirit giving vital energy is called **Kut**. It is considered that happiness, luck and prosperity are provided by **kut**. In the mythological conception of the Kyrgyz people **kut** was imagined as a bit of jelly-like substance of dark red color, which is supposedly falls down through tunduk (The upper wooden circle of the yurt's frame, which rests on upper ends of uuks<sup>3</sup>) and brings happiness to the one, who can take it. And only a good pure person can take it; in the hands of a bad person it loses its properties.

Within the framework of the pilot project "The Sacred Sites of Kyrgyzstan", meetings and roundtables with specialists, who examine and study sacred sites in relation to culture, traditions, as well as ethnic, historical and other aspects of the Kyrgyz people's life, took place. Their articles, in which they express their opinions, ideas and research results, are presented in this publication. A number of seminars were organized for the practicing traditional healers, local bakshy and moldo. Their articles and opinions are also presented to readers' judgment in this publication. In the article "The Kyrgyz Land – Our Wealth and Our Destiny", Burulsun Kadyrakunova shares her personal observations, tells about her parents, her childhood and marriage, the reasons impelling her to start the work of emchi and gives advice on rules of visiting mazars.

In B. Kadyrakunova's opinion, while visiting mazar, one should not tie pieces of cloth to bushes and trees growing nearby because it hinders them from growing.

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<sup>3</sup> "Uuk" – "pole" in Kyrgyz language.

Prior to starting on a journey, a person should perform an ablution and say: "keep safe from accidental misfortunes and temptation" and necessarily dedicate readings from the Koran to the spirits of ancestors.

In order to preserve sacred sites, it is necessary to pay special attention to the work with youth because many of them already do not know and do not understand the significance of sacred sites for preservation of their ancestors' traditions.

The sacred sites of Kochkor District and rules of visiting these places are described in K. Asanbekov's article "Mazar is the People's Wealth".

K. Asanbekov tells about eight mazars: the "Chon-Kara Tash" Mazar ("Big Black Stone"), the "Kosh-Kara Tash" ("Twin Black Stone"), the "Sagynbai-Ata" Mazar, the "Kondoi" Mazar, the "Kyz" Mazar ("Girl"), the "Archa" Mazar ("Juniper"), the "Ayan" Mazar ("Vision") and the "Ak-Kyrchoo" Mazar.

Aichurek Kadyralieva from Orto-Suu village in Chui Province tells about the survey evaluating the level of knowledge about sacred sites among the local residents and describes the spring, which she discovered for herself and her fellow villagers. In her opinion, every village has its own sacred sites; people should know about them, protect them from destruction and not harm them.

E. Shukurov's article "Sacred Site. The Spiritual Environment of the Planet" examines the connection of an individual with geographical environment, which is especially favorable for life and spiritual communication, which make people spiritual children of the country, its history and nature. Sacred sites make up the essential part of geographical surroundings and spiritual legacy, undoubtedly, more important in many ways than even fields and factories, in the name of which many of the sacred sites have been destroyed.

In E. Shukurov's opinion, sacred sites create a spiritual-informational frame of a country and, in a wider sense, of the whole world. Sacred sites connect an individual with specific place on the earth and are perceived by each human on a deeply individual basis becoming a focal point of communication of a certain group of people.

Sacred sites are the spots where human beings find expression of features of individual, unique and undistorted face image of the planet, where history of the earth and the history of a human being merge, where the meaning of human existence harmoniously merges with the true sense of the earth and becomes enriched by it. Sacred sites are the route for a Human Being's return to the Earth and returning a Human Being to the Earth.

Sacred sites are priceless heritage and gift to future.

Issyk-Ata, the special properties of which are examined in the article by A.M. Toktosopiev, I.N. Lemzin and T. Charimov "On Geophysical Features of the Issyk-Ata Sacred Site", is one of such priceless sites for Kyrgyzstan.

The authors relate special properties of environment of the Issyk-Ata River Valley to complex tectonic formations and connect it to high tectonic activity, where considerable role is played by ancient and new breaks alike. Peculiar tectonic conditions and ancient geological rocks in river's valleys created favorable natural conditions for the presence of salubrious water springs. At present, there are more than 50 thermal springs with the temperature of water 38-54°C. The authors attempted to explain anomalous phenomena in places of pilgrimage or sacred sites with the help of insufficiently explored natural geophysical fields and made an evaluation of the power of geophysical fields at sacred sites and their impact on a human.

In A. Dyianbaeva's article "Legends About Sacred Sites of Kyrgyzstan", legends about the origin of sacred sites are examined. She collected more than 400 legends, among which only 15 narrate about the origin of Lake Issyk-Kul, which was both a sanctuary, as well as an object of worship among the Kyrgyz people. The group of narratives devoted to land, especially to mountains, is very broad. Along with the worship of all of the earth's nature, every tribe and clan had their own places of worship, specific gorges, springs and trees, which belonged to the entire tribe and were held sacred by each member.

In A. Dyikanbaeva's opinion, the genre of legends, which narrates about past, present and future, reflects the Kyrgyz people's perception

of the world and performs a cognitive function, which provides an explanation of the origin or appearance of some natural object.

For further study and preservation of the Kyrgyz people's cultural heritage, it is necessary to speed up the collection of the folklore and ethnographic material, as the number of the bearers of the folk knowledge is decreasing with each day due to their elderly age.

Daria Musina's article "The Call of Our Ancestors" tells about difficulties of collecting material about sacred sites near Lake Issyk-Kul. D. Musina's project was the first step in collecting materials based on the stories of the bearers of Kyrgyz language and representatives of senior generation.

According to D. Musina, conservation activity can be sustainable only if it is an integral part of the local culture and folk traditions. Attraction of public attention to the problem of protection of sacred sites will bridge the gap between generations and promote the revival of solicitous attitude towards nature.

A. Krutikov examines the problem of protection of sacred sites in the article "Worship of Sacred Sites as One of the Aspects of Ecological Consciousness". He gives definitions to such notions as "ecological consciousness" and "ecological ethics", which emerged during the period of the global ecological crisis broken out by the -70s of the 20th century.

From the perspective of social ecology and psychology, positive role of ancient rituals, including the ritual of the sacred sites' worship, consists in that people learn the right and harmonious attitude towards nature; they do not consign into oblivion customs of their ancestors by supporting ancient traditions; from the point of view of social and transpersonal psychology, religious worship is some form of psychological protection of national consciousness from global assimilation of peoples' cultures and traditions in modern conditions.

G.M. Baisabaeva's article "Bakshy of the Kochkor Valley Mazars: On the Issue of Sacred Artistic Means" is devoted to the artistic components observed in the practice of modern representatives of shamanism and based on factual data, which was obtained during the folklore and ethnographic expeditions and several field researches of mazars in Kochkor District of Naryn Province.

In G.M. Baisabaeva's opinion, the unity of "bodily" (dependence of music on physiological factors) and "cosmic" (generalized symbolism ascending to the people's conceptions about the world) closely exists in folklore. The Kyrgyz people had musical instruments assigned for accompanying shaman's rituals. In the hands of shamans and bakshy, they gained special power and were animated by them. For example, one legend tells about a bakshy, who put forward his kyl kyyak as a participant at a horse-race.

The researchers, who studied shamanism in Kyrgyzstan, almost did not touch upon the artistic aspects of this culture. Meanwhile, it is specifically the artistic means, with the help of which bakshy performed their rituals – communications with spirits, were the strongest and most impressive means. This spiritual sphere of activity requires detailed study.

In I. Moldobaev's article "Sacred Sites in the Practices of the Kyrgyz Shamans (Bakshy)", parallels between the Kyrgyz and the South Siberian shamanism are made and worships of traditional rituals are described. In his opinion, in the more ancient times, all shaman activities were performed out in the nature; hence numerous worships of natural objects, which later became sacred sites, emerged. The use of sacred sites by the modern Kyrgyz bakshy is observed at present time in remote regions of the republic.

K. Isaev, in his article "The Notion of Sanctity for the Kyrgyz People", tells that the Kyrgyz people's philosophy of "sanctity" is an important part of their world-vision based on the worship of Tenir - the Sky and all of the nature. Having led a nomadic way of life for many centuries, the Kyrgyz people believe that places of worship, spirits, objects and animals, which should be treated with respect, which are held sacred



**Zamir Aldayarov, Principle  
of the secondary school  
in Ormonkhan village, near  
the stone idol (bal-bal)**

and honored to such extent that it is prohibited for a human to lift his hand against them, which are blessed and dear, - sacred.

Study of sacred sites has revealed a special layer of vocabulary in Kyrgyz language, which included the words concerning the nomination of ministers of mazars, their clothing and instruments, and traditions and rituals performed at sacred sites. Ch. Dyikanova's article "The Vocabulary of Sacred Sites in Kyrgyz Language" is devoted to the study of this group of vocabulary. The author gives an interpretation of sacred sites' names and explains the meaning of individual words and word-combinations.

The pilot research of the problem of sacred sites in Kyrgyzstan demonstrated the complexity of this phenomenon, the study of which requires a comprehensive approach. The number of people, who are familiar with this phenomenon, is decreasing. In the new millennium, in the 21st century, we became familiar with the new reality – globalization, which emerged as a result of the collapse of the bipolar system and is fraught with the threat of washing away the diversity of cultures and national values. Will specific cultures with their unique values exist and are there premises for their revival?

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## Worship of Sacred Sites as One of the Aspects of Ecological Consciousness

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**Aleksandr  
Krutikov**

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**W**hile the western scientists were profoundly studying self-consciousness of the peoples of the Tibet Mountain Range, national and spiritual self-consciousness of the Kyrgyz people was being intensely distorted by the Soviet ideology. Whereas the smartest people of Europe, such as Alexandra Davi-Neel and Lobsang Rampa, were adopting the Tibetan names and denominations in order to study

worshipping disciplines in the Tibetan monasteries, administrative bodies of the Soviet government were destroying our sacred sites and burning the remainders of spirituality out of the consciousness of all generations of the nation. Only God knows whether it was right or wrong. However, if the Theosophical Institute of Elena Blavatskaya, as well as the Rerih family, directed their efforts not toward the foreign East, but toward Central Asia, then we would have known much more, than what we have at our disposal today. I do not in the least intend to underestimate the contribution made by Saul Abramzon, Konstantin Yudakhin and others, to the studies of spiritual self-consciousness of the Kyrgyz people, in any way, however, it is clear to everyone, that it was not easy for them to step outside the framework of the Marxist-Leninist methodology.

As a result, today, we can only talk about some separate bits and pieces of garment, which was once complete and dazzled with captivating patterns and fantastic beauty. After all, on the territory of Kyrgyzstan, there are rudiments of Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrism, and other worships, scattered in large numbers even in the most remote mountain ranges, which in their time, certainly, were not foreign to the Kyrgyz mentality. Such conclusion could be made on the grounds of the "Manas" Epic. Thus, for example, the Hero **Almambet**<sup>1</sup> comprehended the Chinese sorcery rites, in which one could trace signs of Taoism. Also remember the Hero **Koshoi** [9, 324-328], who excelled at the use of the magic of India and China. This way, according to manaschi<sup>2</sup> S. Orozbekov, during the first campaign of Manas, in Kashgar, Khan Koshoi "defeats the enemy's sorcerers – "ayars" – by the power of sorcery, changing his image several times and penetrating into the hostile city" [10, 96]. The Kyrgyz folk legend attributed the ruins of the ancient fortress **Koshoi-kurgan** near Atbashi village with Koshoi's name, as well [10, 97].

Our contemporary feels powerful pressure from the man-caused processes: computer technologies and global computer networks, automation of production, conquest of space – all of these, certainly,

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<sup>1</sup> *Here and later in the text marked in bold face by us – A.K.*

<sup>2</sup> *A Person who recites the "Manas" Epic.*



leave their mark on the consciousness of a modern man, whose pragmatic character comes out to foreground. Critical thinking prevails in society, especially in the environment of the growing generation. Many Kyrgyz customs and traditions, related to different ceremonial worships, become heritage of the past or become modernized adjusting to modern conditions. In a multi-ethnic republic, there is a tendency toward interaction and interpenetration of cultures. In addition, urban culture has its distinguishing features compared to the culture of provinces. The influence of the American and western civilizations, establishing their priorities in the modern Kyrgyz society to some extent, is intensified.

It is worthwhile to note that at present Islam is reinforcing its positions in the republic in many ways, although other religious denominations and cults make up undoubted competition to its propagation. It is known that many Kyrgyz young people take serious interest in Christianity and other religions, which, for its turn, displeases the orthodox Kyrgyz. This part of the youth certainly loses interest in places of worship – mazars, since they adopt other values. However, it is a subject for a separate discussion.

The global ecological crisis, which broke out by the 70s of the 20th century, agitated the western European public. Philosophers and sociologists started looking for ways out of the approaching catastrophe. Such concepts as "ecological consciousness" and "ecological ethics," which, we believe, we should be guided by in this research, appeared exactly at that time [2]. In the -70s, philosophers started re-comprehending rationalism of Francis Bacon and Renee Descartes, the Christian eschatology, and came to the conclusion that the foundation of the western European self-consciousness itself suggests barbarian, destructive attitude towards nature and human, as its inalienable component. The idea about the greatest value of the animists' heritage, which was rejected by the priests of science, appeared at the same time. Ronald Higgins, in his remarkable book "The Seventh Enemy. Human Factor in the Global Crisis," said: "We tasted the fruit from the tree of knowledge and I don't see the ways by which we could bring the integrity of the animistic vision of the world

back to us. We, of course, cannot gain it by rejecting science and other forms of objective reason. They are vitally important for the maintenance of the intellectual discipline and the new complex social organization. However, we cannot dispute obvious and hidden claims of science to monopolistic possession of truth, that its vision of the world is the only reality" [2, 48].

Higgins and other philosophers did not imagine how it could be possible to connect laboratory disciplines with visionary consciousness. Nevertheless, the discovery of the transcendental, the awakening of religious spirit, was called the seventh source of light capable of conciliating terminal opposites in the consciousness of a modern man.

Fortunately, neither ideology, nor man-caused process, is capable of changing genetic mechanism of mind – that, which Karl Jung called **archetypes** and **symbols, collective unconscious** [see: 14, 15]. Due to these mechanisms, people not only preserve, but also revive their cultural roots and national self-consciousness during favorable periods in history. Today, in Kyrgyzstan, we observe the beginning of such tendency. However, before starting to examine these problems, we will briefly touch upon the peculiarities of worshiping places – **yyik jer** in Kyrgyz language, – which do not loose their significance these days. Here, one can observe close connection with traditional views, national character, and religious-mystical consciousness factor of the Kyrgyz people.



*The children of Kazan-Kuigan village of Naryn Province draw nature*

Both the ancient pre-Islamic beliefs [3], as well as traditions related to dissemination of Islam in Central Asia and Kyrgyzstan, left their mark on the worship of sacred sites. In the first case, we come across the ceremonial culture of nomads, which is rooted in the great antiquity, when totemic and animistic views existed in people's consciousness. This was reflected in the worship of spirits of mountains, rivers, lakes, animals, and plants. Similar was observed among the Mongolian, Tuvinian, Khakas, and Altaic people. For example, **oboo** (Altaic: **obogo**) – a hill made out of rocks was erected as a sacrifice to the spirit of a sacred mountain [1, 319]. Abramzon notes that such objects of worship "could often be observed in high-altitude mountainous regions, and, first of all, in the mountain system of the Pamirs and Alai," it being known that "there are horns of mountain sheep and goats piled up, poles with yak tails, its hair tufts, pieces of cloth, hanging on them, and many rags, cotton balls, threads, etc., hanging down from twigs and tree branches, near these places. Sacrifices to their "masters" were made on passes quite often" [1, 319].

Natural sacred sites were also connected to the worship of the mother **Umai Ene** – the protectress of mothers and children. Abramzon, while making reference to folk tales, notes: "Umai Ene's footprints remained on some of the cliffs and rocks from her visit to the earth. They are called Umai Enendin tagy (marks of mother Umai)" [1, 293].

However, the worship of **mazars** obtained the greatest prevalence among the Kyrgyz. Initially, places of worship, as it has already been mentioned, were called **oboo**; in worshipping interpretation, the Arabic word "mazar," which meant grave or cemetery, and "sacred site, place of pilgrimage; object of worship", was introduced into day-to-day life speech of the Kyrgyz people with the strengthening of Islam [7, 509]. Another interpretation of the word "mazar" is connected to the tradition of pre-Islamic worship and discussed in the dictionary by Yudakhin in the following manner: "sacred tree, sacred bush (often sea-buckthorn, dog-rose, which are usually covered with rags of cloth tied on them)" [7, 509]. At the same time, according to the opinion existing among the Kyrgyz people, a forty-year-old tree or older is considered mazar, i.e. sacred

site. Yudakhin mentions in his dictionary a noteworthy ethno-cultural feature of the Kyrgyz people: in figurative meaning the word "mazar" was used to call a mother, thus demonstrating special respect and admiration [7, 509].

The words "ee"<sup>3</sup> and "ata" are used to call the spirits-protectors. In the first case, they usually say "mazardyn eesi" (spirit-protector of a sacred site), "bashattyn eesi" (spirit of a spring), "arashandyn eesi" (spirit of a healing spring) [see: 1, 317]. Thus, the word "ee" has a connection with a tradition of animistic vision of the Kyrgyz people. The word "ata" is concerned with the worship of a sacred mythical or legendary person and has a slightly different nuance, which will be discussed later.

It was typical among the Kyrgyz people that some or other mountainous regions often were property of some clan. Thus, Radlov noted: "...the **Bugu** (large tribal sub-division. – A.K.) reported to me that in that region, the Karakyrghyz consider the Mountains Kungraman near the source of the Chu River, Cholpon-Ata – near the Kok-Su River, and Asyl-Bash-Ata – near the Tekese River sacred" [cited according to source: 1, 317]. Abramzon mentioned that "in the south-western part of Issyk-Kul Province, approximately 35 km from Barskaun village, where the Kyrgyz people, considering themselves members of the Bugu Tribe's Bapa Clan live," the sacred "Dyungyuryomyo" Mountain (in Kyrgyz: "rattling") is situated. According to the narrative of one of the village residents, "the mountain was esteemed, people went there to worship, made sacrifices there. There was a pass on the mountain; one could constantly hear the sound of river reminding of a human conversation, and the night before Friday one could hear a child weeping. Although the sacred site frightened, it was still visited. The **Kochkor-Ata** Mountain in the Kochkor Valley and many others were worshiped, as well. The **Muz-tag-ata** (in the Sarykol Mountain Range) and the **Markan-Ata** (near the Ulug-chat)" were regarded as sacred mountains among the Kyrgyz of Kashgar [1, 318].

There are also sacred sites related to the worship of forefathers-totems. In particular, the Bugu Tribe worships the Alamyschyk

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<sup>3</sup> *Pronunciation - [ee].*

Mountain, "which is related to the legend about the Bugus' progenitress – Muyuzduu Baibiche. There is a ... mazar... and an object of worship in the form of a lonely juniper tree" [1, 318].

Places of worship in the Kochkor Valley, in particular the rocky hill called **Kochkor-Ata** in the center of the valley, are of interest. The Kazakh researcher Chokan Valikhanov referred to this mountain. With regards to the attack of the Kyrgyz people by the Kazakh Sultan Barak (1770), the scholar says: "...he grew very careless and, being proud of strength, desecrated the sanctuary of the ancient Kyrgyz – the Koshkarata Grave" [cited according to source: 1, 318]. The Kyrgyz, angry with such act of vandalism and cruelty of the Kazakh Sultan, attacked his camp and put to flight Barak's army and "chased him as far as the Ili River" [1, 318]. As Valikhanov noted, the Kyrgyz ascribed this victory to the protection given by the sanctuary [1, 318].

It is necessary to note that there are folk traditions and legends related to Kochkor District. According to one of them, Kochkor was a stepbrother of Manas (there were six of them altogether – "alty aram"), who, after the hero's death, started plotting against his widow Kanykei and stirred up a mutiny in the team of Manas – the forty warriors (kyrk choro). At first, he and "the kyrk choro" were able to escape to the enemy of Manas, Konurbai; the second time, Semetei overtook them and stroke down Kochkor along with the forty warriors of Manas, he then built a tomb – kumboz for each one of them [8, 324]. Perhaps, we observe the remainders of these tombs at the sacred site called Kochkor-Ata. According to the version of another legend, Manas went through Kochkor District on his way to the commemoration of Khan Kokyotoi.

From an ecological perspective, the Kochkor Valley is a unique region with rich natural resources: mineral wells, salt caves and fertile land. One of the most important tasks is to support the ecological balance in this region.

Islam had much influence on the sacred sites' worship because people started relating many sanctuaries with the worship of saints. Abramzon lists the following toponyms, which have relation to the worship of saints:

1. **Arstanbab** in the southern Kyrgyzstan with a mazar of the same name. Arstanbab had seven sons, who are listed below.
2. **Oisul-Ata** (in Kulja town). By the way, Oisul-Ata is considered by the Kyrgyz people to be a mythical protector of camels.
3. **Karakol-Ata** (in Karakol town).
4. **Shyn-Ata** (on the northern shore of Issyk-Kul Lake).
5. **Manjly-Ata** (on the southern shore of Issyk-Kul Lake)
6. **Cholpon-Ata** (on the northern shore of Issyk-Kul Lake).
7. **Kochkor-Ata** (in the north of Naryn Province).
8. **Ooluya-Ata** (present-time Jambul town – Aulie-Ata in the past) [1, 320-321].

The Cholpon-Ata worship place has been of great interest to us for many years because its exact location has not been identified until now. There is a following indication in Abramzon's work: "According to moldo's<sup>4</sup> words, "saint" Cholpon-Ata was buried on a hill (dobo). There were two springs: one with cold and one with hot water, poplars and willows grew there. Infertile women and ill people from the local residents, who populated the northern shore of Issyk-Kul Lake from Chon-Oruktuu village all the way to Toru-Aigyr village, visited this place. Here, they made sacrifices – tulo. They brought their ill cattle here, spent a night and said their prayers (one usually went on a Thursday night. They also organized praying ceremonies Jer-Suu tayuu (worship spirits of water-earth. – A.K.) here, which were aimed at requesting rain. Those, who lived nearby, as well as families of rich manaps,<sup>5</sup> buried their dead at the foot of the hill" [1, 318].

We believe that it is necessary to carry out a detailed toponymic research among the residents of the territory, which was indicated by Abramzon, for the purpose of finding more exact location of the Cholpon-Ata sacred site.

Special attention should be paid to the worship of healing wells, springs, and hot springs. The famous researcher Petr Semenov Tyan-Shanskii mentioned the Ak-Suu River, confluent of the

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<sup>4</sup> "Moldo" means "mullah" in Kyrgyz language.

<sup>5</sup> A Kyrgyz nobleman.

Jergalan River in Issyk-Kul Province, which was famous among the Kyrgyz people for its warm springs. He calls the spring "Alma-Arasan" and describes the place of worship, noting that colorful rags of cloth hanging down from bushes and trees present sacrifices to the "spring's genius" [cited according to source: 1, 325-326]. Abramzon adds to his information: "At this mazar, which is called **Almaluu Mazar**, people cut sheep, baked bread, drank water from the spring, bathed in the pit filled with spring water. Some saw a white young of camel (ak tailak). It is considered to be the "master" of the spring (*bulaktyn eesi*)" [1, 326].

Many sacred springs have lots of legends about them. For example, in the south of Kyrgyzstan, there is a very dramatic legend about a loving couple, a young man by the name of Kulmurza and his true girlfriend Ak-Satkyn. As a result of tragic developments, the young man was killed and his sweetheart committed a suicide. Two trees grew up in the ground, where the innocent souls were buried, and a spring welled out of the ground. Old people came to this mazar to remember the past, and young people made oaths of fidelity to each other at this sacred site. There are many such places in Kyrgyzstan, but unfortunately, no one among the population at those places does any special work on reviving ethically high traditions. But after all, it is exactly them, who are connected to the openness to "signals from the sphere of transcendental, sacred, wherever they would appear, and not in last turn to numinous spirit of those places, which have served for worshipping for centuries..." [2, 69].

It is necessary to mention the **Altyn Arashan** Resort located in the gorge of Teploklyuchenka village, 10 km away from Karakol town. There are more than ten big warm hydrosulphuric and radon springs possessing medicinal qualities in the Altyn Arashan. The springs are located inside of wooden cottages, in which cement bathtubs are filled with spring water. There is almost no vegetation, and people hang pieces of cloth on the scarce bushes growing not far away. There is a place near the resort, which is especially worshiped by the local population: they believe that in the old days, Kydyr, a well-known legendary clan ruler of the Aksu Kyrgyz, lived there on a permanent basis in summer time.

We are convinced that the research of spiritual peculiarities of sacred sites' worship is not possible without taking into account a transpersonal aspect of national consciousness. After all, it serves as a foundation not only for sacred site worship, but also often for its choice in the first place, as well.

The American psychologist Fritiof Kapra [5] is one of the many scientists, who made an attempt to provide scientific grounds for transpersonal tendency in psychology for the first time. Based on Gregory Bateson's ideas [16] about the unity of structure of nature and structure of mind, Kapra proves that namely spiritual world-view "forms the very essence of ecological consciousness" [5, 74]. The works by this author lead to a thought that spiritual worships of sacred sites could become an important aspect of ecological consciousness and provide serious assistance in the work on preserving and protecting the environment.

On ethno-cultural grounds, the transcendental layer of consciousness reveals itself in shamanism (e.g.: **bakshy**, who are popular among the Kyrgyz people), phenomena of clairvoyance (so-called *koz achyk* or clairvoyants), state of trance, and the type of hypnosis (**ayan beruu**) of the gift of *manaschi* to certain people by mythological and legendary persons. The sacred sites' worship is directly connected to the sphere of transpersonal and, for this reason, has its own specific character. The very fact of the paranormal phenomena, when some people experience irrational processes in their mind on frequent interaction with places of worship, is of interest. These people are often under changed forms of consciousness without the use of any drugs.

Thus, during a visit to the sacred site Kochkor-Ata, the author made a record of visions of several *koz achyks*. One of them claimed that he had seen Semetei, the son of Manas, leisurely riding his horse along the mountain range, and then turning towards the mountain and disappearing in the same cleft, on several occasions (this fact is described in the "Manas" Epic). Other clairvoyants, men and women, talked about ancestors' spirits – *arbaks* and local spirits, who were seen here and there doing some things. In the presence of the next spirit, *koz achyk* kneeled and bowed down to



the ground. They taught us about the properties, which one or another stone, connected to a certain spirit, possessed. The clairvoyant recommended to us to collect small pieces of one of such stones, so that upon returning back home, we threw them out of a window into water to heal from a serious illness.

A popular legend connects the spiritual sacred site **Manjly-Ata**, which is located in Ton District, not far from Bokonbaevo village, with some saint of the Mongolian origin, hence the origin of the word "Mongol" – "Manjyl". Ill people and infertile women (more often the latter) visit the Manjly-Ata Mazar, stay there for several days, make sacrifice of some domestic animal (mainly sheep), say prayers – surahs and ayats from the Koran, and perform the Mohammedan prayer. In accordance with the tradition, pieces of cloth are hung on nearby trees and bushes. Perhaps, natural conditions and positive psychological attitude of the ill people have a beneficial effect on the latter. Unofficial statistics witness that many sick people go back to normal and recover their health.

Most likely, certain mechanisms in ill people's mind are stimulated through transpersonal aspect of national consciousness, which helps organism to restore homeostasis. Be that as it may, but multiple visits to the Kochkor-Ata, and, especially, the Altyn-Arashan and the Manjly-Ata, over several years, convinced us that people experienced cases of healing rather often.

The facts described above, as well as other facts, witness that the consciousness of the contemporary is not completely cut off from the animistic roots of the national world-view. A book by R. Kachkeyev "Arbaktar Suiloit", which, according to his testimony, was based entirely on the information provided to him by a clairvoyant by the name of Ak-Maral, was published very recently. On the grounds of communicating with the spirits of ancestors – arbaks – she named a great number of sacred sites in Bishkek and on the territory of Kyrgyzstan, which are allegedly forgotten and therefore not worshiped by anyone. In 2004, by Kachkeyev's initiative, a construction of a complex dedicated to saint Cholpon-Ata, not far from Chon-Sary-Oi village, has begun. For the time present, a

mausoleum – kumbez has been constructed. However, nobody knows saint Cholpon-Ata's true place of burial.

Full trust of an educated man, Deputy of the Jogorku Kenesh, to a clairvoyant, speaks for the kind of influence possessed by obvious or imaginary ideas and images of clairvoyants. Common people – inhabitants of rural and remote areas are more exposed to such influence. This fact shows that it is one of the most powerful instruments capable of making a positive influence on the human moral and ecological principles. At present, this possibility is not used by professional ecologists.

For a modern person, the transpersonal aspect of spiritual worship is full of mystery, inscrutability, and unexplainable and unusual things. On multiple occasions, the author himself experienced and observed incidents of clairvoyance, telepathy, telekinesis, levitation, and parapsychological phenomena, at sacred sites.

Transpersonal effect excites a belief in the higher power, hopes for better future, love for one's motherland, traditions of ancestors, pride for one's land, and national history, in the local population. Consideration of the transpersonal aspect of mind of a person worshiping sacred sites constitutes a powerful psychological instrument of suggestive effect on an individual and his positive attitude towards nature. At the same time, in our opinion, speculations and falsifications, as a natural negative element of spiritual worship, not in the least diminishes its significance for forming of a contemporary ecological human consciousness. Of course, fetishism limits national consciousness of a contemporary in many ways, not allowing him to realize the ceremonial aspect of various worships in broad and critical manner.

We were lucky to meet with the close relatives and friends of manaschi Mambet Chokmorov from Bokonbaevo village. This person was a wise man, a clairvoyant, a healer, and, for several decades, – a keeper of the sacred spring Manjly-Ata. The story of his life is interesting because at the age of four he disappeared from his home and spent more than three weeks in the mountains alone and without any food. According to his mother's testimony, when he returned home, he told about incredible meetings with the team of Manas at the

location Archaluu and Tastar-Ata, and that he was ordered to become a manaschi, when he would turn twenty [see: 11, 390].

This is not the only case when an external transcendental power sets a program independently from a person's desire and abilities and leads a manaschi or akyn<sup>6</sup> through his life. Legendary persons of the past give them ayan (an initiation and, at the same time, a blessing and insight) in their sleep or reality, delivering a certain mission to their consciousness. As a rule, it is humanistic, noble, and of high moral standards. This is the most important aspect of the Kyrgyz national world-view. Manaschi and akyns enjoy veneration and respect among the people, who understand that these people are marked by the Highest Power, Allah, and received their predestination from above. One could name Keldibek, Tynybek, Choyuke, Naimanbai, Sagymbai Orozbekov and Sayakbai Karalaev; akyns: Asan Kaigy, Kalygul, Esenaman, Jenijok, Toktogul, Moldo Kylych and many others among them. We have the right to consider such individuals the bearers of ecological consciousness and ecological ethics. Their influence on the cultural heritage of the people is could not be overestimated.

At the same time, we are amazed by such phenomenon. Bateson proved that mind is an essence of the living; it is spilled in all of the live nature, and serves as a connecting-link among all of its objects. Pure, saint people, akyns, manaschi and others easily pick up these patterns (systems) of mind spilled in the nature, and even the time abyss between the past and the future does not hinder them. The Highest Power, the transcendental beginning, provides them with the ability to reestablish the relationship of times.\* We believe that the factor, which is able to assimilate the traditional myth into the consciousness of a contemporary and realize the continuation of historical evolution, is concealed here. Jung wrote: "Myths and tales gives expression to unconscious processes, and, when they are re-told again, it brings back to life corresponding processes and contributes to their recollection; thereby, a relationship between the consciousness and the unconscious is reestablished. Psychiatrists

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<sup>6</sup> *Person, who creates, improvises and sings folk songs with an accompaniment of the national string instrument "komuz".*

know too well what division of the two halves of mind is fraught with. They are familiar with it in the form of dissociation of personality, which is the root cause of all neurosis... Since opposites never connect at their own level... there is always need in some "third" of the higher order, in which both of the component parts will come together. And since a symbol is produced from the consciousness to the same extent as from the unconscious, it is able to connect them with each other, conciliating their conceptual polarity by the means of its form, and their emotional polarity – by the means of its numinosity" [13, 205-206].

Jung's words seem significant and topical within our context: "The loss of tradition makes the masses neurotic, preparing them for collective hysteria, – and collective hysteria requires collective therapy, which consists of abolishment of freedom and establishment of terror. Those states, in which rational materialism rules, have tendency to turn not as much into prisons, but into madhouses" [13, 207].

Examination of the peculiarities of sacred sites' worship from the standpoint of social ecology and psychology leads to the following conclusion.

The positive aspect in sacred sites' worship is that they turn into some kind of "forbidden" zones, upon which a taboo has been placed by the traditional views and beliefs of the Kyrgyz people. From the standpoint of regulation of the natural balance of ecosystems, it is the specialists-ecologists, who will decide on the situations related to artificial protection of places of worship, construction of mazzars, mausoleums and other installations. Some of our observations demonstrate negative influence of the ceremony of hanging pieces of cloth and rags on bushes and tree branches. As a result, on the one hand, the place of worship starts to look non-aesthetical, and, on the other hand, there is no guarantee that this ceremony does not have a negative impact on the ecology of plants.

From the standpoint of social ecology and psychology, the positive role of ancient ceremonies, including the ceremony of worship of sanctuaries consists in the following:

- 1) People acquire correct and harmonious attitude towards nature;
- 2) They do not consign to oblivion traditions of ancestors by supporting ancient traditions;
- 3) From the standpoint of social and transpersonal psychology, worship is some form of psychological protection of national consciousness from global assimilation of peoples' cultures and traditions under modern conditions;
- 4) Construction of mazars, mausoleums, architectural complexes in places of worship, has its own impact on the consciousness of the contemporary Kyrgyz people; this worship acquires features of modernization and is bound with national roots, besides, worshiping installations become local sights and could influence tourist business;
- 5) Since worship sites are often connected to folk myths, traditions, and legends, it would be useful to create tourist booklets (hand-books of advertising nature) and popular scientific brochures, which would contain description of sacred sites and provide legends and traditions related to them, for specialists in ethnography, folklore, history, and, especially, for the growing generation.

Finally, along with the preservation of worship sites, it is necessary to popularize and

support oral creative work of the Kyrgyz people, which should play an important role in the work of forming of spiritual and ecological consciousness of modern generation of the citizens of Kyrgyzstan.

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# The Vocabulary of Sacred Sites in Kyrgyz Language

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**Cholpon Dyikanova**

Study of sacred sites has revealed a special layer of vocabulary in Kyrgyz language, which included the words concerning the nomination of ministers of mazars, their clothing and instruments, and traditions and rituals performed at sacred sites. Kyrgyz people call sacred sites – **yiik jer** (*yiik – holy, sacred; jer – land*) and **mazar** – *sacred site, place of pilgrimage*. The word **mazar** is an adoption from Arabic language. The word mazar in modern Kyrgyz language has two meanings: 1) *grave, cemetery*; 2) *sacred site, place of pilgrimage*. A bush or a tree covered with pieces of cloth is also called mazar and means *sacred tree or sacred bush*.

At sacred sites, pilgrims read the Koran, perform prayerful rituals, give **tule**, and arrange zikir. The word **tule** in Kyrgyz language means *sacrificial meal*, which is usually arranged during daytime on Thursday, before Friday, which is sacred for Muslims. This word is formed from the verb **tile** – to ask (for), to wish.

The word **zikir** – *dervishes' zeal* is used for description of religious technique of trance, bringing oneself to ecstasy by means of repeating endless repetition of Allah's epithets. The word **zikir** was adopted by the Kyrgyz people from Arabic language, in which it meant *Sufi techniques accompanied by prayerful singings and collective trances*. The **zikir** ritual is usually performed on the night from Thursday to Friday. These rituals are necessarily performed in the presence of religious ministers, usually **bakshy** or **moldo**. The words bakshy and moldo serves for nomination of ministers of religious worships in many Turkic languages of Central Asia. Some scientists trace back etymology of the word bakshy to the Chinese word **boshi, bog-si** – *teacher, instructor*; and the word **moldo** has two meanings in Kyrgyz language – *literate, ecclesiastic, minister of religion*, and in figurative meaning – *humble, obedient*.

The group of vocabulary used for nomination of ministers of religious worships is represented in Kyrgyz language by words designating Muslim and pre-Muslim spiritual positions. Such words as **azanchy** – *muezzin*, **imam** – *senior in a mosque*, **moldo** – *mullah*, **muptu** – *mufti jurist interpreting suras from the Koran*, **shaiyk** – *sheikh, keeper of a sacred site*, **eshen** – *spiritual instructor*, etc., relate to Muslim positions.

The words of a shaman trend are widely represented along with the Muslim ones. The spokesmen and ministers of shaman worships were shamans and wise men: **bakshy** – *bahshi*, **dumana** – *shaman*, **emchi** – *wise man, healer*, **tamyrchy** – *wise man diagnosing illness by pulse*, **tabyb** – *healer*, **byubyu** – *woman shaman*. In the past, shamans and wise men had big influence on the Kyrgyz people; tribe members assigned them a special role of a mediator in contacts with the world of supernatural. Shamans were the keepers of traditions of their people, took care of physical, moral, and spiritual health of their tribe members. Shamans were the keepers of open traditional medicine; they also played a certain role in accumulation of the first theoretical knowledge in mathematics and astronomy (Kyrgyz terms: **jaichy** – *weather conjurer* and **esepchi** – *the one, who keeps track of time*). These occupations were inherited and usually passed from a father to a son. They observed stars, predicted weather, determined optimal conditions and dates for migration and seasonal work.

Research of words on nomination of persons of pre-Muslim faiths demonstrated that many of them were ancient and native Turkic in their origin. Many words were registered in the Ancient Turkic Dictionary (ATD) representing the code of vocabulary, which has been preserved in numerous memorials of the 7<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries. Materials of other modern Turkic languages, the degree of relation with which, in general, is unequal, could help to trace the origin, development and change of these words' meanings. Kyrgyz language is especially close to the Turkic languages of South Siberia: Altaic, Khakas and Tuvonian, which represent one of the branches of the vast group of Turkic languages. Modern South-Siberian languages are situated along the southern and eastern border of distribution of Turkic languages. These languages are close to Kyrgyz language in its



phonetic, morphological, and lexical aspects. In lexical aspect, their common feature is the presence of a large quantity of mongolisms, which is not observed in Turkic languages of other groups.

The special language closeness of the Kyrgyz and Altaic people reflects their language commonality, as it was correctly noted by Igor Batmanov, "the Kyrgyz-Altaic language commonality emerged not in the process of mutual influence, but by means of separation of languages of the Kyrgyz people and the mountainous Altaic people from one base-language by means of its differentiation."

The Turkic people of Central Asia and Siberia had different historical destinies. Unlike the Kyrgyz people, the tribes of Altai were not drawn into the influence orbit of the Karakhanid state in the 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries, as it happened to the Turkic people of Central Asia. In the 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries, Mongolian languages and tribes practicing Buddhism strongly influenced the forming of the peoples and languages of Altai.

The worshiping practice of Buddhism in the South Siberia gained significant propagation in the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries; however, it was not widely disseminated among the Altaic people.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the process of converting of Altaic people into Christian faith started in Altai, which also reflected upon their adoption of some of the Orthodox worships. However, despite the forced conversion of the Altaic people into Christianity, many of them remained followers of shamanism, which is once again confirmed by the presence of a large quantity of words used for designation of religious shaman worships and their priests.

In the environment of the Altaic people, just as in the environment of the Central Asian nomads in general, shamanism was extremely widespread. The first information from written sources about shamanism among the Turkic people is found in Uighur memorials dating back to the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Starting from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, *kam*, the name of a priest of shaman worships, appears. In Khakas language, which is also included in the group of South-Siberian languages, such words as, **ham** – *shaman*, **ham inei** – *woman-shaman*, **pastaan paba** – *shaman instructor*, and **im-tom** – *shaman wise man*, can be found. The Khakas divided shamans into three categories: **pugdur han** – *strong, great shaman*, **pulgos han** –

*shaman with education*, **chalanchyh** – *shaman without special education*, **tolkech** – *fortuneteller*, **tukur kech** – *shaman curing with spittle*. The first two kinds of shamans had special costumes, tambourines, and wooden hammers; the third kind did not have special costume and was not familiar with special shaman education.

Shamanism has been widespread among the Tuvinian people from time immemorial. Among the Tuvinian people, it represents a certain world-view; its sphere of influence reached all aspects of private life and culture. It had long history of formation and development. Nevertheless, the new religion – Lamaism gradually penetrated all spheres of the Tuvinian people's life. Yet it is necessary to note that Lamaism in Tuva peacefully co-existed with old shaman views. That is why in Tuva, **ham** – *shaman*, **domchu** – *healer-sorcerer*, **oduchu** – *wise man*, **tolgoch** – *fortuneteller, foreteller*, **chatchy** – *sorcerer*, who evokes rain, existed side by side with lamas.

In the environment of Turkic language speaking peoples, development of shaman worships was not uniform; even the name of the central figure of the shaman priest in ancient Turkic time was not universal, they, too, were called differently: **kam**, **ham**, **shaman**, **bakshy**, **dubana**.

The word *dubana* has two meanings: 1) "*God's fool*," *possessed*; 2) *beggarly*. In the idea of superstitious religious people – it is the one who has the charisma of prophecy. This word is not recorded in the Ancient Turkic Dictionary.

The word **shaman** derives from the Arabic word **sham** – *lamp, candle*; **compare shamana** – *lamp, torch*. There were different kinds of shamans divided into original ranks. By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, shamanism of the Kumands was clearly of professional nature. Shamans often received money and cattle for their services. The Altaic people had two kinds of shamans: **kara jan** – *black shaman*, **ak jan**, **sut jan** – *white shaman*. Among the Kumands, shamans were divided into "great" – **nyan** or **ulug kam (cher ayaktyg kam)** and "minor" – **yrbykchy shabychylar** ones.

The category of shamans called **cher ayaktyg kam**, literally "shaman, who has earth legs," performed shaman rituals devoted only to spirits of terrestrial and underground sphere. The word **kam** in the meaning of "priest of shaman worship" is not found in Kyrgyz

language; the word **moldo**, which received greater significance in Kyrgyz language than in other Turkic languages, is more widely used.

In Kyrgyz language, pilgrims visiting pre-Muslim sacred sites are also called **ziyaratchy**, which derives from the word **ziyarat** – *pilgrimage*. Pilgrimage to sacred sites is not compulsory for all believers; it was usually performed by those, who received **ayan** – *suggestion from above*. This *suggestion* was usually made from above in one's sleep; it could mean special warning from above; it could be a sign of transfer of secret knowledge or charisma of clairvoyance. Obeying **ayan** was compulsory for all; insubordination could lead to negative consequences.

Pilgrims' clothes and behavior also play an important role during a visit to a sacred site. Before pilgrimage, it is necessary to perform **daarat** – *ritual ablution*.

In the past, bakshy's clothes for performing zikir were very diverse; at present time, men are required to wear a headdress and women – a headscarf, and modest clothes covering the entire body, without any restrictions with regards to form, color, and length. In S. I. Weinstein's opinion, distinctive features of shaman's tambourines and costumes formed as early as the second half of the I century A.D.

Descriptions of bakshy's clothes have been preserved in Kyrgyz language; compare **kuu** or **ak kuu** – *dervish's headdress decorated with swan feathers*. A special cone-shaped hat of a dervish in the form of a skullcap called kuloo is also described in folk literary works. Compare: **Ak kuloolu dumana, asasy bar shyldyrap** (folklore) – *Dervish in white hat with a walking stick with rattle*.

The word **asa** means *walking stick made from abele* with rattles attached to it. It was a necessary shaman's attribute. Bakshy's walking stick is also called **asa-musa**, where the word itself is the name of a plant – *abele*. Bakshy's walking stick was necessarily made from abele because this plant was rot resistant and could be preserved for a long time without deterioration. Compare: **Doo karybait, asa chiribeit** – *Suit does not get old; walking stick made from abele does not rot*.

In addition to the walking stick *asa-musa*, bakshy had amulets, which he never parted with. The amulets were called **tumar**. **Tumar** was a text of incantation written on a piece of paper, folded in a shape

of triangle, and sewn inside of a cloth case. They never parted with tumar and wore it under clothes close to their body. Besides the walking stick, amulets and special headdress, bakshy always had a rosary and a horsewhip – **kamchy** with them. For a Kyrgyz nomad, kamchy was not just a whip; it was a *multipurpose instrument* for performing very different actions. Kamchy was used to cure the ill and conjure spirits away (compare: **kamchy sal** – *to whip*); warriors swore an oath (**kamchy karmat** – *special form of strengthening an oath*); it was used to measure distance, etc. One could express his mood with the help of kamchy by holding it in different positions. If kamchy was dragged on the ground behind its owner, it meant disagreement, non-reconciliation. Compare: **kamchysyn kosho suirop kiruu** – *to feel resentment towards yurta's owner*.

Bakshy accompanied their rituals by singing and playing national instruments. These instruments included **komuz**, **dobulbas**, **kyl kiyak**. **Komuz** is a three-stringed musical instrument played by plucking. **Kyl kiyak** is a two-stringed bow instrument similar to fiddle; the sounding board is usually made from camel skin; the instrument does not rest on a shoulder during play, it is placed vertically on the floor or the ground.

**Dobulbas** was also called **doolbas**, where **dool** meant a drum with one bottom covered with camel skin. Dool produces very loud and deep sound; much earlier, it was used by the Kyrgyz people during war campaigns and falconry. Compare:

Dool kagyp, bakyrat

Beri kel dep, chakyrat.

The drum beats a cannonade

Calling everyone to go ahead.

The names of sacred sites themselves, which usually provided lexical interpretation of words' meanings and had descriptive nature, were translated from Kyrgyz to Russian language during the study of sacred sites; compare: **Kashka Bulak**, where **kashka** – *clear and pure*; **bulak** – *spring, brook, stream*. **Ak Bashat**, where **ak** – *white, pure*; **bashat** – *spring*. **Bashat**, in contrast to the word **bulak** means small spring – its water is absorbed into the ground not far from where the spring comes out.

Well-known mazars are often named in combination with the word **ata** – father. Compare: **Isyk-Ata** (**isyk** – *hot*, **ata** – *father*), **Cholpon-Ata** (**cholpon** – *morning star*), **Manjly-Ata** (*father Manjly*), **Kochkor-Ata** (**kochkor** – *ram*), **Tastar-Ata** (**tastar** – *rope coming from tyundyuk*<sup>1</sup> *to threshold*). The word **ata** in these words has a meaning of a protector. In Konstantin Yudakhin's opinion, the word **Ata** in place-names points out to the sanctity of the place. **Kyrgyzata** (ethnic) *is the spirit-protector of the entire Kyrgyz nation*. **Manjly-Ata** *is the protector of children and mothers – childless people worshiped it and asked for children*. Compare: **Bash tilesen Manjlyga bar, which means** – *If you want to have children, ask Manjly*. **Cholpon-Ata** *is the protector of sheep – poor people worshiped and asked for wealth*. Compare: **Mal tilesen Cholpon-Ataga bar** – *If you want to have wealth, ask Cholpon-Ata*. **Isyk-Ata** *grants health and longevity*. Compare: **Den sooluk tilesen Isyk-Ataga bar** – *If you want to be healthy, ask Isyk-Ata*.

The word **oluya** – *saint, prophet*, which was used by the Kyrgyz people in the past to call seers of venerable age, often can be found in names of sacred sites. In folk works this word is used as an epithet to heroes of venerable age experienced in worldly wisdom. Compare: Oluya Unkyur (*unkyur* – *cave*).

Every sacred site has its master-protector, spirit, which is called **ee** – *master, owner*, **mazardyn eesi** – *spirit of mazar*.

For a Kyrgyz, the word **arbak** – *spirit, spirit of an ancestor* has a special meaning. The word **arbak** has different meanings, which vary depending on its combination with other words. **Arbaka syiyn** meant – *Entrust yourself to spirits of ancestors*. **Arbak kongon kishi** – *lucky person*. When wishing great happiness, the Kyrgyz people used to say: "Ata babandyn arbagy koldosun," which meant – *May your luck be guided by the spirits of your ancestors*. They asked for permission to undertake some action, asked for their blessing; compare: **Arbaktyn aldynan ot** – *Ask for the grace of ancestors' spirits*. They used to appeal to the spirit of ancestors for advice, asked him as an

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<sup>1</sup> *Tyundyuk – the top wooden circle of yurt's frame resting on the upper ends of poles.*

arbiter; compare: **Arbaka koi**, which meant – *call the spirit of ancestors as an arbiter* (let him judge and let him punish). **Arbak** is sacred for the Kyrgyz people; it was considered compulsory to keep promises given to ancestors, read the Koran, arranging sacrificial meals in remembrance of a spirit or spirits of ancestors. **Arbaktan kutul** meant – *clear oneself in the eyes of the spirit of ancestors by keeping given promise, by making sacrifice*, etc.

Sacred sites are the places of abode of the spirits, with whom bakshy could make contact while performing rituals.

While describing mazars, sacred sites, practitioners – healers and wise man often mention protectors of sacred sites, presenting them in the images of **Ak Tailak** – *white young of camel*, **Ak Jylan** – *white snake*, **Ak Tulku** – *white fox*, and **Ak Baka** – *white frog*. The word **ak** in these word combinations, in addition to the meaning – *white*, also has much stronger figurative meaning – *pure, light, sacred*.

Explanation of meanings of the words and word combinations often used by practitioners while describing sacred sites or performing their traditions and rituals helps us to understand the meaning of the worship of sacred sites deeper.

Defining etymology of words is possible only under comparative historical study of related languages; that is why we used materials of Turkic languages of the South Siberia, with which the Kyrgyz people had deep ethnic and cultural relations.

## Sacred Sites.

# The Spiritual Environment of the Planet

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*Republic and many others. Since 1993, Emil has been the founder and co-Chairman of the Ecological Movement of Kyrgyzstan "Aleyne". He has extensive scientific and professional career. He held positions of the Dean of Ecology Department at the International University of Kyrgyzstan and the Director of the Institute of Biology at the National Academy of Sciences. Currently, he serves as the Scientific Adviser to the Central Asian Transboundary Project on Biodiversity Conservation.*

**A** human being's ties with his geographical environment are extremely diverse. They could be symbolically divided into material and spiritual ones. The geographical environment consists of natural and artificial components containing different objects and phenomena, which are included in an individual's sphere of interests to one extent or

another. A special spiritual relationship can be established with some of them and they become so-called sacred sites.

***A sacred site is a local component of geographical environment, with which a human being and human community establish special spiritual bond.***

One's native town, village or country is connected with a person, who was born there, by special feelings. There are many places in the world, which are somehow or other memorable for certain people and groups: places of study, travel, and emotional experience of various events. There are places, which are liked by some or disliked by other people; there are places, where they long to return. The emotional map of the planet is not less complex and saturated than any other geographical map. A sacred site is local. With few exceptions, it could be rather vast territory and in the latter case it includes identified objects. These could be natural formations (springs, rocks, grottos, etc.) and human structures (constructions, burial places, pictures, sculptures, etc.), which are directly worshiped. In this case, we deal with a complex of sacred sites, an ensemble of sacred sites, which are quite often connected among them thematically.

By no means every site and territory, for which an individual has special feelings for or, which have special meaning for him, become sacred sites. A sacred site is connected to specific actual or expected impact on a human being (his health, business, destiny, spiritual state, etc.); it as though responds to his expectation in the case of notice through the performance of specific ritual. There is a definite specialization of sacred sites based on their purpose, success of impact upon the events, conditions and phenomena, which are meaningful for an individual. ***Locality, ritual, and purpose are obligatory features of sacred sites.***

It is very important to note that sacred sites satisfy spiritual needs of human beings, which, in many regards, are much more important than material needs.

During an individual lifetime, every person forms his unique environment, in which places, which are especially dear and memorable by something, play special role. One's own home, a gorge, a river, graves of close people and a place marked by some significant event... Some of them are memorable for the whole family



or village. Others become common property of the people populating a given territory. Few become common property of a nation and receive world-wide fame. Objects of natural and non-natural origin, which are especially significant and worshiped by a wide circle of people, belong to the category of sacred sites.

Sacred sites not only connect a human being with a specific place on the earth, but also become the center point of communication for a certain group of people. It is one of the forms of spiritual communication, the means of forming of the inner world of some group of people sharing common values.

It is necessary to note that in many cases these places are worshiped by people who belong to different ethnic and religious groups and have different citizenship, as well. The higher the level of spirituality, the less important the borders are, which have been artificially created by people between people.

Geographical environment is not homogenous. There are places on the face of the earth, which are especially favorable for life and spiritual communication. Obviously, some of the sacred sites are located exactly in such regions.

Sacred sites have been known since antiquity. Their emergence and functioning are usually linked to one or another religion. It is true for many of them; however, the significant part is not strictly tied to any specific religion. They are worshiped by representatives of various religions, countries and cultures. Many sacred sites serve as peculiar centers of inter-ethnic, inter-cultural and inter-cultural contact.

Sacred sites create the spiritual-informational frame of a country and, in a wider sense, of the whole world. It is very important that objects with common significance are perceived by each person on a profoundly individual basis.

The Soviet time demonstrated that one could do anything to a country, which had been deprived of sacred sites, and to the people, who had been forcedly deprived of memory and links with them. Generations without spiritual values, which actually had no Motherland, grew up. The system of so-called memorials of revolutionary, battle and labor glory was not able to compensate for that loss.

As in all of the former Soviet Union, in Kyrgyzstan, under the excuse of struggle against illiteracy and religious remnants, a struggle

*A resting place near a sacred site*



against sacred sites took place. In old days, many of them were passed from generation to generation, from one nation to the next one. Some of them have been forgotten, others were destroyed, but the tradition of worship itself has remained.

Here are just some of the examples: the famous mountain Suleiman-Too in the south of Kyrgyzstan is sanctified by the name of the Judean King Solomon worshiped by Muslims as St. Suleiman. It has become the place of pilgrimage for Muslims. Human settlements in this area have been known for more than 3 thousand years. Excavations revealed the existence of ancient spiritual constructions, probably, ritual sacrifices. It witnesses that the sacred site has been worshiped since antiquity and its undoubted succession has been preserved in spite of the frequent change of ethnic groups, cultures and religions. This place was especially popular in the Middle Ages and the pre-revolutionary period. According to popular belief, rocks at its slope treated women from infertility. It was considered as special privilege to be buried at the foothill of the sacred mountain. During the post-Soviet period worship and rituals related to it have been revived.

The amazing memorial Saimaly-Tash in the Fergana Mountain Range covers the period from the late Stone Age until the Middle Ages. There are nearly 3 thousand petroglyphs dating back to first century B.C. – the first half of the first century A.D on the territory of 10 hectares at the altitude of 2-3 thousand m. It also served as the place of worship for the tens of generations of people populating the Tian-

Shan for several thousands of years. Being situated along the route of the ancient Great Silk Road, it appeared as peculiar stone chronicles, which had recorded the world-views and beliefs of various ethnic groups, which belonged to nomadic and agricultural cultures, in the course of one and a half thousand years. It was used as the place of practice of ancient worships for a long time. At present, it is worshiped by the local population as a sacred site.

Travelers of the Great Silk Road worshiped the magnificent waterfall Barskoon in the Teskei Alatau Mountain Range on the southern shore of Lake Issyk-Kul. The local residents worship this place at present, as well.

Cholpon-Ata, the sacred site at the northern shore of Lake Issyk-Kul, is dedicated to the morning star Venus (“Cholpon” means “morning star”) and grants wealth and rich herds. At the opposite shore of the lake, there is as though its twin place Manjyly-Ata, which grants successful posterity.

In the mausoleum (kumbez) of the Muslim prophet Idris Paigambar located in the Chatkal Valley, there is a rock with the Sogdean writings dating back to the time of several centuries prior to emergence of Islam. After prolonged period of neglect during the Soviet period, this mausoleum is being revived now like many other places. Repair and restoration work, constant supervision and care and land improvement are being implemented.

Kyumboyz Padysha-Ata known for ages, where the grandson of Prophet Mohammed is buried, has begun a new life. It is located on the bank of the river with the same name in the Chatkal Mountain Range and has been a place of pilgrimage and worship for a long time.

In a cave in the surroundings of the Issyk-Ata Resort, there used to be an idol worshiped by the Buddhist in the Middle Ages. It was an object of worship in latter days, as well. It being known that it was worshiped by many people, who did not have any relation to Buddhism. At present, this cave is obstructed but people continue worshiping the place itself, the healing springs, and the waterfall, by tying pieces of cloth on trees and bushes. And again, the administration of the resort tries to fight against the worship threatening with fine those, who tie rags.

According to a legend, Mathew, one of the apostles and associates of Jesus and the author of one of the Gospels, is buried on the shore of Lake Issyk-Kul in Tyup District. A Christian monastery existed there for a long time.

There is an amazing waterfall Abshir in Osh Province. It is a whole river breaking out of an opening in the rock. It has been an object of worship since old times.

A great number of places are related to legends. In the folk tradition, many outstanding geographical objects are linked by their origin to some events. Suffice it to remember a great number of legends about the origin of Lake Issyk-Kul. The Kyrgyz epic tradition is saturated with mentioning of a large quantity of geographical names. The Kyrgyz people still relate outstanding objects of geographical surroundings with the deeds of the legendary Manas and his associates. According to legends, the narrow cleft, through which a mountain river runs on the way to Naryn, was formed as a result of the stab by the sword of Manas. Huge rocks in Jumgal District stiffened as if they were resting bodyguards of Manas. There are places related to the names and events of other epic memorials. Mountains and valleys have been spiritualized by the deeds of the heroes of antiquity.

There are sacred sites all over the country, in each of its corner. Connection with these places makes people spiritual children of the country, its history and nature. They make up the essential part of geographical surroundings and spiritual legacy, undoubtedly, more important in many ways than even fields and factories, in the name of which many of the sacred sites have been destroyed.

The planet is not faceless. It has its own face, which is not conditioned on human activity. It has its own meaning, not the one, which is imposed on it by a human being. Human beings, who entitled themselves to transform the face of the planet, often act against the meaning of nature, destroying not only their own habitat but also their spirituality.

Crudity, irresponsibility, complete lack of delicacy in interrelation with nature cannot but have the very negative effect upon human beings' relationships with others of their kind.

To the so-called “modern human”, anxious attitude toward nature, which made our ancestors different from us, seems as an expression of their ignorance and dependence on the forces of nature. They identify delicacy in relations with nature as savagery. In reality, many tens of thousands of years of the so-called “savagery” had not caused such catastrophic damage to the native planet, as the modern civilization has caused in countable hundreds of years.

This time could be called the time of false values and false aims. Yet evidence and traditions of a different kind of relations with earthly habitat has still been preserved.

This time could be called the time of homeless people, in the sense that they do not have special indissoluble links with any of the specific geographic point or region. The majority of the population of the planet is not tied down to any specific place, except for the fact of birth. Their goal in life narrows down to securing their personal well-being, which is not related to peculiarities of their place of birth and place of residence in any way. Under the conditions of such mass loss of sensitivity, mass indifference of people in well-being of specific geographical habitat, it is difficult to expect radical change of situation, even though it is far from being normal.

Revival of sacred sites, which have become not only the subject of interest of researchers, but also the subject of an ever-increasing worship by people, instills hope for spiritual rebirth of society. And it will become a genuine rebirth, if it responds to spiritual demand of unification among people regardless of their religious or ethnic background, and a discovery of spiritual roots with the earth, with one’s immediate surrounding and supporting space, which becomes one’s home and native land.

Sacred sites are the spots where human beings find expression of features of an individual, unique and undistorted face image of the planet, where the history of the earth and the history of a human being merge, where the meaning of human existence harmoniously merges with the true sense of the earth and becomes enriched by it. Sacred sites are the route for the Human Being’s return to the Earth and returning the Human Being to the Earth.

***Sacred sites are priceless heritage and gift to future.***

## The Notion of Sanctity for the Kyrgyz People

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**Kusein  
Isaev**



**I**n Kyrgyz language, traditions and everyday social life, the notions of “sacred” and “sanctity” are commonly existent.

Places of worship, spirits, objects and animals, which should be treated with respect, which are held sacred and honored to such extent that it is prohibited for a human to lift his hand against them, blessed, which are precious and dear, are called sacred.

Sanctity is described in oral folk compositions, tales, various life conceptions, songs and traditions. For example: “El degen yiyk kazyna” – *People are the sacred treasury*; “Sozun chyn, jolun tuura, molsun, kensin” – *If your words and ways are true, then you will be respected by everyone*. “Shertin ak, oshonduktan yiyk elsin” (A. Osmonov) – *That nation is sacred, whose oath is innocent*. “Kol tiybes yiyk saktalat Ata meken jurtubuz” (T. Moldo) – *We hold our native land sacred*. “Adamdyn kolu barbagan yiyktygy bar eken” (“Semetei”) – *It has such sanctity that one cannot lift his hand against it*.

**“A spirit of ancestors is sacred.”** A special place in the historical life of the Kyrgyz people is given to the “sacred worship of the spirit”. As the wise thinker of the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Yollyg-Tegin notes, the Kyrgyz people followed the rule: “If you wish for your family to go on, never forget your ancestors’ spirit.”

The folk wisdom saying, “If the spirit is displeased, then people will not be successful in their endeavors” has been used for a long time. Holding the spirit sacred, worshiping the spirit and protecting oneself with the help of the spirit have been preserved in all spheres of the Kyrgyz people’s social life. This is witnessed by the wide use of this notion in the folk creative works. “Asyl Bakai koikashka, arbagy jandan bir bashka” – *The noble famous Bakai, his spirit is different from other people’s spirits*. “Arbagy karap turganda, ordogo kantip kirebiz?” – *How can we enter the palace, when his spirit is soaring over it?* “Arbakka syiin” – *Bow down to the spirit*. “Ata-babandyn arbagy konsun” – *May your ancestors’ spirit deign to you*. “Arbagy koldoit” – *He is protected by his spirit*. “Arbak ugur!” – *Be damned (by the spirit)!* “Atandyn arbagy tobondon ursun!” – *May the spirit of your ancestor strike you!* “Arbaktan kutul” – *Purify yourself in the spirit’s eyes*. “Arbaktyn aldynan ot” – *Ask for permission of the ancestors’ spirit*. “Tiruudo ozum, olgondo arbagym yraazy” – *In this world myself, and in the other world my spirit will be pleased* (T. Sydykbekov). When an enemy attacked the people, an old wise man addressed them with the words: “Erkegin emes, katynyn, chonun emes, balan soyul kotorboson, atanyn arbagyna koem” – *If all of you, men, women, adults and children alike do not come forth against the enemy, I will appeal to the spirit of your ancestors, - and called them to struggle*.

When someone was not on good terms with someone else, he cursed that person by mentioning the spirit. “Arbaktyn tyshynda kal” – *May you be left without the protection of the ancestors’ spirit*, or “Arbagyn bashtan uz” – *Stay without the spirit’s benevolence*.

Achievements and victories of a human or the nation were welcomed by mentioning of the spirit. “Arbagy kotoruldu” – *He is successful, prosperous (because of his spirit)*, “Atagy chykkán aalamga” – *He is well known to the whole world (because of his spirit)*, “Arbagy ketken dalaiga, o, bottom, elin esen jataby?” – *Is your nation renowned to the entire world successful?* (“Semetei”).

It means that in the life of the Kyrgyz people, it was common to worship the “spirit” and to hold him sacred. In the oral folk tradition, one can come across information how the Kyrgyz people, who were engaged in cattle breeding, worshiped domestic animals (with the exception of a horse) and some species of wild ruminants for centuries of the nomadic way of life. “Koi ichinde kozgolbos, yiyk bolgon serke bar” – *There is a sacred leader in the sheep herd*. “Yiyk kotorgon buura” – *The sacred sire camel*. “Yiyk kotorgon toru aigy” – *The sacred sorrel stud-horse*.

However, according to tradition, the Kyrgyz people do not hold a horse sacred because they believe that it originated from the wind.

The even-toed wild ruminants, kaiberens<sup>1</sup>, were considered sacred. “Askala ottop jaiylgan kiyik bolot turbaiby; adis mergen atkany yiyk bolot turbaiby” – *After all, those that graze in the cliffs are the kiyiks<sup>2</sup>, so everything that is shot by an accurate rifleman is the best of the best (sacred)*.

The notion of “sacred” was used with regards to strong people, who were as sharp-sighted as a golden eagle and had a courageous heart as a lion, as well as with regards to the golden eagle itself calling it “ak yiyk” – *very strong golden eagle*, “jylanach yiyk” – *mythological creature helping people in difficult situations*, “ak yiyktaí aigy” – *courageous, strong and tenacious as the golden eagle*.

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<sup>1</sup> In Kyrgyz language “kaiberen” is a general term for wild ruminants, as well as the name of their mythological protector – Kaiberen.

<sup>2</sup> In Kyrgyz language “kiyik” is a general term for all even-toed animals with an exception of a pig.



In spite of the fact that the notions “sacred” and “sanctity” were preserved in thoughts, different oral creative works and traditions, I became interested and surprised that to the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there had been no special research and publications explaining and analyzing these concepts.

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One of the main reasons for dissemination of the notion of “sanctity” in the life of the Kyrgyz people is its connection with Tengrianity,<sup>3</sup> which embraces the world view, world knowledge and people’s attitude towards the world. “Ustunde Kok Teniri jaralganda, astyda booru jazy buurul Jer jaralganda, ortosunda Adam uulu jaraldy” – *When the Blue Sky appeared in the above, and the wide-chested gray Earth below, a Human appeared in the middle*. The nomadic Kyrgyz people tried to show their life, family life and thousands of years old interests by means of making engravings on rocks. There is an immediate link between Tengrianity and the “Manas” Epic-Encyclopedia. To tell the truth, Tengrianity is present not only in the “Manas” itself, but it also lays in the foundation of the story about Manas. Manas was considered the continuation of Tenir. For the people of Kyrgyz, Manas is both the Sun and the Moon, and the merging of gold with silver. In the great history of the Kyrgyz people, Manas is considered the most sacred among the sacred. In the “Manas”, it says that the nation is sacred and its freedom is sacred. The integrity of Ala-Too<sup>4</sup> and unity of the nation are sacred. Ancient tradition of ancestors is sacred. Mother is sacred. Father is sacred. The consciousness, which could foresee and foretell the future, the critical spirit, which cares for itself and for others, are sacred. Native language is sacred. Humanity is sacred. Honor of the nation is sacred. The name of the Kyrgyz is sacred. If one continues to count, there are many “sanctities”, which are honored by Manas. Manas prefers death to the shame of giving up his native land to an enemy. “Kzyktuu jerdi aldyryp, Kyrgyz uulu bolgoncho, kyrylyp jatyp kalaly” – *It is better to die, than to be the son of*

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<sup>3</sup> “Tenir” means “sky” in Kyrgyz language.

<sup>4</sup> The Ala-Too Mountains.

*the Kyrgyz, who gave up his land*, – says Manas. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, under the condition of globalization, the ancient sanctity of homeland for the Kyrgyz people is turning into a powerful force.

Since the foundation of the Kyrgyz people's world-view was based on Tengrianity, which was held sacred, great and unchangeable, the people of Kyrgyz lived in harmony with the Nature. For centuries, they considered Tenir the spirit of the universe itself and the creator of the whole world. They called it Koko-Tenir, Tenir, and worshiped it. Despite the fact that the Nature itself was sacred for the Kyrgyz people, it had its functions in the eyes of the Prophet and the holy book. They perceived it as live, great, eternal and sacred. Our ancestors believed that the world consists of three worlds. The Highest World is the Kok (Sky) or the Light, the Middle World is the Earth-Water or the Existence, and the Lowest World is the Underworld or the Darkness. The creator of the world Koko Tenir belonged to the "Highest World", which was situated at the other end of the world above the sky and the peak.

According to the legend about Tenir, "Koko Tenir" created the Sky with an open peak and the Earth with a shaggy chest first, and then a human being arose between them. This ancient legend of the Kyrgyz people later turned into the legend of the entire world and became the foundation of all religious books about the idea of the "creation of the world". In ancient family trees of other nations, there is information saying that "the ancient Kyrgyz worshiped many Gods", but it does not mention anywhere which Gods they were. It only mentions that the ancient Kyrgyz said: "My Tenir... My Tenir" while extending their hands. Speaking as a matter of fact, according to suggestions made by historical research, all subsequent religions originated from Koko Tenir, and everything is based on the "legend about Tenir", "wise aphorisms about Tenir" and "teachings of Tenir".

The notion of "Koko Tenir" is not just a religion, but it is the whole World! To tell the truth, "Koko Tenir" does not fit the conceptions about religion provided in books, it stepped out of its framework and turned into the life of the Kyrgyz people, it is much deeper and much more superior World without borders! "Koko Tenir", having formed in the world-view of the Kyrgyz people long

time ago, sunk into their everyday life, language, heart, thoughts, traditions and living conditions. The word “Tenir” itself is dearer for the people of Kyrgyz than the words “God” or “Allah”. In the opinion of European scholars of the last century: “For the Kyrgyz people, the name of Allah is “Koko Tenir”. When they have a problem, they appeal not to “Allah”, as the rest of Muslim people do, but to the Sky.” “Koko Tenir” is the great, sacred and spiritual World because the thoughts of the Kyrgyz people are untouched as the primeval nature, pure as the clear waters, clean as the air of the Tenir-Too<sup>5</sup>, very deep as Bai-Kul and Issyk-Kul and very high as the Khan-Tengri. It is the sacred idea about the inseparability of the Nature and human from one another and their unity; it is the Great Thought, the Great World and the sacred world knowledge that “Koko Tenir” originated exactly from the existence and the heroic life of the Kyrgyz people, who have successfully gone through life’s trials and difficult historical paths! That is why all of the Kyrgyz people’s sanctities have come from and worshiped Tengrianity.

The people of Kyrgyz, during the Stone Age, the age of matriarchy and, later, the age of patriarchy worshiped nine Tenirs: starting from Koko Tenir (God of Sky), Umai Ene (Ochok Tenir, the Holy Mother or the mother of all living creatures), Kun Teniri (God of Sun), Ai Teniri (God of Moon), Jol (Jyldyz) Teniri (God of Stars), Jer Teniri (God of Earth), Suu Teniri (God of Water), Too Teniri (God of Mountains) and Kan (Sogush) Teniri (God of War). Every time, when they worshiped one or another Tenir, they started with the words: “Oo, Koko Tenir!” and then repeated the name of the Tenir, whom they worshiped, nine times.

Each of the worships was accompanied by an animal sacrifice (a horse, a sheep, etc.). It is necessary to note that a horse was sacrificed to Gods of Sky, Sun, Moon, Stars and War, who were highly esteemed as the Gods of Heroism. Despite the fact that a horse was an animal, it was considered a friend of a hero and it was equal, to some extent, to the Warrior, that is why it was sacrificed. When one worshiped the earth by worshiping the God of Earth, water – by

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<sup>5</sup> *Tenir-Too means Khan-Tengri in Kyrgyz language.*

worshipping the God of Water, a mountain – by worshipping the God of Mountains and Umai Ene, he sacrificed small animals, kumys,<sup>6</sup> milk, airan,<sup>7</sup> boorsok<sup>8</sup> and meat.

The number nine is considered sacred to this day. This notion originated from requesting and bowing down to nine Gods nine times. Traditionally, our people gave a dowry or a share, rendered tributes or gave cattle for slaughter in the amount of nine heads of cattle, prepared nine tokoches<sup>9</sup> and worshiped Tenir. For example, if nine horses were given as dowry, then the first horse was dedicated to the God of Sky, the second one – to Umai Ene, the third one – to God of Sun, the fourth one – to God of Moon, the fifth one – to God of Stars, the sixth one – to God of Earth, the seventh one – to God of Water, the eighth one – to God of Mountains and the ninth one – to God of War, and a blessing to the newlyweds was said: “May you live in prosperity.” If a fine for killing or severe injury was paid in the amount of nine heads of cattle, it meant that the person paying the fine was requesting forgiveness from the nine Gods. **The tradition of doing something nine times was left from ancient times.** Our ancestors had a tradition to assemble yurta<sup>10</sup> with kereges<sup>11</sup> consisting of nine parts, which expressed respect and worship of the nine Gods. Thus, holding nine Gods sacred and performing rituals nine times have been preserved to this day. By the order and selection of the Great Nature, all of the aforesaid nine sacred Gods had special purpose in everyday life of the Kyrgyz people and had special significance in the life of the nation; that is why the ancient nomads held the nine Gods sacred above anything else and worshiped them. The fact that despite the rules of the Islamic religion: “A twig will not move without an order from Allah (God). Worship Allah”, the Kyrgyz people worshiped the

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<sup>6</sup> “Kumys” is a traditional drink made of fermented mare milk.

<sup>7</sup> “Airan” is a drink similar to liquid yogurt.

<sup>8</sup> “Boorsok” is traditional bread made of sour dough and fried in oil in small pieces.

<sup>9</sup> “Tokoch” is traditional flat bread made of sour dough.

<sup>10</sup> “Yurta” – the Kyrgyz traditional nomadic house.

<sup>11</sup> “Kerege” – the wooden lattice of which the yurta’s frame is made.

nine Gods, especially Koko Tenir and Uman Ene, who were perceived as the most sacred among the sacred, the most omnipotent among the omnipotent, is the **truth** in the history of humanity. The Kyrgyz people cut heads of those, who lied. So, they said truth even while dying. The nation respecting its Tenir did not turn away from truth, even if an ax was hanging above their head. It could not be otherwise in the times of warriors.

In addition to the nine Gods, the Kyrgyz people had many (99 protectors, according to some thinkers) sacred protectors (there is still no author, who would have systemized and written them down). In some publications, the notion of “sacred protector” is marked by the notion of “pir” (protector). That is why we also used the word “pir”.

According to legends of the ancient Kyrgyz people, the pir of intellect was Sekelek sary kyz (Little red-headed girl or Asan Shaiyr); the pir of bakshy was Aktailak (white young of camel); the pir of melody – Kambarkan, the pir of farming – Baba Dyikan, Boz Kepter; the pir of army – Kyrk Choro, Kyrk Chilten; the pir of fire and lovers – Ochok ene, Ot ene (Mother of hearth); the pir of wisdom – Oto Kan, Tastar Ata; the pir of rain – Kuldur Ata, Chagyl Kan; the pir of ironsmiths – Dootu Ata; the pir of water – Suu Bai, Sulaiman; the pir of stars – Urker Ata; the pir of wind – Jel Kaiyp; the pir of trees – Bai Terek, Chynar; the pir of cold – Ayaz Ata; the pir of evil and bad intentions – Jez Tyrmak, Jelmoguz, Zyandash; the pir of intensely cold weather – Kirdach; the pir of mountain goats – Ak Baibiche, Kaiberen; the pir of happiness – Doolot Kush; the pir of heroes – Shaamerden; the pir of snakes – Shaimerden; the pir of mice – Chie Ata; the pir of the chuck-a-luck game - Kakcheke; the pir of hunting birds – Alp Kara Kush, Budaidyk and Chegir Bayak; the pir of honor – Ak Bugu; the pir of sorcery – Koroson Ata; the pir of a racing horse – Tulpar, Duldun and Jelmayan, the pir of kitchenware – Bubu Batma; the pir of worms – Kara Chayan; the pir of grasshoppers – Cherte Bayan; the pir of ants – Kumpa Bayan; the pir of marmots – Solton Mergen; the pir of roads – Jolaman; the pir of games – Ordo Kyz; the pir of hunting – Kulanch and others.

These pirs were worshiped by nomads and they sacrificed a lamb to them, too, when time came. The Kyrgyz people, who were afraid to

harm not only big animals, but also insects, held all pirs sacred, from the pirs of insects to the pirs of birds. The proof to this could be found in the poem “In What Way?” by the famous thinker Asan Kaigy, in which he tells how these pirs helped in difficult natural conditions.

The nation also demonstrated high respected other pirs, as well. In due time, they made sacrifices to different pirs. For example, they sacrificed small cattle to Chagyl Kan to have a rainy spring and abundant grass; they made sacrifice to the pir of sheep Cholpon Ata to ease the sheep breeding; to the pir of goats Chychan Ata – to have goats produce twins; to the pir of camels Oisul Ata – to ease the camel breeding; to the pir of horses Kambar Ata – to have mares produce racers; to the pir of cows Uzongu Baba – to have cows calve without problems and have plenty of milk; to the pir of yaks Ak Muyuz – to have yaks living high in the mountains calve easily; to the pir of dogs Kulaiyk – to protect cattle from dogs and birds. The rest of the pirs also received sacrifices of small cattle in due time.

Kadyr Ake was the pir of happiness, kindness and safe journey; he protected the nomads. In the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, parents still give blessing to their children: “May Kydyr protect you!”

Ulukman Ake was the pir of sorcery; Asan Kaigy was the pir of kindness.

The great Manas respected Khan Koshoi, who was the pir of athletes and heroes for the nomadic people. Eleman, the father of the famous Er Toshtuk, was the pir of the nation; the famous Malabai was the pir of animals; the wise man of the Kyrgyz people Kalkaman became the pir of the nation.

The pir of the Kyrgyz nation Kyrgyz Ata and the pir of humanity Adam Ata occupied special places in everyday social life of the people in the times of the nomadic civilization. During specific time of year (in early spring or late fall), a horse was sacrificed to all pirs (sacred protectors).

The Kyrgyz people had special opinion about the earth; they considered it the most sacred among the sacred. According to the notion of the Kyrgyz people about the earth, “a man was made of the earth, he will be buried in the earth and he lives because of the richness of the earth.” Not without reason, there is an inscription about

the Kyrgyz people's philosophy about the earth on the gravestone of Aman Mamytov, the great scientist of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, founder of the soil science. People pass from their mother's embrace into the embrace of the Mother Earth, and blood is shed on the ground. **The Kyrgyz people consider the place of birth sacred.** Before starting on a long journey, they bowed down to their native village with respect, took a handful of earth with them and considered it their protector. From young age they taught the growing generation about the inestimable value of the native land, saying: "The land, in which you were born, is worth its weight in gold." Young people listened to wise teachings of their people near the sacred fireplace, grew with respect to their traditions, learnt the rules of etiquette and listened to many tales, songs and epics. One's love for the native land and people was born particularly near that fireplace, later, while among the people, it grew even stronger. The value of human philosophy about the earth and incomparable thoughts about it made him love his fatherland, respect his people and hate his enemy. The Kyrgyz people considered their fatherland sacred. Every hero stepped on the battlefield saying that it was the sacred responsibility of each one of them to protect their native land and to keep enemies away from it. When someone committed a crime, then he was taught or cursed by the words: "Jer sorgur!" – *The earth take him!* And when someone felt offended, he threatened by saying: "Topuragymdy tuyup berem" – *I will give you the dust (remains) of me.*

The nation respected its heroes and athletes, who died for the native land and their people; they were called "sheiyt" and their graves became mazar. In the Kyrgyz people's philosophy of "sanctity", "mazar" occupies special place. It is widely mentioned in proverbs and sayings, songs and moral teachings of the people. For example, "El-mazar, elden chykkan – azar" – The nation is sacred, the one who became separated from the nation is a martyr; "Dumana boldum, sen – mazar" – *You are my sanctity and I am your dervish*; "Mazardyn butagy bele" – *Who cares about this "sanctity!"* "Tuptuu chynar mazarym, karasa, kabak jazarym" – *You are my strong sacred platan, when one looks at you, all his troubles disappear*; "Adoolottuu er bolso, - mazar bolgon chynardai" – *The just man is like the sacred*

*platan*; “Bir isharat boloor dep, mazarga baryp tunodum” – *I spent a night a mazar waiting for the sign from above*; “Balaluu ui – bazaar, balasyz ui – mazar” – *The house full of children is like a bazaar, the one without children is like a mazar*; etc. This means that mazar is a sacred place for worship; it could be a grave of famous great heroes or a thing, an object, or, even, a plant. Ill people, women, who do not have children and people, whose proceedings are not going well come there and sacrifice cattle. Since ancient times, the Kyrgyz people have honored and protected mazars. There are such places in Kyrgyzstan as, for example, the mausoleum of the great Manas, as well as places related to the name of Manas, the Khan Koshoi’s Horde, The Khan-Tengri Mountain and some of its specific parts, Ysyk-Kol, Jeti-Oguz, Ysyk-Ata, Jalalabad, Arstanbab, Manjly and other beautiful places with springs and forests, as well as other places, which have been considered sacred since ancient times and turned into places of worship.

Does not the fact that the Kyrgyz people, who were created from the ray, are considered sacred and inhabit the blessed land of the Ala-Too, where seasons change like in paradise, prove that all of the land has become mazar?

The Kyrgyz people’s philosophy of “sanctity” as an inseparable specific part of the world knowledge, world-vision and attitude towards the world, has served to upbringing children with the knowledge of honesty, tenderness, avoidance of bad intentions, diligence, tolerance, insusceptibility to offence, perseverance, equality, avoidance of troubles, preservation of property, fear to harm someone, respect for spirits, avoidance of harming nature, living in harmony with nature, in short, the best qualities, which are inherent in the Kyrgyz people.

For writing of the article about the notion of “sanctity” among the Kyrgyz People and the problem of “sanctity”, information about history, tokens and traditions of the Kyrgyz people provided in various sources and works by Saul Abramzon, Lev Gumilev, Orozbek Aitymbet, Choyun Omuraly Uulu, Dastan Sarygulov and others were used.



## On Geophysical Features of the Issyk-Ata Sacred Site

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**Alymbai  
Toktosopiev**

*Alymbai Toktosopiev was born in Chon-Uryukty village of Issyk-Kul Province. Alymbai is a specialist in the field of physics and geophysics. In 1982, he graduated from the Tomsk Polytechnic Institute named after S. Kirov (RSFSR) with a major in "Engineering" and worked there as the Senior Engineer for two years. His consequent professional experience includes the following positions: Head of Ala-Archa Geophysical Region of the Institute of Seismology of the National Academy of Sciences of the Kirghiz SSR (1985-88);*

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**Ivan  
Lemzin**



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**I**n Kyrgyz language, translation of "Issyk-Ata" means "Hot Father." People's wisdom gave a correct description of the natural resources of this place assigning the main importance to the thermal waters. Due to their medicinal properties, mineral springs were known to the local population, as early as the great antiquity. According to archeologists' data, they were used approximately since II - III centuries A.D. Local residents had been using the resort for a long time, and starting from the end of the XIX century Europeans started visiting it, as well.

Thus, the first researcher, who visited this location in 1875, was the Russian traveler I.V. Mushketov, and 10-12 years later A.I. Severtsev, the famous researcher of mountainous regions of Central Asia, also visited this location. In 1896, these places were visited by

the friend of M.V. Frunze's father, F. Poyarkov, who described his visit in the following way: "In the Issik-Ata Gorge of the Alexandrian Mountains (one has in view the Kyrgyz Ala-Too Mountains), mineral waters, according to natives, have been widely known since time immemorial due to their medicinal qualities. Every summer, ill people from Semirechye, Turkestan and Fergana come here in great numbers and their influx continuously increases."

The beginning of the resort's development dates back to 1891 (construction of the bath block). Since 1931, it has been functioning as a trade union health-center with the capacity for 250 places. Issyk-Ata is the closest resort near the capital of the republic, located 77 km from Bishkek. Regular bus service allows holiday-makers to make an interesting trip to the foothill of the northern slope of the Kyrgyz Ala-Too in just one and a half hours. The resort is located in a narrow gorge at the absolute altitude of 1775 m above sea level. A river with the same name originating at the northern slopes of the Kyrgyz Mountain Range runs through the central part of the territory. The latter has an altitude of 3500 m in this region; the Issyk-Ata River Valley, in its upstream and middle currents, is deeply cut into its high spurs and has sub-meridian direction. In the middle current, where the resort is situated, it is directed strictly northward and has a V-shaped form with slopes 30-35° steep.

The resort occupies a small territory of the right-bank river terrace, 150 m wide and about 600 m long. Below the resort, the valley widens and turns eastward, using latitudinal tectonic flexure, following which is the zone of high (up to 2200 m above sea level) foothills. Taking in itself a large right-bank inflow - the Tuyuk River, the Issyk-Ata River steeply turns northward, cuts through the foothills and goes into the Chui Valley. In the resort area and higher, its steeply-sloped valley sides are weakly divided. The largest inflows of the Issyk-Ata River are the right-hand Batyi, Bartak, and the streams Dorat-Bulak, Karagailu-Bulak and Karagai-Bulak.

**Climate in the Issyk-Ata Resort Area.** Despite the significant height above sea level, winter is 2,5 - 3° C warmer, than at the eastern shore of Lake Issyk-Kul, which is located almost 200 m lower.

The location of the Issyk-Ata Resort in a deep valley well-protected by mountains from the impact of not so powerful cold air masses, as well as rather stable warming-up of air and soil in some days, conditions formation of "summer" weather even in winter time, which is not typical for the steppe zone. Mountain-valley winds contribute to such weather regime.



*By the sacred spring Issyk-Ata*

Frosty weather without a thaw is formed in November. The average temperature in January is  $-6^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Spring in this zone comes at the end of March. This period is characterized by large amount of precipitations, increased humidity and nebulosity.

The beginning of summer season is characterized mainly by sunny, moderately humid weather, which is observed in the following months, as well (July and August). The average temperature in July is  $16^{\circ}\text{C}$ .

The beginning of fall (September) is characterized by a large number of sunny days with humid weather of increased nebulosity.

The annual precipitation is approximately 500 mm. The average annual relative humidity is 53%.

As it was noted earlier, there is no wearisome heat at the resort in summer time, which is explained by the height of its location above sea level. Besides, the river running through the resort's territory, which is the most rapid and full-flowing at this time of the year, decreases the air temperature and moistens it. Scientific research conducted in the valley of the Issyk-Ata River points out that in this time of year, the air at the riverbank is saturated with negative air ions, which are very useful for inhalation in cases of various illnesses.

As for the soils, they are low-powered and rocky and develop on the basis of products of erosion of the ledge rock. Loess and loess-

like loams appear on slopes and terraces only below the resort, in the widened part of the valley.

Vegetation of the region in study submits to general rules of vegetation of the northern slope of the Kyrgyz Mountain Range, and peculiarities of its floristic composition were revealed by E. V. Nikitina in her time (1962). She determined six high-altitude zones: 1) wormwood-ephemera zone, 2) steppe zone, 3) meadow-steppe zone, 4) forest-meadow zone, 5) sub-alpine zone, and 6) alpine zone. The first two zones are typical for foothill tails and foothills until the absolute altitude of 1600 m, the third and the fourth ones - for mid-mountain region, the absolute altitude is 1200-2500(3000) m, the fifth and the sixth ones - for high altitude region (above 2500 m).

With regards to the geological and tectonic features of the given region, the Chui Valley and its mountain frame are situated within the Caledonian folded system of the Northern Tian-Shan (pic.1). At the basis of the regions' Caledonian folded complexes, the Precambrian masses, which are metamorphized, gathered into folds and torn in large intrusions, are deposited. They form the compound of the foundation separated from younger sedimentary and sedimentary-volcanic rocks.

Among the rock masses constituting the compound of the foundation, early Precambrian, Arachean Middle Proterozoic, and late Precambrian (Riphean) masses, which are divided by surface cracks and disagreement, could be marked. Phyllites, sandstone and siltstone could be marked among the rocks of this age.

Significant role in the composition of the Precambrian compound of the foundation is played by granitoids, among which more ancient and younger ones could be distinguished. Younger granitoids, which are weakly changed and burrow through the Riphean sediments, are typical for the Issyk-Ata region.

In the tectonic perspective, considerable role is played by ancient and new breaks alike. If the first ones have relation to the thermal springs, then for the second one, it is typical to influence forming of a perfect relief. The Shamschy-Tunduk Break and the east of the northwestern stretch limiting the Kyrgyz Mountain Range in the northeast could be distinguished among them. It constitutes the border

between the mountain range and the valley. In the basin of the Issyk-Ata River, the newest Issyk-Ata break, limiting the adyry from the plain country of the Chui Hollow, passes through to the north of this break.

Peculiar tectonic conditions, as well as the ancient-geological rocks in river valleys, created original relief forms; waterfalls of these rivers, which are located relatively not far from each other and easily accessible, relate to them. These include the Tuyuk Waterfall situated in the picturesque gorge of the river with the same name, 3 km above the forestry cordon; the Marble Waterfall, a beautiful 10 m high waterfall just 1,5 km from the resort up the Issyk-Ata River Valley; the 12 m high Bala-Partak Waterfall situated 4 km from the resort in the valley of the right inflow of the Issyk-Ata River; the cascade of the Jaryk-Tash (Split Stone) Waterfalls 11 km above the resort in the gorge of the left inflow.

Wonderful natural conditions of the described region, presence of medicinal springs known since ancient times, have attracted travelers since VIII century A.D. This wonderful piece of nature has been used as a sanatorium, which is witnessed by the image of Budha-Healer carved out in the cliff.

At present, there are more than 50 thermal springs with the temperature of 38-54° C. The biggest water debit is 8 liters/second. The highest temperature is 54,5° C. The mineral water is colorless, with weak hydrogen sulphide odor. The high temperature of the water prevents bacteria growth.

There are several springs with wonderful, clean, purest water, which also has medicinal qualities, lower in the Issyk-Ata River Valley.

In such local tectonic conditions, as in the Issyk-Ata River Valley, scientists have often observed anomalous phenomena. Anomalous phenomena are natural and man-caused processes in the form of electromagnetic radiation, acoustic signals, thermal fluctuations, and gravitational waves, which have not been studied to this day. Anomalous phenomena in the environment could be divided into atmospheric, lithospheric, and man-caused, depending on the locality of their origin.

We believe that environmental features of the Issyk-Ata River Valley are connected to complex tectonic composition and relate to

high tectonic activity. As it is shown in Pic.1, the Issyk-Ata Resort itself is situated in the zone of crossing of ancient and newest breaking occurrences.

Lately, we have attempted to explain anomalous phenomena in places of pilgrimage or sacred sites with the help of insufficiently explored natural geophysical fields. Evaluation of power of geophysical fields in places of "sacred" objects, their magnitude and impact on people were made. A conclusion was made that the observed anomalous phenomena in the structure of geophysical fields in "sacred" places are related to transformation of significant quantities of energy commensurable with those coming into the environment exactly from the "sacred" objects. For the time being, physical meaning of these processes, their impact on ecological balance, their place in the system of natural interdependence, are not clear; and so the degree of their danger for the existing balance in the environment, and, consequently, for human, is not clear either.

It is known that the majority of environmental physical factors, in correlation with which the animate nature evolved, have electromagnetic nature. It has been determined that any range of the electromagnetic spectrum has played some role in the evolution of the animate nature and takes part in the processes of organisms' vital functions. The influence of rather weak natural electromagnetic fields on different kinds of organisms was discovered, as well.

Based on the aforesaid, we suggest that the egress of electromagnetic systems in the Issyk-Ata River Valley relates to articulation of geological structures, i.e. crossing point of mechanical exertion zones. This type of geophysical fields in particular influences the regulation of processes of vital function and coordination of organisms' physiological processes.

Image of Budha on a big rock has been preserved on the territory of the resort. According to archeologists, the Buddhist memorials in Kyrgyzstan date back to the XII century. In his book "Epigraphic of Kirghizia" (Second Edition, Frunze: "Ilim", 1982, pp. 48-49), Chetin Jumagulov, specialist in Turkic studies and epigraphist, wrote the following with regards to the history of studies of Buddha's image: "The image of Buddha in the south-east of Frunze city is related to

Buddhist memorials. This place has been known for its mineral and thermal springs for a long time, which has been reflected in various reports and publications."

The following information about this rock was published already in 1886 in the Protocol of the meeting of the Eastern Department of the Russian Archeological Society: "N.I. Veselovskii stated that he heard the following hearsay presenting interest for archeologists at the post office in Kokan. They said that near Pishpek<sup>1</sup>, on the way to Karakol, where the hot springs Rasant are, there are writings on rocks, which nobody can read. It would be desirable to research whether there is anything common in this hearsay with the latest discoveries of gravestone writings in the same localities. Besides, Veselovskii was told that there is some kind of "Their Lady" carved out in the rock very well, and that Kalmyks<sup>2</sup> come and anoint it with oil."

The first report belongs to N.N. Pantusov, in which he provides some information about this memorial and drawing of it in pencil. Moreover, he noted that on the sides of the image, there were some ornaments that looked like cuneiform, which could not be seen clearly because the surface of the stone had been weathered out. He also noticed another writing carved out in another rock. In particular, he wrote: "Kyrgyz worship this idol as sanctuary, call him arasan, the spirit of waters, make sacrifices of cattle in his honor, then anoint it and the writings with the sacrificial fat (usually with tail fat), by doing so, they propitiate the spirit of medicinal waters and request cure from bathing in them. Indeed, around the image of the idol, there are five lines of writings, which are faintly visible; one could barely notice differently sized words of the famous formula "Ommani..." It is difficult to trace the writings because they were covered with paint and other layers on numerous occasions, and that is why it is a difficult task to read all of the writing without special treatment. The size of the image is 120smx113sm. We made the second report about this idol in 1964. After that, in the fall of the same year it was examined by A.N. Zelinskii."

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<sup>1</sup> *Pishpek is the old pre-Soviet name of Bishkek before it became Frunze.*

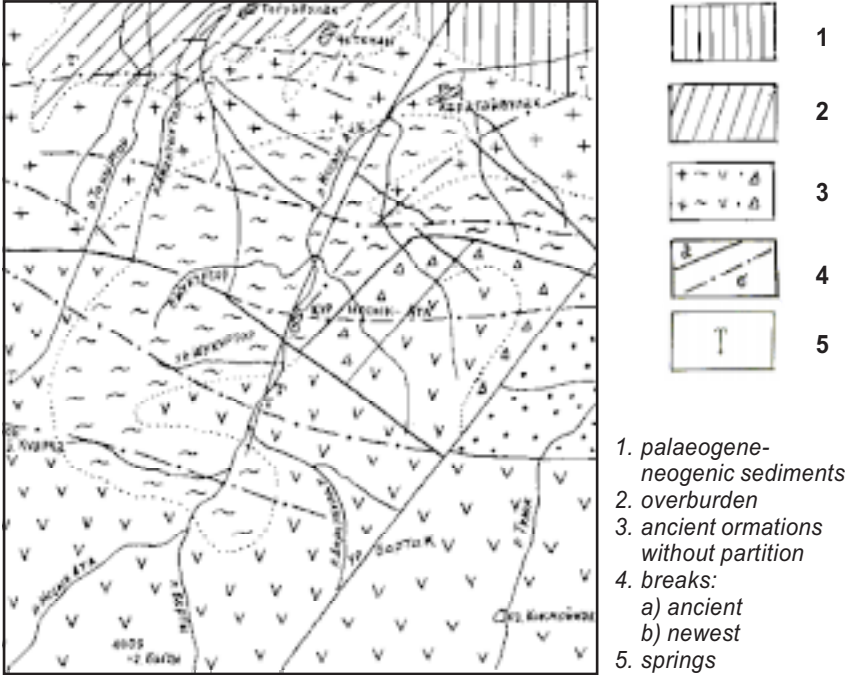
<sup>2</sup> *An ethnic group.*



In spite of all its super-achievements, humankind, still in the 21st century, is unable to respond to the questions raised by the Most High and the Nature. Therefore, some people find sacred places by means of performing some simple unfamiliar to us folk rituals, and each one of them appeals to the Almighty with his request. There are usually springs at such places. People stand together in line by the spring and drink sacred ice-cold water. We have often witnessed that miracles happen there, where they are believed in.

That is why when we discuss the places of pilgrimage of "sacred" sites, we also talk about the Valley of the Issyk-Ata River with the resort with the same name, which is that kind of place not only for Kyrgyzstan but also for the entire Central Asia, China, Afghanistan and other countries.

*We express our gratitude to T. Charimov for kindly providing the map of the Issyk-Ata River Valley for our disposal.*



**Pic.1. Schematic Geological Map**

## The Call of Our Ancestors

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**Daria  
Musina**



***(From articles by Stephan Dömpke and Daria Musina  
in the book "The Call of Our Ancestors")***

**T**here are valuable or memorable places in every person's life. These could include mountains, forests, gorges, rivers, springs and one's own house. Society assigns special status to some of these places. "Objects of natural and non-natural origin, especially significant and honored by broad public circle, belong to the category of sacred sites" (E. Shukurov).

The publication "The Call of Our Ancestors," which I would like to tell you about, is the result of the project on the natural sacred sites of the Issyk-Kul Biosphere Territory.

Within the framework of the project, the non-profit organization "People and Nature" (Germany) and the Public Foundation "Estelik" of the Republican Center of Aesthetic Education "Balajan" united their efforts in collecting materials about sacred sites around the Issyk-Kul Lake. Our project became the first attempt in its kind to study sacred places in this area. It has become the first step toward

collection of material based on the words of bearers of the Kyrgyz tradition, representatives of elder generation; it is the result of a survey conducted among representatives of local communities.

Collection of material was organized according to the method developed by Stephan Dömpke, the head of the non-profit organization "People and Nature."

Nature conservation activities can be sustainable only if they are an inalienable part of local culture and traditions. One of the main goals of the project is attracting public attention to the problem of protection of sacred places and issues of youth's interest in protection of the environment at these sites. Also, propaganda of environmental education on the example of those places, which are sacred for local population, through exploration of ecological functions and measures on planning their protection and care. At present, it is necessary to strengthen forms of nature management rooted in the Kyrgyz culture, bridge the growing gap between generations, and start our own initiatives on practical protection of our own culture and natural environment.

The book turned out to be very useful for a wide circle of readers interested in sacred sites and for secondary school teachers of history, geography, and, especially, ecology. It tells how people of Kyrgyzstan interact with sacred sites and how concerned they are about protection of these places.

Traditional knowledge of the local population and knowledge based on scientific research served as the foundation of this work. The process of joint work of different people with different knowledge and experience itself could be regarded as a cultural effort to preserve culture and nature as national values.

Initially, a two-day workshop was held to bring together the existing knowledge about the subject, and to develop common understanding of the project's tasks and goals. This appeared to be an indispensable starting point, because the issues touched upon by the project are completely new in terms of applied socio-cultural work. Participants of the workshop were mainly scientists and bearers of traditional knowledge, added by a small number of NGO representatives, and the organizers. The seminar helped to

identify important bearers of traditional knowledge and create the first list of sacred sites. Along with determining the project participants and methods of work, it also helped to define questions, themes and goals.

The next step was identification of elders, who knew something about sacred sites. These people usually live in remote rural localities. Many do not have a telephone, and few people would know how to find them. The task and purpose of our project could only be explained to them through personal conversation. In order to find the bearers of traditional knowledge, we met with directors of local secondary schools, which, in the absence of any cultural institutions, became the centers for cultural activities of different kinds. Visiting the schools allowed to inform the teachers directly, and with the we worked afterwards. The teachers asked students to ask their parents whether they knew elders, who would be prepared to give interviews. Thus, one could say that all village residents were involved in the project.

The field-work part of the project was performed by a group of students, who divided into four teams, two persons in each one, and conducted interviews with the bearers of traditional knowledge in 16 villages in 4 districts of the biosphere territory. The data was recorded on audio equipment and then transcribed on paper.

During special seminars, students took courses in interviewing; special guideline principles on creating circumstances conducive for producing good results were developed for them.

We would not say that collection of information was easy. We had to overcome different kinds of difficulties.

Sometimes, when we had to find out location of sacred sites, we encountered the people's circumspection. They explained their anxiety by the fact that these places were connected to God and were property only of those, who believed in their efficacious power and came there with special preparation, whereas bringing strangers to sacred sites would mean taking a sin upon one's soul.

Another difficulty was in the organization of interviews themselves. Through school directors and, in two instances, through local organizers, we met with elder people and personally invited them, informing about the place and time of the interview to be

conducted. To show our appreciation, we invited the elders to dinner. In order to make travel easier for elders, who were 80, and even 90 years old, transportation was provided.

One more task was the organization of students' trips to villages located at significant distance from transport routes, without any hotels, cafй, nor even stores. It was necessary to find private houses for night's lodging. Students also faced difficulties in one of the villages, where they were inadequately received by the local youth, which lead to conflict between them.

The students' work during interviewing was complicated by unforeseen social everyday situations: such situations, when elders' children, relatives or neighbors, who were present in a room, distracted them from conversation, were unavoidable. Besides, students had to overcome the feeling of uneasiness and shyness while communicating with the elders occupying the most honorable position in accordance with traditions, which have served as the foundation of social relations in villages since olden days. They, indeed, had to ask the elders such questions, which they would have never asked in their presence under usual circumstances. They were strangers in those places where they had to carry out their work, and they had to find the right approach in communication with the elders in each particular case.

For their part, the elders, who were not used to answering to the point, in many cases talked about issues, which they had more knowledge about, and it was not always easy to explain to them that we were restricted in our research by pronouncedly defined topic. To avoid hurting their feelings and discouraging their wish to continue conversation, sometimes patience was required. One had to record long speeches, which contained a lot of historical information, which was interesting in itself but did not have much in common with our topic.

Students also explained to us that the elders were not always willing to share with them the information regarding the location of sacred sites (mazars), because they felt that such information should not be widely disseminated. An apprehension was expressed that the more information would be distributed about these places and more people visit them, the more polluted the sacred sites would become.

*Lake Issyk-Kul - the Kyrgyz people's sanctuary*



© *Paul Hotham (FFI)*

Many people with whom we had conversations were very old; they spoke unclearly and often changed the subject of conversation, used different words, which passed out of use, at times spoke unintelligibly, which, sometimes, made it difficult to understand what the conversation was about.

The process of transcribing audio recordings required special efforts. They had to be transcribed as precisely and accurately as possible, in order to avoid distortion of the original source. However, taking into consideration the circumstances described earlier, it turned out to be an extremely difficult task. In order to check shorthand notes made by students, it was necessary to invite a specialist in Kyrgyz language and culture.

Translation of texts from Kyrgyz to European languages was rather difficult even for translators with good knowledge of the Kyrgyz culture. Translated decoding of shorthand notes had to be processed in such way, so that they would take clear and understandable to all form. It was very important because this information was intended for a wide circle of readers from various fields of activity: from international scientific community, nature and cultural heritage conservation, international and nongovernmental organizations, to an ordinary citizen of Kyrgyzstan. And, nevertheless, we are fully responsible for the result of our work, which we bring forth to readers' judgment.

The information collected during interviews was re-written, completed, and edited by the project director for publishing in Kyrgyz, Russian, and English languages.

Afterwards, the project participants from villages, where interviews were conducted, were invited to regional meetings. There were four meetings in total for the purpose of familiarization with the project results and making plans for future. Based on these meetings, the final symposium of experts and project directors was held, where ways for implementation of these plans were discussed and general evaluation of the project results was made.

As for the project as a whole, it promoted big contribution to persuade people in local communities in the necessity to protect sacred sites and keep them in purity for the present and upcoming generations.

We hope that participation of students, teachers, representatives of older generation, and members of local communities in this project, provided an incentive for its further development. It is a chance to start productive work, which will provide people with an opportunity to deeply realize their belonging to an ethno-cultural space; it is a chance to provide understanding of the importance of work for creating conditions contributory to the protection of sacred sites.

Having spoken with directors and teachers of secondary schools, we found out that there was lack of pedagogical literature and various didactic on history, geography, ecology and other subjects almost in all of the elementary and middle classes. We hope that this book will at least be a small contribution to solving this problem.

We have become persuaded that our project had excited in teachers, mentors, university and secondary school students, and children, love to their motherland, pride for it, and feeling of responsibility for their own future. It also provided them to some extent with the knowledge about relationship between the growing generation and sacred sites, disposed them to study sources of origin and protection of those places, where people have been going for centuries and continue going to worship the power of nature.

Recording of history from the words of people with consecutive transcribing into written form has become the first experience of its kind for all of the project participants.

The topic of our project was ecological education of the growing up generation, students, and local communities. Our biggest goal was to attract students to the process of work and creation of a document, which could be used by teachers in secondary schools, students, and NGOs.

We believe that our project has become only the first step opening the way for further research of the Kyrgyz spiritual culture of past and present. At the same time, interviews have created sufficient base for this first publication; they clarified the meaning of natural sacred sties for the concept of conservation of local ecology and the Kyrgyz cultural environment. It will serve later on as a foundation for more research. We will be glad if this project leads to more thorough and broad scientific research of the subject. We appeal to the scientific community, especially the Kyrgyz one, to use original tapes and their transcriptions for further study. They are available for scientists, who are interested in using them as scientific sources.

*The title of the book in Kyrgyz language is “Ata-babalarybyzdyn undyoryu.”*

*The title of the book in English language is “The Call of Our Ancestors.”*



## Sacred Sites in the Practices of the Kyrgyz Shamans (Bakshy)

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**Imel  
Moldobaev**



*sity, which he completed in 1972. In 1979, Imel brilliantly defended his “Kandidatskaya” (Ph.D.) dissertation on the subject “The Epic “Janysh and Baiysh” as Historical and Ethnographical Source” at the branch of the Institute of Ethnography named after N.I. Mikluho-Maklai of the Academy of Science of the USSR in Leningrad. His three monographs devoted to the “Manas” Epic caused great resonance among scholars. He also worked in close collaboration with the State Directorate “Manas-1000” having participated in all of the activities related to the epic. In 2000, Imel received the State Award of the Kyrgyz Republic in the field of science and engineering. At present time, Imel lectures and teaches special courses to students of the History Department at the Kyrgyz National University. Two scholarly dissertations were defended under his supervision. Imel is an author of more than 200 scholarly works and the participant of a numerous number of scholarly conferences.*

**S**hamanism originated in the ancient times of the history of humanity. In the opinion of scholars directly researching shamanism, its beginnings take their start from the Paleolith. Shamanism was inherent in all people of the Earth, when they were at low levels of social development. It was typical for pre-class societies, as well. Thus in 1985, a new archeological culture of the Bronze Age was discovered in the locality of Karakol in the Ursul River Valley in Altai. Images of human figures in costumes decorated by bird feathers are drawn on the gravestones in Karakol. V.D. Kubarev considers them to be the most ancient shaman pictures. All of this points out that shamanism among the Kyrgyz ("bakshylyk" in Kyrgyz language, from the word "bakshy") formed on the basis of traditions, which belonged to cultures of preceding ethnic communities, mainly the Turkic and Farsi speaking ones. The fact of existence of shamanism among the Iranian people is reported in the texts of the "Avesta". Various ancient and medieval sources, mainly the folklore data, report about shamanism of the ancient Turkic people, part of who reached Central Asia in the beginning of the Common Era. The history of the Kyrgyz shamanism is also thousands of years old. One of the most important sources about shamanism is the well-known heroic Epic "Manas".

In written sources, the Arabic and Persian authors of the IX-XII Abu Dulaf, Gardizi, Marvazi and the author of the writing "Hudud al-Alam" reported about the Kyrgyz shamanism for the first time. For example, Marvazi, while characterizing the Kyrgyz people, noted that they had people, who were called Faginuns, who lost their consciousness during the performance of ritual music and made their predictions upon regaining their consciousness. Seven centuries later, Ch. Valikhanov, in connection with the Kazakh shamanism, mentions about various functions of the Kyrgyz shamans. P.P. Semenov-Tian-Shanskii provides brief but important information about the presence of tambourine among the Kyrgyz shamans. For the first time, F.V. Poyarkov reports more detailed data about the Kyrgyz and the Kazakh shamans. The short article by N. Korzhenevskii tells about the shaman "games" of the Kyrgyz bakshy from the Alai Valley.

In the Soviet time, S.I. Ilyasov, in his note, provides the first report about the Kyrgyz shaman or rather about the meeting with an old shaman and his story. S.M. Abramzon was the first one to study multifaceted functions of the Kyrgyz shaman, as well as the receiving of the shaman's charisma. In connection with the research of traditional medicine, information about the medicinal functions of the Kyrgyz shamans, to a certain extent, is provided in the unpublished work by G.G. Nurov. Several general comments about shamanism are present in philosopher B. Amanaliev's work about the pre-Islamic beliefs of the Kyrgyz people.

The Kyrgyz shamanism was first researched in greater detail by T. Bayalieva. There is a special chapter about shaman worship in her book about the pre-Islamic beliefs of the Kyrgyz people, in which she widely uses fieldwork material. Some of the fieldwork material collected during the joint brief trip to the northern Kyrgyzstan with the author of this article were used by V.N. Basilov in his book about shamanism of the people of Central Asia and Kazakhstan. Brief mentioning of shamanism as the religion of the Enisei Kyrgyz is provided by the Chinese historian of Kyrgyz descent A. Baitur in his lectures on the Kyrgyz history. Information reflected in the heroic Epic "Manas" and the shaman folklore is examined by us, as well.

As it is evident from the above-stated, the historiography of the issue is not extensive. With the exception of T. Bayalieva's research (in the volume of one chapter), there still have been no special writings on the Kyrgyz shamanism. Furthermore, almost all, who wrote about shamanism, were not eyewitnesses of the Kyrgyz bakshy's seance. In this regard, unpublished notes about the Kyrgyz bakshy written by Togolok Moldo (1860-1942) – one of the pre-revolutionary akyn-writers,<sup>1</sup> are of interest. He was also the narrator – manaschy.<sup>2</sup> During the period of 1923-1941, he recorded his version of the trilogy "Manas", "Semetei" and "Seitek" in the volume of 98703 lines. He was an expert in folklore. He was very well familiar with the

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<sup>1</sup> *Person, who creates, improvises and sings folk songs with an accompaniment of the national string instrument "komuz".*

<sup>2</sup> *Person, who recites the "Manas" Epic.*

entire folklore genre, including the shaman maxims. Along with the folklore material, he collected information about the Kyrgyz shamanism. In 1929, in Toguz-Toro District of the present day Jalalabad Province, T. Moldo personally visited three bakshy: Borbu-bakshy, Balta-bakshy (Chyngysh-bakshy's son) and Shatan-bakshy and gathered interesting material.

Kyrgyz people call a shaman – bakshy. Among the Kyrgyz people, men (bakshy) and women (byubyu-bakshy) alike could be shamans. This is also reflected in the Epic "Manas". For example, when Manas was born, they asked for a shaman's and a woman-shaman's help.

Already in the XVII – beginning of the XX centuries, the functioning of shamans and women-shamans among the Turkic speaking people of Siberia had a parity character as among the Kyrgyz people. In Siberia, the female shamanism is determined as the earlier one. The high status of women-shamans is witnessed by facts of the Yakut and Altai male shamans' use of clothes, hairstyle and ornamental details.

As it is known, among the Kyrgyz people, shamans performed mainly healers' functions. Their mission was to ease childbirth. The Kyrgyz called wise men, who were able to frighten evil spirits away from women in childbirth – "kuuchu". In 1942, S. Ilyasov recorded from the words of shaman Shermet Orusov the folklore text about how he became kuuchu, in other words the person driving away evil spirits – "albarsty" and having the ability to see them. Shermet told that when women became ill with the illness called "koz bozoru" while giving birth, they called him and he cured them. This illness, in his words, occurs because albarsty takes away woman's lungs during childbirth. If it manages to drop them off into water, then the woman dies. However, if the woman's relatives can bring kuuchu in proper time, then he makes albarsty put the ill woman's lungs back and she recovers. Ch. Valikhanov highly praised shamans. He wrote: "Shamans were honored as people protected by the sky and spirits. Shaman is the person gifted by magic and knowledge more than others: he is a poet, a musician, a foreteller and a doctor at the same time. The Kyrgyz call a shaman – bakshy, which means 'teacher' in Mongolian language; Uighurs call their people, who can read and write, 'bahshy'; Turkmen call their singers by this name."

While describing practices of the Kazakh shamans, who were not much different from the Kyrgyz ones, F.V. Poyarkov noted that they lick a burning hot reaping hook or a knife, stand barefoot on the bottom of a hot cauldron, swallow 2-3 dozens of live snakes and take them out again, let several persons cord themselves up with a lasso, and can perform a great number of other tricks in the presence of numerous public. F.V. Poyarkov lived among the Kyrgyz and later among the Kazakh people for a long time. Being a doctor by occupation, he, evidently, was able to learn the shamans' psychology well. Such high appraisal of shamans' abilities is confirmed by the material collected by the akyn-writer Togolok Moldo in 1929 in the Tian-Shan, as we mentioned earlier. He not only gathered and recorded the entire process of shaman ritual or shaman games, but was also present during a seance of shaman Shatan, who cured a mentally ill person. T. Moldo writes that he saw by his own eyes how Shatan-bakshy licked burning hot iron three times, which he threw into fire himself before the shaman ritual. In his manuscript consisting of 46 pages, he briefly provides almost all information about the Kyrgyz shamanism of that time. He had conversations with several bakshy, who told him about the difference between the "black"<sup>3</sup> and "white"<sup>4</sup> bakshy. He provides texts of the shaman folklore. Let us just note that the manuscript material still has not been introduced for the scholarly use. The manuscript contains information about shaman terminology, which is not found in the existing literature on the Kyrgyz shamanism. Thus, T. Moldo along with bakshy and byubyu also mentions "kuchunach". K.K. Yudakhin cites this terms in the form of "kuchunash" and translates as "the ability to foresee".

The performance of various "tricks" by shamans could have the realistic basis, although one can come across the word "seerchi" interpreted as sorcerer, magician, wizard and hypnotist in the vocabulary of Kyrgyz language and in the "Manas". Hence, there were hypnotists and sorcerers in the Kyrgyz society, who could also be shamans. However, in general, in shaman rituals, the matter probably

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<sup>3</sup> *"Black" bakshy are those, who help for evil purposes.*

<sup>4</sup> *"White" bakshy are those, who help for good purposes.*

does not concern sorcery. Let us take the yogis' system, which originated more than 4000 years ago, as an example! The teaching of yoga attained great achievements in India and in countries where Buddhism is preached. "Yoga is above all the special technique of meditation providing entrance into the state of trance and becoming disconnected from all irritants." In the Tibetan religious philosophical system, for example, the teaching of yoga by the name of vadrayana was transmitted by the word of mouth, from a teacher to student. As it is noted by V.S. Dilykova, "psychological experience of the vadrayana teaching was formed in the course of many centuries, and it undoubtedly contains certain rational basis, which presents interest for modern psychology." As we can see, a method of suggestion lies at the foundation of this teaching. And that is already the activity of the human higher nervous system. Perhaps the Kyrgyz bakshy like the Buddhist yogis could suggest lack of pain, when pricked themselves with a knife or while being cord up with a lasso. They do not burn their tongues when they lick burning hot knife or do not burn their feet when they stand on the bottom of a burning hot cauldron. It is known that the Hindu yogis can walk barefoot on scorching iron: heavy sweat creates a kind of a pillow between feet and the red-hot metal, and he can walk through before he burns his feet.

Undoubtedly, the Kyrgyz shamans should not be equated with Hindu yogis. Nevertheless, researchers of shamanism must take into consideration the fact of existence of certain similarity in their actions, because shamanism is also one of the ancient religions of the peoples of the world and like the yogis' system has thousands of years of its history. At least, the Kyrgyz people of Yenisei followed shamanism at the borderline of the I-II centuries A.D.

One could suggest that shamans played an important role among the Kyrgyz people in ancient times being genuine healers in those times. It is known that they did not charge for their services. Later, especially in the XIX century, upon joining of Kyrgyzstan to Russia and with the development of commodity-money relations, shamanism had undergone changes. Besides, in the same period, certain shaman rituals, especially some of the techniques and methods of healing were lost.

The functions of fortunetellers (tolgoch) and foretellers using a sheep's shoulder-blade bone (dalychy) are demonstrated in the Kyrgyz folklore. Their existence was explained by spreading of an echo of the ancient belief in the magic power of an animal bone. Researchers quite justly



***Nyshan Azymjanova – bakshy  
from Naryn treats with her hands***

attribute the information about these and other elements of pagan religion to early stages of forming of the Kyrgyz ethnic group. Indeed, the "Manas" has many examples from which one could extract elements of shamanism, fraction by fraction. Thus, it mentions various terms related to the shamans' activity. The bakshy themselves are called by different names. One could come across "opko chabar bakshy" (literally: bakshy, who beat with lungs).

In the practice of the Kyrgyz shamanism, the use of lungs can actually be found. Thus, reported by T. Bayalieva, a woman-shaman Aiyumkan from the southern Kyrgyzstan used just removed lungs of a lamb in her ritual; she touched heads of ill persons three times with them, whereupon the lungs were thrown out to dogs.

On the other hand, according to "Manas", shamans could be highly honored people, heads of a tribe and the nation. It is confirmed by the information in the Oguz heroic epic "My Grandfather Korkut's Book". Shaman abilities are typical for the main hero – Grandfather Korkut. In Altai, Korkut is a shaman, and upon the advancement of the Oguzs to the west he transforms into a commander, but retains many functions of a shaman. Both in the Kyrgyz and the Oguz epics shaman first lives in Altai. As noted by H. Koroglu, "these legends bear the pan-Turkic character, but the Kyrgyz and Kazakh materials prevail in them. Korkut appears in them mainly as a shaman," just like Almambet in the "Manas".

Without going into details about shamanism (the volume of our article does not allow it either), let us point out that shamanism as

a phenomenon develops in a religious environment and is related to many religions and adopts their pantheon and ritual forms. It included ideas about nature, human and society, moral foundations, various means and forms of a religious society, embracing all spheres of life; influenced the development of culture, forming of the mode of living and psychology of people's mass. Since the Kyrgyz shamanism, in our opinion, has the south-Siberian origin, we have a right to draw a parallel between them. The researcher of the Buryat shamanism T.M. Mikhailov affirms that: "ideas about unity of nature and human are at the philosophical basis of the Central Asian shamanism... Religious rite of a nomad on top or at foothill of a mountain, on a river bank or on seashore, near a road or a tethering post – all of these are manifestations of its biosphere essence, aspiration and will to live" (Mikhailov, T.M. "Tsentralnoaziatskii Shamanism kak Istoriko-kulturnyi Fenomen" in Shamanism kak Religiya: Genezis, Rekonstruktsiya, Traditsii, Yakutsk, 1992, p. 7).

In more ancient times, all of shaman's activities took place outside in the nature, from which numerous worships of natural objects, which later on became sacred sites, had emerged. As it was correctly noted by G.R. Galdanova, "the shamans, shamanists' temple is the Nature itself under the dome of the Eternal Blue Sky, since the main shamans' worship is the worship of nature." And indeed, if one makes an excursus into the history of the Kyrgyz shamanism, then one can find out that the role of sacred sites in their activities was great. Thus, T. Moldo, before visiting shaman rituals of Shatan baksy in April of 1929, visited Borbu bakshy and recorded from his words a folklore text, in the very beginning of which the ritual mentions four sacred sites – mazars and mountains:

<i>Archaluu Mazar Aziret,</i>	<i>Archaluu Mazar the most sacred,</i>
<i>Azapka saldyn kuduret.</i>	<i>You have tormented me, the Almighty.</i>
<i>Jydeluu Mazar Aziret,</i>	<i>Jydeluu Mazar Aziret,</i>
<i>Jin chakyrtyym kuduret.</i>	<i>I have called genies, the Almighty.</i>
... ..	... ..
<i>Jar Mazarda Aziret</i>	<i>At Jar Mazar the most sacred</i>



*Jalgai kyorgyun kuduret. Help, the Almighty.*

... ..

*Kyoikaptyn toosun jerdegen Those, inhabiting the Koikap<sup>5</sup> Mountains*  
*Keselder kelsin oinuma. Let the ill people come to my rituals.*

Worship of trees played an important role in the work of shamans, as well as in the entire system of traditional rituals of the Kyrgyz people. It is necessary to note that tree worshiping is known to many Turkic-Mongolian people. In their mythology it is considered the "world tree". Scientists believe that another later modification of the "World Tree" is the so-called shaman tree, of which a shaman's stick could serve as the most widely used analogue – substitute. As a result of historical development of the entire system of traditional beliefs and worships of these people, including the Kyrgyz people, the worship of a shaman's tree descending to archaic image of the "World Tree", transformed into the popular worship of sacred trees. The majority of Turkic-Mongolian nations of Siberia consider birch as one of such trees, for example "bai kazyn" – a sacred birch among the Khakas people.

In heroic epic of the Kyrgyz and Altaic people, the ancestral sacred tree is called "bai terek"<sup>6</sup> – a sacred poplar. Thus, in the "Semetei" Epic, when Kanykei, the wife of Manas, with her six-month-old son Semetei and her mother Chyiyrdy were running away from hostile relatives to Bukhara, they ran into a "bai terek" with golden leaves on their way. Kanykei and Chyiyrdy beg the sacred poplar to hide them from their pursuers. "Bai terek" not only sheltered them, but also gave milk (which began flowing from one branch) to drink to the exhausted and hungry poor things.

It is necessary to note that worship of a birch and a poplar as sacred plants, which, according to the ancient worldview, serve as

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<sup>5</sup> *Koi kap (or Koi toosu) - mythical mountains surrounding the earth along the edges; word's end, faraway countries. It is considered sacred site.*

<sup>6</sup> *Researchers incorrectly translate the word "bai" as rich, i.e. rich poplar (for example, see: D.S. Dugarov, Istoricheskie Kornj Belogo Shamanstva, Moscow: Nauka, 1991, p. 127). The correct translation is "sacred poplar").*

prop between the sky and the earth ("asman menen jerindin tiryoosyunyon byutkyondyoi") was known on rather vast territory embracing all of Siberia and Central Asia. Among Kyrgyz people, as well as many Turkic-Mongolian people, the sacred poplar – "bai terek" or birch (among the people of Siberia) was the ancestral sacred tree, around which shamans made sacrifices, pronounced incantations to spirits and performed magical actions. Among the Altaic people, the ancestral tree was often called "temir terek" – "an iron poplar". The tree worship was so strong that the Teleut shamans while making a sacrifice to higher heavenly spirits, in particular to Ulgen, placed a birch (branches were cut off the birch and only the top remained) into the specially mounted marquee (made of poles). It was probably a later modification, so that a shaman would not have to walk to the sacred birch, which was growing within some distance from the place of ritual. In the opinion of the majority of researchers, plots with the poison stone also relate to shaman's ritual. The information from the epic tells about connections of Kyrgyz shamans-jaichy with the Siberian ones: magical actions with the stone are performed both by the Kyrgyz people, as well as the enemies of Manas, such as aforementioned Joloi and others. Thus, in the episode "Commemoration for Koketei", during the commemoration horse race, in order to weaken horses of the adversaries, Manas ordered Almambet to change weather. Almambet "changed" weather on many occasions, especially in difficult situations, for example, during the Kyrgyz army's crossing of a big river. Here "jai tash" – the poison stone performed the role of a "sacred stone", and the river – of sacred water.

The epic contains very valuable data about a peculiar shaman legend, which was lost from the arsenal of shamanism almost among all of the nations of Central Asia in the XIX century already. In this instance, it is also important that Almambet, who engaged in sorcery, was a foreigner; however, data from written sources, although indirectly, but still confirms that there were some rulers and commanders among the Kyrgyz people, who had a shaman's charisma, and, who were also shamans with good knowledge of nature. Let us note that a ritual, which related to the phenomenon of nature and took place in religious conceptions of Kyrgyz people and

their neighbors, could also be performed by shamans of those times in real life. Apparently, it is not accidental that in the encyclopedic work of the Central Asian scholar of the XVII century Mahmud ibn Vali "Bahr al-asrar fi manakib al-ahyar", the stone yada (or jada) was mentioned among the commodities of Turkestan (where the author noted habitation of Kyrgyz, as well).

As a rule, only gifted people were shamans (bakshy). To some extent they were the bearers of traditional knowledge and that is why, probably, some of them could predict weather. And when their predictions about changes in weather coincided in time with some military actions, they easily put their "sorcery" to use. Here, they were in a favorable situation. The fact that the climate of Sino-Altai and Kyrgyzstan is sharply continental, characterized by very different "surprises", also contributed to successful predictions. It often created the illusion of "sorcery". That is why we made records about the "sorcery" using the "poison" stone on rather vast territory. This phenomenon was present among many Turkic-Mongolian people (D.S. Dugarov), among the Teleuts (N.P. Dyrenkova), among the Turkic people of Western China (S.E. Malov) and other people.

According to testimonies of the Kyrgyz bakshy recorded in 1929 by T. Moldo, they treat from the following illnesses: eye illnesses, toothache, illnesses of arms and legs, gastrointestinal tract, paralysis and neuropsychic illnesses. All of these illnesses are of course not mentioned in the "Manas" epic given its specific nature. However, names of neuropsychic illnesses (jin oorular), which are treated by bakshy, are well represented. Some of these names are not found in the ethnographic literature on the Kyrgyz shamanism. For example, there is a word "ajyna" in the "Manas", meaning: 1) evil spirit; 2) the name of a severe psychic illness supposedly occurring as a result of attack by an evil spirit. In the epic, it appears mainly as the name of an illness, for example, when young Manas is taken ill by ajyna illness. Here it talks about the neuropsychic illness ajyna. The name of the disease originates from an Arabic word but by now it has been forgotten by traditional medicine of Kyrgyz people as a whole. Other names of neuropsychic illnesses, which could be treated by shamans, are also mentioned in the "Manas".

A special musical instrument "ganlin" – a pipe made of a cannon-bone and designed for imitation of neighing of a mythical horse Azhnai mor', has been preserved in the religious-magical practice of the Mongolian lamas. Something similar is observed between the Mongolian word "azhnai" and the Kyrgyz word "ajyna". The use of komuz<sup>7</sup> is known in the shaman practice of the Kyrgyz people. In the earlier times, the people of Kyrgyz also used tambourines. Already in the middle of the XIX century, S. Tian-Shanskii saw a Kyrgyz bakshy with a tambourine. This is witnessed by the fact of our finding of more than twenty names of musical instruments, including several names for tambourine.

The use of sacred sites at present time is also observed among the modern Kyrgyz bakshy. Thus, in 1995, N. Kabyzbekova took part in the ritual of a woman-bakshy (bubu bakshy) Marita from Talas. She conducted her seances in specially built quarters ("shypagerler uiyu"), constructed near the mausoleum of Manas. Pilgrims, who came here, said prayers to the spirit of Manas ata. She ordered all people, who were present during her seance, to walk around the mausoleum seven times together with her, and did not stop her actions, which started at midnight, until morning. She had an assistant dumana<sup>8</sup>, "God's fool", who led ill people upon the order of the woman-shaman to that or another sacred mazar. Upon approaching a sacred mazar, dumana fell into a trance. By doing so, he made a strong psychological effect on his patients.

In 2000, N. Kabyzbekova also recorded important information about the use of sacred sites by the Kyrgyz shamans in Kyun-Elek village of Alai District in Osh Province from the words of the son of Adish bakshy, who had passed away. Witnesses, who saw and heard Adish bakshy's seances, remembered that he started off by calling the "masters" of sacred ancestral mountains "Tastar Ata Chon Mazar" – i.e. Tastar Ata Big Sacred Mazar.

Thus, the Kyrgyz shamanism, which has Siberian origin, presents a complex phenomenon. As it was justly noted by many

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<sup>7</sup> *Kyrgyz national string instrument.*

<sup>8</sup> *Another term for bakshy.*

researchers of shamanism, there is a need for complex approach, since elements of all history and culture experienced by people are present in their activities. The Central Asian shamanism embraced all pre-Islamic religions and cultures. Having originated from the Siberian source, the Kyrgyz shamanism has experienced very strong Islamic influence. However, they have preserved worship of sacred sites, which are abundant in Kyrgyzstan, due to their origin. This means that registered sacred sites: mountains, spring, mazars and other natural objects should be preserved and treated with care. It is necessary to renew scientific study of the activities of the Kyrgyz shamans, who could still be found in remote regions of the republic. Sacred sites connected with shamans' activities should become known to the young generation, at least in the cognitive sense. It would also be a good lesson, so that we preserve purity and beauty of nature.

## **Bakshy of the Kochkor Valley Mazars: On the Question of Sacred Artistic Means**

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**Gulshat  
Baisabaeva**



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*institutions of the republic. Since 1994 until present time, she has been working as a lecturer at the History of Music Department and Assistant Professor at the Musicology and Composition Department of the Kyrgyz National Conservatory. Gulshat is the author of methodical manuals and school-books, and programs and standards for secondary and children musical schools, which have been approved by the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Kyrgyz Republic. She published more than 50 scholarly articles in collected publications and scholarly journals and more than 60 articles on various themes in local and foreign editions. Gulshat is an ethno-musicologist engaged in problems of epical narration and a member of the revision commission of the Composers' Union of the KR. She took part in many national and international conferences. In 2004, Gulshat became the Prizewinner of the Republican Competition on the Best Musicological Work dedicated to the 2200th anniversary of the Kyrgyz statehood.*

Ceremonies have accompanied a human being throughout all his life. These include everyday family and religious-worshipping actions, as well as the calendar-based ones. Mystical concepts, doctrines of pagan beliefs and Muslim faith, moral ethical values, and principles of healing, acquired lively emotional artistic forms in ceremonies. Some of them join the so-called “popular Islam” existing alongside of the official teaching.

A big layer of the national musical and poetical tradition related to religious worships, left a striking imprint in the historical memory of the nation in the form of creative work of *bakshy* and *duvana*.

*Bakshy*, the Kyrgyz shaman, is a representative of special class, which was formed as far back as the pre-Islamic period in the history of the Kyrgyz people. *Duvana* (*dubana*, *dumana*) is a bearer of Islamic, Sufi religious dogmas, the Kyrgyz dervish. Chokan Valikhanov wrote: “Shaman is a person, gifted with magic and knowledge more than others, he is a poet, a musician, a foreteller and a doctor at the same time ... And, among the Kyrgyz, not everyone can be a shaman, as not just anyone of us could be a poet.”<sup>1</sup> Shamanism is an ancient form of pagan beliefs and syncretic art uniting worshipping functions with aesthetical functions.

Researchers, who have studied shamanism in Kyrgyzstan, have almost not touched upon the artistic aspects of this culture. Meanwhile, artistic means in particular are the strongest and most impressive means with the help of which *bakshy* realized and realize their shaman rituals – communication with spirits.

This article is devoted to the artistic components, which are observed in the practice of contemporary representatives of this specialization and based on factual data, which we obtained in the course of folklore and ethnographic expedition and several field researches of for example, in Kochkor District of Naryn Province.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Chokan Valikhanov. *Sobranie sochinenii. V 5 tomah, T.4.* (Alma-Ata, 1985), pp. 52, 65.

<sup>2</sup> Expedition took place on June 3-8, 2004, with the support of the Community and Business Forum (Kyrgyzstan). Expedition in August-September of the same year was supported by the Aga-Khan Foundation.

The expedition route was Bishkek – the Kochkor Valley – Bishkek. The main points on the route were the Kochkor-Ata Mazar, the Ak-Mazar and the Archa-Mazar.

The expedition participants attended ritual services, conducted audio and video recording, and surveyed pilgrims and ministers of religious worships. These were expeditions of pilot nature, since they were the first ones to this region in the last fifteen years. On the grounds of it, not only detailed record of objects was made, but also preliminary general observations and conclusions were drawn.

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So what is the specific character of musical folklore in the aspect of problems of the given article?

Firstly, it is the identity of an author and a performer.

Secondly, it is the identity of centuries-old skill, manifestation of a deep feature of understanding of traditional communities: predominance of the collective over an individual. Tune and poetical text interact not only with consciousness, but also with the “collective unconscious” (K. Jung).<sup>3</sup>

Deviations are not acceptable in the aesthetics of folklore music playing; it is an improvisation on the ideal-invariant. Thus, for example, a desolate widow performing the ceremonial *koshok* can provide rather full situational emotional portrait of a deceased. However, she does it by following prevalent the traditions given by centuries. That is why, the word and intone in her performance are fully prescribed by the ritual of the Kyrgyz ceremonial folklore.

Thirdly, unity of “bodily” (dependence of music on physiological factors) and “cosmic” (generalized symbolism ascending to the people’s conceptions about the world) exists in the folklore so closely, as nowhere else. Not without reason, parallel of an emotional state and comparison between human and nature is constantly played up in the texts of lyrical songs. Music here is simultaneously a duplicate-portrait of an individual, as well as part of the conceivable universal set.

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<sup>3</sup> Karl Jung. *Analyticheskaya Psihologiya*. (Moscow, 1995), p. 210.



In the art of Eurasian canonical improvisation, musician as though meditates on the state of the world and soul, resting upon the ideas about steadfast foundations of human existence consolidated in theology and strict musical theory. However, the worshipping canonical improvisations rest upon the system of “supra-human” values. This type of music playing exalts prayer.

A worldly type of popular music playing expresses the self-valuable emotional state above all, for example: tenderness, joy, delight, love, etc. In the oriental *mugamat* and Indian *raga*, harmony and rhythms possess specific emotional content and influence. And, nevertheless, in worldly genres of canonical improvisation human comes forward not as an individual and person, but as a typological unit.

In the Kyrgyz Epic “Manas”, a narrator following century-old rules of this art is not only an objective dispassionate medium of artistic chronicles of his people, but also an author of vividly individual interpretation. He creates a multitude of epical (heroic, lyric, fantastic) portraits. At the same time, “theater of one actor” allows *manaschi* as if to “try on” gigantic in their historical and ethical significance images of the epic, and, thus, “personify” them for listeners.

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The Kyrgyz *bakshy*, according to oral testimonies of ministers of religion themselves, are divided into two categories:

- *kara bakshy* – the one who practices “black magic”;
- *ak jolgo tushkon bakshy* – the one, who practices “white magic”;

Furthermore, depending on the type of activities, there are following types among *bakshy*:

- *tushchu bakshy* – the one who predicts future according to dreams;
- *jargych bakshy* – the one, who takes away effect of bedevilment.

The visit to the Kochkor-Ata Mazar coincided with ceremonial service of a *bakshy*.

According to sheikh Syezdbek, Kochkor-Ata is one of the seven sacred mazars of Kyrgyzstan: the Kambar-Ata, the Baba-Ata, the Manjly-Ata, the Cholpon-Ata, the Oluya-Ata, and the Kochkor-Ata

(the name of the last one, which is located in Osh Province, concurs with the Kochkor-Ata Mazar in Kochkor District). The Kochkor-Ata dates back by specialists to the 8-9<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D.

The Kochkor-Ata presents a natural object in the form of conglomeration of rocks, which is approximately 20 m high, in the middle of the Shamshi Valley. According to the legends exaggerated by pilgrims, the protector of the mountain can appear in the image of a white young of camel Ak-Tailak. He then disappears just as suddenly. From ancient times, witnesses have considered this as a good sign.

Famous writer Kenesh Jusupov, in his book “Bairky Izder” (“Traces of Antiquity”), notes that appearance of a young of camel at these places is the evidence of protection by higher forces. Here, in particular, lies the sacred meaning of the Kochkor-Ata Mazar. This place is actively visited by pilgrims from Kyrgyzstan, as well as other Central Asian countries.

For worshipers, at the distance of several meters from mazars, there is a small 4-room house, a place for sacred ablution in the form of a small ground, paled by a wall 1.7 m high. Service, in which *bakshy*, *dumana*, and pilgrims participate, takes place on the night of Thursday to Friday on a weekly basis. Otherwise (at different time, or by requests made by those present or visiting) the ritual is categorically not performed.

On the night of June 4-5, the participants of the expedition made sacrifice and ritual meal in the form of sacrificial food (flat cakes, rice, sweets, etc.) near the Mazar Kochkor-Ata. The sacrificial animal was black lamb.

As acting persons of the given *zikir*, the participants met Kenje Suranchieva (May 11, 1931). Kenje-Apa turned out to be a vivid representative of the Kyrgyz shamans. According to her, she is a *bubu-bakshy* (*woman-bakshy*) in the fifth generation. Among the people, Kenje-Apa is called *ak joldogu bakshy*.

Kenje-Apa had a conversation with us without lifting her eyes up: “At this moment spirits are talking to me and I am visiting the sky”. She foretells without using any attributes (mirror, tambourine, *kyrk tash*), in contrast to her ancestors, who performed rituals with the use of *dobulas*-tambourine. However, she does not part with the stick *asa-*

*musa (asa-tayak)*: she walks leaning on it and makes manipulations with it during the shaman ritual. Kenje-Apa uses *asa-musa* with rosary and a bunch of owl-feathers at the top.<sup>4</sup>

In the conversation with us, Kenje-Apa clarified that she made predications based on “revelations”, which she received in her dreams. The Kyrgyz people call such foretellers *t tolgochuu*. Such foretellers existed among many Asian nations. They guided exercise of ceremonies of naming, ritual circumcision, farewell incantations, etc. Kenje-Apa keeps this tradition as well.

As bakshy-foreteller and bakshy-healer, while gathering medicinal herbs, Kenje-Apa, in her own words, hears a voice from the outside, and necessarily performs a recitative tune. This has connection to the people’s ancient belief in the magical power of music and rhythmical narration.

According to our evaluations, Kenje-Apa is a *tokmo*. At first, her account of *bata*-blessing and a parable foretelling about old age were brief – 1 minute. After a while, Kenje-Apa, skillfully improvising the first version, repeated the blessing and the parable foretelling for 4 minutes already.

Later at the Ak-Mazar, Kenje-Apa performed sacred hymns. Her prayer-*bata* has a form of a song-verse. Besides, Kenje-Apa delivers *bata* and foretelling in the form of a verse-rhythmical statement. According to her testimony, “the stream of words flows all by itself, she just regulates it.”

While studying the musical-poetical performing stylistics of the Kochkor Valley shamans – the bearers of the most ancient specialization, as well as the richest epical heritage of the Kyrgyz people, we come to the conclusion that a shaman combined in his practice artistic vocal (declamatory, narrative) and song (of different genres) improvisation.

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<sup>4</sup> “*Asa-musa*” usually has metal plates, bells *shaldyrak*. According to the classification by **Zachs** and **Hornbostel**, *asa-musa (asa-tayak)* belongs to the group of idiophones. At present time, it is used in the folklore ethnical ensemble “*Kambarkan*” of the Kyrgyz National Philharmonic Society named after Toktogul.

Let us remind that among the Kyrgyz people, professional singers-*yrchy* had significant popular authority in the great antiquity and were invited as participants to discussions of important state affairs of war and peace, as advisors to tribal chiefs. In the capacity of actors, they performed important in their content historical songs, odes-*maktoo*, hymns-*joktoo* to honor heroes, who were lost. At last, they were often engaged as foretellers, who guided people, chiefs, and even tribe patriarchs based on their prophetic dreams.<sup>5</sup>

The last function of *yrchy* is similar to the shamans' prophecy-telling function. Even Chokan Valikhanov noted it as one of the primary functions in the activities of the Kazakh and Kyrgyz *bakshy*. Thus, in the "Manas" Epic, Yramandyn Yrchy-Uulu (Singer, the son of Yraman – the true name is Karatai) and Jaisain-Yrchy were described as shamans-foretellers. The warrior Tolok, who possessed the gift of foreteller-*tolgochuu*, is mentioned there as well.<sup>6</sup>

Kenje-Apa possesses voodoo skills of *emchi domchu*. *Shaman, bakshy, kaichy* in translation from the ancient Turkic also means doctor. Kenje-Apa accompanied her magical hand passes (non-contact massage) by incantations *kabyr-kobur*.

In such a way, in the arsenal of expressive means of *bakshy* Kenje Suranchieva, traditional vocal music, recitation, spoken word, sense of rhythm, and musical instrument come forward in syncretic unity. Performances at the Kochkor-Ata and the Ak-Mazar were recorded on video.

The next participant of the ritual at the Kochkor-Ata was Akim Isaev (born on May 10, 1958). He considers himself a shaman and a foreteller. He is familiar with rituals on the basis of oral communications by pilgrims and priests. During *zikir*, he ticks away the rhythm on the

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<sup>5</sup> See: Gulshat Baisabaeva. "Sotsialnyi Status i Funktsii Muzykanta v Epope "Manas," in *Ispolnitelskoe Tvorchestvo: Istoriya i Problemy Razvitiya na Sovremennom Etape. Materialy Mezhdunarodnoi nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii*," the (Kazakh National Conservatory named after Kurmangazy: Almaty, 2002).

<sup>6</sup> The bearers of similar functions among the Altaic people were the belge-tolgo; among the Azeri people – the *tul-tsshe*.

surface of household items – metal and wooden. One of the components of the *zikir*, which was recorded by the expedition participants, was a dance ancient in the nature of its movements consisting predominantly of upper body chaotic indigested pas.

Shamans-*bakshy* are usually very flexible, plastic, and use in the ceremony all means of acrobatics. However, Akim Isaev, due to large bodily constitution, must limit his set of movements.

In the presence of the expedition participants and pilgrims, *bakshy* Akim Isaev used from his arsenal unusual for this specialization items. In our opinion, his request to purchase for him electric musical equipment is nonsense. Therefore, based on our observations, Akim Isaev is a pseudo-shaman.

The third and the youngest participant of *zikir* is Kylych Jumaliev (born in 1962). He calls himself *moldo*, *dumana*. From his story we found out that he visited many mazars of Talas and Issyk-Kul Provinces. He starts his speech with a symbolic phrase in Arabic: “Lai Illaha Ilallah, Mohammed Rasul Allah” (which means: There is Allah, and Mohammed is the Messenger of Allah).

This phrase-*kelme* is pronounced by all Kyrgyz believers before a ceremony, a prayer and a meal. In *zikir*, it is performed not as musical song tirade, but as a verse vocal construction of two phrases.

Kenje Suranchieva, Akim Isaev and Kylych Jumaliev guided the ritual at the Kochkor-Ata on the night of June 4-5, which proceeded in the following way: each man and each woman (which, by the way, is prohibited by Islam) read a *surah* from the Koran solo under the light of sham (a small twig wrapped around with cotton wool). Reading of the Koran was replaced by a general ritual conditional dance.

The Ak-Mazar, which was visited by the expedition the next day, June 6, – is also a medium-sized mountain, where there is a mausoleum ruined by time on the top, which belonged to a noble person from the Azyk Tribe, the Wolves-*boru* Clan. The Ak-Mazar dates back to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is located within 10 km distance eastward of the Kochkor-Ata.

At the foothill of the Ak-Mazar, there is a mausoleum of Abdrahman, a member of the same clan, who wished to be buried here approximately 10-15 years after the Ak-Mazar was founded.

During the visit to the Ak-Mazar, the expedition was accompanied by Kenje-Apa and Syezdbek. At the foothill of the Ak-Mazar, there is a spring, which was discovered personally by Kenje-Apa about 10 years ago. Pilgrims worship this place as well. The spring has a “guardian” Ak Baka (White Frog), which was been seen by people on many occasions. This example is unusual because the protector has not the spiritual but the bodily-material form.

Believers became convinced about the special sacred status of the Ak-Mazar since an attempt to demolish it took place. A person, by whose order a land work was started, was a high official. However, on the day when bulldozers came to the Ak-Mazar, he died from unstated causes. The next “atheist”, who violated the sanctuary (he made a disrespectful remark with regards to the believers’ feelings towards the Ak-Mazar) was the head of the local State Motor Licensing and Inspection Department. He died shortly after in a car accident.

According to the testimony of sheikh<sup>7</sup> Syezdbek, nearly 10 years ago during the construction of household installations, a great number of human skeletons were found on a small depth in the ground. The bones were of large size, unusual for modern people. Weapon (spears, arrows with quivers, sabers) and fragments of clothing were also discovered at the place of burial. Specialists of the regional studies museum of the Kochkor District, including S. Atabekov, who were called at that time, believe, that this burial belonged to the *Usuns* Tribe. It populated the Kochkor Valley in the 5-6<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D.

The *Usuns*, as it is known, preached shamanism. Perhaps, modern bakshy use fragments of ritual act, which they inherited from generation to generation.

The Archa-Mazar was proclaimed sacred relatively recently (1-2 years ago) and it is still visited by pilgrims rather rarely, since they do not know about it.

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As it is know, the ancient Kyrgyz worshiped the sky (Tenir), the moon and stars, the earth and water and the underground kingdom.

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<sup>7</sup> “Sheikh” – the keeper, person, who watches after mazar.

They had binary (upper world – under world), trinomial (the sky – the earth – the bowels of the earth), ternary (four kinds of cattle) and other systems ("seven layers of the earth").<sup>8</sup>

The "compass" of a nomad is peculiar. Top-bottom in the universe is connected by a diagonal cut of a mountain slope, a curve of a comet's tale and a shiny as poniard rapid stream of water. The highest mountain, which was overcome, becomes a horizontal. Rivers turning into waterfalls become a vertical. Even the horizon in mountainous region becomes realized vertical.

The main idea of Avesta – the dualism of the dark and the light beginnings – was typical for the Kyrgyz people, as well. The symbol of the first one was undoubtedly Manas:

*As if created from the buttress  
Of the sky and the earth MANAS.  
As if woven from the light  
Of the sun and the moon MANAS.  
As if gathered from the coolness  
Of the sublunary clouds MANAS.  
As if made of the heaviness  
Of the earth's thickness MANAS!*

*(Translation to Russian by the author)*

Manas is the World Tree, a super-symbol. The earth can barely sustain his power.

There is a popular belief that realistic portrayal of Manas is sinful. Therefore, some modern artists embody the epic themes in the system of signs.

According to a legend, which we recorded from Syezdbek during the expedition, Kochkor-Ata was a simple nomadic warrior. At the age of 40 he saw a prophetic dream, in which the Most High sent him a blessing to start on a godly path. And Kochkor-Ata felt extraordinary strength. He could put his sacred *asa* (stick) on his shoulders and fly like a bird, heal people and enlighten their spirits.

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<sup>8</sup> See: Sh. Akmoldoeva. *Drevnekyrgyzskaya Model Mira (based on the "Manas" Epic materials)*, (Bishkek, 1996).

According to research by the Kazakh scientist Bulat Sarybaev, the Kazakhs and the Kyrgyz had musical instruments assigned for accompanying shaman rituals.<sup>9</sup> Instruments (*kyl kyyak*, *asa tayak*, tambourine) gain sacred qualities in the hands of a shaman and become animated by him.

As an example, let us cite a legend existing among the Kyrgyz of the Chu Valley bordering with Kazakhstan. One bakshy-shaman put forward at a horse-race his *kyl kyyak* as a participant. During a shaman ritual, it is exactly *kyl kyyak* and tambourine-*dobulbas* that turn into the “racer” taking its masters away to any spot of the parallel – Upper, Middle or Under world. Knowing unusual power of *kyl kyyak*, rivals tie it to a big tree, so that it does not compete with regular racers. People, who gathered at the finish line, were terrified to see in the approaching cloud of dust the instrument, which was victoriously racing ahead of all and dragging behind on a rope the rooted tree.

This legend is attributed to the names of many shamans, who lived in the 17-18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Let us bring the content of an episode from one of the more ancient oral sources – the “Manas” Epic.

...Manas was dying. His armor and weapons were hung out in the yurt. Flat sounds of *dobulbas* are heard from the outside – it is Jaisan-yrchy, Jaisan-shaman is becoming exhausted in unequal struggle with spirits-giants, who came after the soul of Manas. However severely wounded great batyr<sup>10</sup> pronounces:

*“Koi degele Jaisandy,  
Kyi nabasyn janymdy”.*

“Tell Jaisan to stop,  
Let him not torment my soul”

*(Translation to Russian by the author)*

Jaisan puts his *dobulbas* down on the ground, the instrument falls silent, and Manas leaves for Eternity.

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<sup>9</sup> See: Bulat Sarybaev. *Kazakhskie Muzykalnye Instrumenty*, (Alma-Ata, 1978).

<sup>10</sup> “Hero” in Kyrgyz language.



While playing music, shaman supports balance of cosmic forces, sating everything around with streams of vivifying energy. Shaman uses such properties of musical instruments, as therapeutic impact of an acoustical instrument expressed in relaxation or, on the contrary, in excitement, leading to healing of psychologically suggestible people. Besides, instrumental music is capable of delivering picturesque musical and non-musical program information. Skillfully directed by performer, it focuses on certain parts of sub-consciousness, exciting planned emotions, behavioral models and other reactions.

Therefore, perception of playing music by a shaman as some sort of sacred act and necessary component of ceremony performed by *bakshy* appears appropriate. Here, an instrument is a shaman's spiritual "double".

In their time, Russian travelers and scientists, who visited Central Asia in the 19<sup>th</sup> – beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, described this occurrence: "The Kyrgyz reads about his ancestor's adventures in the sounds of *synnai* as if in a book."<sup>11</sup>

The Kyrgyz folk musical instruments are of interest as both an attribute of musical creative work, as well as the work of applied art. Today, they sound even as part of the symphonic orchestra delivering unique coloring of antiquity. Folk musical instruments had been formed many centuries ago and become irreplaceable companions in household, on vacation, in games, during folk-sport competitions, in marches, in celebrations and funeral feasts. Relatively light, easy in their arrangement, they accompanied the Kyrgyz nomads everywhere.

At present time, folk instruments have somewhat modernized and their mass production has been established. However, instruments made by individual craftsmen are still highly valued. They are esteemed as national relics and occupy the most honorary place in a yurt or a house.

In people's consciousness instruments are, in a way, material symbols of spiritual and aesthetical attitude towards outward things. Repeated mentioning about them in the epical trilogy "Manas" with

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<sup>11</sup> Citation from the book: *T. Vyzgo. Muzykalnye Instrumenty Srednei Azii, (Moscow, 1980), p. 113.*

almost documental description of their arrangement and expressive capabilities witness about the great role of instruments in the life of the Kyrgyz people. For example:

*Komuz is crafted from an apricot-tree,  
Sounding board is made of a chest box.  
Its cup is carved out deeply,  
Its string rest is low,  
Strings made of guts are stretched.  
Komuz was played like this and like that,  
Those who heard approved of it.*

*(Translation to Russian by the author)*

The performing arsenal of the Kyrgyz people could be divided into instruments, which have their own artistic function, purely applied purpose and ritual, which combine qualities of both. As a rule, intoning line and rhythm carry the main load in the parts for instruments of the first group, timbre – in the second one and rhythm and timbre – in the third one.

At the same time, borderlines between the groups are relative. Already in antiquity, some wind and percussive instruments had broadened their functions from signal to artistic ones. Nowadays, instruments of applied and ritual type either have disappeared along with the old way of living or are being used in concert practice, as bearers of unique timbre characteristics.

Instruments of the Kyrgyz people, like those of other peoples of the world, classify according to the four main groups, in particular:

- 1) string (*kyl*) – chordophones, for which stretched string serves as the source of sound;
- 2) wind (*yuilyomyo*) – airophones, for which air column contained in an instrument serves as the source of sound;
- 3) percussive (*urma*) – membranophones with the source of sound in the form of a stretched membrane;
- 4) self-sounding (*kakma*) – idiophones, for which the frame itself is the source of sound vibrations.

*Komuz, kyl kyyak* and *temir komuz* belong to the most popular musical instruments today. Thanks to efforts of scientists-folklorists

and performers themselves, formerly forgotten *chopo choir*, *sybyzgy* and *dobulbas* are being revived.

Based on archival information, generalization of modern scholarly proceedings on the given problem, as well as field observations, we insist that the ceremonial instrumental music underlies musical culture of oral professional tradition. The latter means not only masterly use of instruments, but also intentional influence on a listener and concert functions, owing to which the professional instrumental performance belongs to so-called presentation genres.

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In the art of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, author's and listener's "self" (K. Jung) often become known with the help of combination of ancient oriental aesthetics and western esoteric teachings. They focus on meditation, which suggests avoidance of external impressions, relaxation of body and inner self-discipline, self-immersion leading to intensive spiritual activity and religious reflections. In Hinduism and Buddhism, meditation is a method of mental training and self-regulation. In all cases, practice of meditation leads to the knowledge of inner "self".

As it is known, psychedelic jazz and pop-music (for example, "Pink Floyd"), music of some non-European nations, ritual, "new simplicity", ostinato, etc., could dispose to meditation.

In the music of the United States and Europe of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, these properties contained in itself, the so-called minimalist or repetitive music, in particular. One of its inventors, the German composer P. M. Hamel, called minimalism the musical spiritism (let us remind about Skryabin's enthusiasm in the last years). Hamel used in his music light projections, fragrances, prepared instruments, and the style of the Pacific gamelan. In such musical compositions, the role of improvisation not connected with musical notation is extremely important, and a composer and a performer are, most likely, mediums, whose movements are directed by intuition.

Types of "alternative consciousness" embodied in modern music are provided in Hamel's book "Through Music to the Self". The author assigns music exactly the role of a healer of spiritual illnesses of a

modern man. Having become a musical guru for many of his colleagues, Hamel has urged to get free from everything habitual and concentrate on high aspects of spiritual life.

Hamel's theoretical research found embodiment in his opera "Beyond the Wall of Sleep" (1981). The intrinsic plot of the opera was the philosophical path of a human to his self. Thus, notion of self-portrait in the minimalist music is directly linked to the principles of the latest psychotherapy, auto-training and hypnosis. L. Nono, E. Denisov, and G. Ligeti created in the same imagery sphere.<sup>12</sup>

Ligeti, in the second of the three pieces for two prepared pianos "Self-portrait with Reich and Rily (and Chopin in the background)", portrays his own state of meditation, prostration. Following the track of the minimalist "elementary" art of the Americans Steve Reich and Terry Rily "modeling" music out of "nothing" – endless repetitions-rehearsals, primitive sound formulas, Ligeti applied the technique of keyboard instruments' block up. The musical piece is performed quickly in the rhythm of "perpetual motion", but since some of the keys "do not speak", an impression of rhythm intermittence is created. The composer's enthusiasm about genre-stylistic cues let itself know at the end of the piece during the appearance of the "Chopin's Profile" (stormy theme of the finale of the Sonata in Si-Flat Minor for piano).

Thus, traditional principles of the most ancient sacred music are extrapolated on modern art and find here their earnest followers – composers, performers and listeners alike.

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During the scientific practical expedition it was clarified that mazars of the Kochkor Valley, the Kochkor-Ata, the Ak-Mazar and the Archa-Mazar, are visited by pilgrims, who, according to the most ancient tradition, worship sanctuaries of Tengrianity, Zoroastrism, Shamanism and Islam.

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<sup>12</sup> See: D. Zhitomirskii, O. Leontyeva, K. Myalo. *Zapadnyi Muzykalnyi Avangard Posle Vtoroi Mirovoi Voyny*, (Moscow, 1989), pp. 270-280.

Sacred temples in the Kochkor Valley have different history, architectural appearance, and internal spiritual content. Their general characteristics are location at flat open place, natural foundation for architecture and the purifying effect on the souls of believers.

Temples do not have permanent priests and technical and economic services. From time to time they are visited by groups of pilgrims accompanied by one of the sheikhs, *bakshy* or *moldo*. In these cases, sacrificial ceremonies are performed; prayers-*bata* and *surahs* from the Koran are read.

In our opinion, these ministers of religion assign themselves several functions, it being known that it is not always consistent with strict observance of worship rules. Moreover, some of these people discredit sacred predestination of *bakshy*, *moldo*, *dumana*, *emchydomchu*, etc. by their actions. On the other hand, there are people among the religious ministers, who serve the traditional deities with sincerity, in whom people have faith and therefore achieve true spiritual purification.

Every ritual with participation of such shamans-*bakshy*, as, for example, with Kenje-Apa Suranchieva, is, in a way, a highly professional, profoundly spiritual dramatized action. The words of their prayers are expressed in verse, which satisfies people's expectations and spirits alike (as believed by pilgrims).

Thus, *bakshy*-shamans, with whom the expedition participants met, were, in a way, representatives of the ancient spiritual culture of the Central Asian region. They observe the whole set of traditional creative work, peculiar to artistic semantics of this specialization. It includes music (vocal and instrumental), recitative, shaman ritual, scansion, plasticity of torso and hands, artistic vividness, creation of integral image of a representative of some higher powers on the earth.

Functions of healing, foretelling, communion and purification are accompanied by this arsenal of the artistic expressive means. This set has a great impact on believers (regardless of *bakshy*-shaman's truthfulness or fakeness). Typical noises, music, rhythmic speech, original clothing, plasticity and mimicry create specific syncretism of the art of *bakshy*. Ceremony performed by him is a strictly individual

creative work, which allows comparing him to the “theater of one actor” in the creative work of *manaschy*.

Image of a dancing *bakshy*, his temperamental rhythmic speech, captivate participants of the ceremony and they fall into psychedelic trance. The applied healing sessions, in particular, present a complex set of actions, which are supposed to have hypnotic effect on patient’s consciousness and emotions, and relatives surrounding him.

Complexity and multiple composition of a shaman ritual require not only multifaceted talent, but also great experience, which cannot be acquired right away, but in a course of psychological maturing and gaining life experience. Incidentally, specialization of *bakshy* and all functions corresponding to it are inherited genetically, rarely in the first generation.

In conclusion, it is necessary to say that the specialization of *bakshy* with all of its spiritual and material attributes is deeply rooted and, despite the destructive forces of history, has been preserved in Kyrgyzstan until this day and concentrates on sacred temples, including those in Kochkor District of Naryn Province.

This spiritual sphere of activity requires a detailed study.

## Legends About Sacred Sites of Kyrgyzstan

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*Turkey). In 2004, she graduated from a doctoral program of the Aegean University and received a Ph.D. degree in Cultural Anthropology. At present, Aigerim lectures at the Kyrgyz-Turkish University "Manas." Aigerim won the Open Society Institute's grant within the Central Asian Research Initiatives Program (CARI) to conduct research on the topic of "Comparative Analysis of the Kyrgyz Legends" for the period of 2003-2005. Aigerim received musical education in the class of flute and temir komuz at the Children's Musical School named after Shubin and was awarded a prize of the International Congress on Jew's-Harp Music (Yakutiya, 1991).*

**T**he present day Kyrgyzstan used to be an arena, where complex ethnic processes and historical events leaving profound imprints in the Kyrgyz tribes' consciousness, took place. Places where these events took place were preserved in the people's memory becoming surrounded by legends occupying a great place in the treasury of oral creative work of the Kyrgyz people.

Narration of legends is usually connected to an emergence of some object (a hill, a lake, a sacred site, peculiarities of some animal, etc.). Among more than 400 Kyrgyz legends collected by us, only 38 of them narrate about how this or another sacred site or sacred object appeared.

People were born in the mountains. It was here, where their uneasy life passed by. Hopes for peaceful and well-to-do existence were connected with water, and so the Kyrgyz people made so much effort to saturate land with water. Too much depended on water, therefore it was worshiped, it was respected, and extraordinary life-giving properties were ascribed to it. Thus, the legend "Ayup-Ata Bulagy" (Ayub Ata's Spring) tells how prophet Ayub cured from leprosy and became younger in the medicinal waters of the spring located on the territory of today's Jalal-Abad Resort.

Proud and independent Ayub, who did not kneel before anyone, was severely punished. After cruel torture his body was covered by a multitude of wounds; his internal organs were seriously damaged, as well. And he was exiled into a wild desert place, where the sun burnt mercilessly and there were no water, food or shelter. Obstinate Ayub wandered around the desert for a long time enduring terrible sorrows. Worms swarmed in the wounds in his body and stinking smell came out of them. Ayub repented. The Most High heard his prayers and sent his archangel Jabrail with an order to have Ayub stomp the ground with his right foot. And there, where he stomped his foot, a hot spring welled out of the ground, which flows continuously to this very day. Having bathed in this spring, Ayub recovered from his stinking wounds. All of the worms swarming in his wounds died except for one, which turned into silk-worm and settled in the mulberry tree. And in order to recover from the illnesses of internal organs, the archangel ordered Ayub to stomp with his left foot. Another spring emerged. After drinking from this spring, Ayub completely recovered. He had lived as a righteous man on the earth for a long time until death came to him.

Many interesting legends regarding the healing springs of the Jety-Oguz River Valley could also be mentioned. The hot springs



were announced sacred sites. They used to say about such places: "A praying sick person will become healthy, a childless woman will get pregnant."

Presence of medicinal mineral waters healing from many illnesses and red rocks unrepeatable in their beauty served as the reason for creation of many legends about this region by our people. Here are just two of them.

1. Long ago there was a rich Bay<sup>1</sup>. He had seven sons. The time went by, the Bay was growing old and his sons were growing up and maturing. When he reached an old age, the Bay decided to divide his reaches among his sons. When he was dividing his innumerable herds, seven calves got lost. They looked for them for a long time but could not find them. Soon the Bay passed away. The sons started living separately. Much time had passed by and the calves were found. They had grown and turned into big bulls. The brothers saw them and wanted this good for themselves. Each one of them wanted to get the richest piece. None of the brothers would let the other one have it. Quarrel and struggle of life and death started among them; blood was shed. One



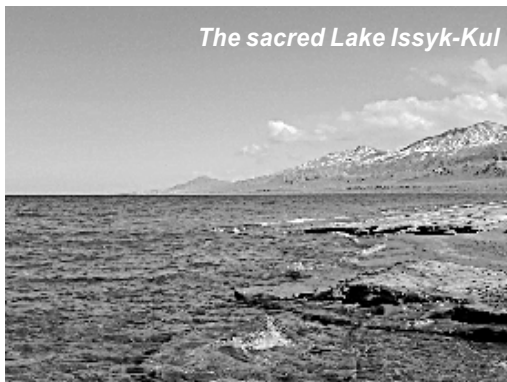
wise old sorcerer foresaw unavoidable fratricide and turned the seven bulls into seven huge blood-colored rocks. They still stand not far from the southern shore of Lake Issyk-Kul. They are called Jety-Oguz.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Bay" - a wealthy noble man in Kyrgyz language.

<sup>2</sup> "Jety-Oguz" - "Seven Bulls" in Kyrgyz language.

2. In time immemorial, two noble and powerful Khans,<sup>3</sup> rulers of innumerable and rich clans, lived in the mountains near Lake Issyk-Kul Pro-vince. Once, one of the Khans, the wicked and treacherous one, stole the beautiful



wife of another Khan. Quarrels, discord and wars started between them after that. The Khan, whose wife was stolen, started conquering his enemy. He did not want to make peace until his beloved would be returned to him. Then the treacherous confidants advised to their evil Khan: "Your enemy demands that you return his wife. Fulfill his wish. Kill the woman and give her dead body back to the one, who demands her return. What can your enemy respond? You will have his demand fulfilled. And your heart will be at peace because he will not be able to possess the woman that you will return to him." The evildoer liked this plan. He organized a big funeral repast in the mountains and invited many guests from different towns. Seven bulls were slaughtered to prepare food for the feast. When the last bull was killed, the villain Khan plunged a dagger into the poor woman's heart. Hot blood spurted from the wound and sprinkled the mountains. It still can be seen on the cliffs. Along with the red blood, boiling water gushed from the red wound and flooded the valley. The entire clan of the killer Khan died in the boiling water. The wave of the stream carried away the bulls' carcasses and turned them into red rock cliffs. Look attentively and count these carcasses: seven red bulls – seven red cliffs.

In our collection of the Kyrgyz legends, we also have about 15 versions of legends narrating about the origin of Lake Issyk-Kul, which

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<sup>3</sup> "Khan" - "king" in Kyrgyz language.

was a sanctuary and an object of worship among the Kyrgyz people. Here is one of these legends.

There were three magic wells in one kingdom. The secret of each one of them was known only to the Khan. He piously guarded them and ordered to close them tightly with lids so that water would not spill out of them.

A beautiful poor girl, with whom the Khan's son fell in love, lived in this kingdom. However, his father was against their wedding. He ordered his servants to cut off the girl's head in his son's presence. The servants did exactly as he ordered. The ground started boiling from blood drops fallen on the ground and hot springs welled out at that place. When the girl's head fell on the ground, one of the wells exploded, and the water, which poured from it, flooded the entire kingdom. Thus, Lake Issyk-Kul emerged.

As it was noted earlier, mountains, springs, and more often lakes, were objects of worship in Kyrgyzstan. One of such places was the lake named Kyz-Kol.

There is a legend about the reason why this lake is considered "sacred". Among the girls of the Basyz tribe, there was a beautiful girl, who lived in her brother's family. Her brother's wife did not like her very much. Once, the brother gave her a dress as a present. She went to the lakeshore in her new dress. Her brother's wife, who followed her, pushed her down to the lake, and the girl drowned, while her brother's wife and her child turned into stone. Since that time, there is a stone on the lakeshore reminding of a woman breast-feeding a baby.

Near Lake Kyz-Kol, prayers were said with regards to women's infertility. There was a belief that if the master of the lake, a white young of camel, would make himself seen to a woman, then the prayer would help her. At the same time, there was an idea that although this lake was sacred, evil spirits lived in it. If any person would see a snake, then he would certainly die.

There is a broad group of legends devoted to land. From the earliest times, extraordinarily rich nature of the Kyrgyz land has stirred up powerful fantasy, created beneficial basis for the emergence of numerous narratives and various poetical stories. In

antiquity, every somewhat noteworthy stone, field, hill, every mountain, pass, and, sometimes, an entire settlement, had legends about them.

Thus, there is a legend about the Kyrk Kyz Pass, which is also considered a sanctuary among the Kyrgyz.

In the old days, forty beautiful girls went up this pass to collect flowers. However, the pass was high and difficult, and there were snow storm clouds and blizzards blowing at its very peak. As soon as the girls climbed to the top of the pass, a terrible snow blizzard broke out. In order not to get cold and lost, the girls bunched up and fell asleep. They got covered with snow. The next spring nothing was found at this place. Since then, every time when old people go up the pass and pray facing the east, a blizzard accompanied by the ground wind breaks out, from time to time turning into illusive female figures. A hum reminding of a moan of those passed away can be heard from under the ground. Since that time this place is considered sacred. To this very day travelers passing by read a prayer from the Koran.

The legend "Three Brothers" narrates about the reason why the Cholpon-Ata place is sacred.

There were three brothers: Analak, Mynalak and Cholpon. The two elder brothers had a lot of cattle and wealth, whereas the youngest one, Cholpon, had only three sheep. He often wondered: "Oh God! Why should I be poorer than my elder brothers?"

Once he came into a field, built a shelter of branches and fell asleep inside. In his dream he heard a voice: "Cholpon, close your eyes and open them when you here noise!"

After a while, he heard some hum: sheep's baaing and cow's mooing. Then, Cholpon opened his eyes and indeed saw a lot of blue-colored cattle.

Since then, the place where this fellow spent a night is called Cholpon-Ata. People honor this place and say the following: "If you wish to have children – go to Manjyly-Ata, and if you wish to have livestock – go to Cholpon-Ata."

The worship of nature, which existed among the Kyrgyz people from the earliest times, promoted origin of numerous legends.

The notion about the sky – *tenir* as of the highest deity could be considered as the most ancient among the notions related to the worship of nature, shamanism and *tengrianity*<sup>4</sup> in general.

Along with idolization of the sky, there was worshiping of the "real" sky as part of nature among the Kyrgyz people. That is why they often used the expression: "Kok asman koldo!" (Blue sky, help!).<sup>5</sup> In the Kyrgyz epical works, in narratives in particular, one can often come across the following damnation: "Tobosu achyk kok ursun! Toshu tyuktuu jer ursun!" (May the open sky punish! May the earth with its chest covered with vegetation punish!).

In the worship of nature among the Kyrgyz people, significant place is occupied by the worship of the earth and water, undoubtedly based on their real properties, as bearers of the source of vitality and fertilizing substances.<sup>6</sup> In these notions of the Kyrgyz people, there was no personification of images. They worshiped all of the earth's nature, the earth's surface, as *Jer-Suu*. There was a ceremony *Jer-Suu Tayuu* among the Kyrgyz, when they made propitiatory sacrifices to the deity.<sup>7</sup> According to information inherited from elder generation, the Kyrgyz people said prayers to the deity *Jer-Suu* and offered sacrifices to it twice a year: in spring, when first plants appeared in the mountains and animals brought forth youth; and in late fall, during nomad's migration from summer to winter camps, when cattle-breeders made their preparations for winter.<sup>8</sup>

Along with the worship of all earthly nature, some concrete sites, such as mountains, gorges, springs, and lakes, were objects

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<sup>4</sup> *In my opinion, the term "tengrianity" is more suitable for denoting the religion of the ancient Turkic people, rather than the term "shamanism".*

<sup>5</sup> *T. D. Bayalieva. Doislamskie Verovaniya i ih Perezhitki u Kirghizov, (Frunze, 1974), p. 33.*

<sup>6</sup> *B. Amanaliev. "Doislamskie Verovaniya Kirghizov," in Religiya, Svobodomyслиe, Ateizm, (Frunze, 1967), p. 20.*

<sup>7</sup> *K. K. Yudakhin. Kirghizsko-Russkii Slovar, p. 249.*

<sup>8</sup> *Bayalieva, p. 38.*

of worship of one and, sometimes, several neighboring clans. Sacred sites usually had their spirits-masters.<sup>9</sup>

One of such worshiped sites was the Dyugyuryomyo Mountain at the place of Bar-Bulak (Ton District of Issyk-Kul Province). Her is what Abdrai Tolongutov tells: "Dunguromo consists of two cliffs divided by a small river. The mountain is called so because here, on the night from Thursday to Friday, boom and noise are heard, and light shines. People came here simply to say their prayers, women who did not have children came to pray, and mentally ill persons were brought here and left overnight with a shaman. A person, whose prayer was accepted by the "site's master," saw him or heard his voice. The "master" of this sanctuary was thought to be white young of camel (ak tailak)."

The prominent ethnographer T. Bayalieva recorded a great number of other sanctuaries, which were objects of worship by one or another clan, and, sometimes, even the entire tribe.<sup>10</sup> In northern Kyrgyzstan, especially in the mountainous districts of the Tian-Shan, around Lake Issyk-Kul, sites of saints' burial or some mountains, gorges with a spring and several trees on branches of which every traveler tied some piece of cloth, were considered sacred. Along with that, some domestic animal was sacrificed for the sanctuary's "master" or spirits of the deceased (arbak).

The influence of Islam on the worship of tribal sanctuaries in northern Kyrgyzstan was expressed in that during visits to these places, Muslim prayers were said, and, at present, mosques are built there. In southern Kyrgyzstan, the influence of Islam was expressed much stronger. Some clans, tribes, which lived not far from the most prominent Muslim sanctuaries, such as "Tahti Suleiman," "Arstanbab," "Azret-Ayub," "Safed-Bulyand" and others, visited them and performed collective and individual prayers there. Thus, in the legend "Sulaiman Toosu" (the Suleiman Mountain), it is told about a padishah by the name of Sulaiman, who was endowed with a magic

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<sup>9</sup> Bayalieva, p. 40.

<sup>10</sup> Bayalieva, pp. 40-44.

throne. Under this throne, padishah and his people lived in peace and harmony, but after the padishah's death the throne turned into a big mountain. In the course of time, the mountain received the name Sulaiman and became an object of worship. The legend "Safed-Bulyand" tells about a girl, who buried bodies of Saint Umar and 2,000 warriors and was rewarded for that with indescribable beauty. It also tells about the stone still existing today, on which the warrior's heads were cut off. Because of the stone and the burials, this place is considered sacred and visited by numerous pilgrims.

Until the middle of the XX century, legends attracted attention mainly of historians, as this genre narrates both about past, as well as present and future. Legends also reflect the people's perception of the world and perform a cognitive function, which fully or partially provides an answer about the origin or appearance of one or another object.

This genre is especially popular among the narrators and listeners alike. Since its brief content does not require special training, which is so essential for "manaschy",<sup>11</sup> every listener could become a potential narrator of this or another legend in future.

Popularity of this genre among the population called forth the emergence of a great number of legends. As it was noted earlier, we collected over 400 legends. Taking into consideration the fact that fieldwork research was conducted not in all of the settlements of Kyrgyzstan, then one could suggest that if this research was conducted in all locations, then the number of legends could be doubled or, even, tripled. That is why, collection of folk and ethnographic material, including narratives, is necessary for further study and preservation of the Kyrgyz people's cultural heritage. However, we should not delay this work, as the bearer of the folk knowledge is mainly the elder generation.

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<sup>11</sup> *Manaschy - a person reciting the "Manas" Epic.*

## How I Found My Spring

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### **Aichurek Kydyralieva**



*Aichurek Kydyralieva was born in Ton District of Issyk-Kul Province. Since 1970, she has resided in Orto-Suu village of Jayil District of Chui Province within 60-km distance from Bishkek. Aichurek completed a secondary school and works as a librarian. Earlier an atheist, Aichurek has gained*

*the gift of clairvoyance and healing since 1990s. She is now one of the local traditional healers – emchi.*

**M**y name is Aichurek Kydyralieva. I was born in 1950 in Ton District of Issyk-Kul Province. Since 1970, I have lived in Orto-Suu village. I am a librarian by occupation. I have been an atheist for almost all of my conscious life. Since early 1990s, I have been granted the gift of clairvoyance and healing. Now I am one of the local traditional wise women – *emchi*. I would like to share with you my story about acquiring my extraordinary abilities, but first I would like to tell you a little bit about our village.

Orto-Suu village is located in Jayil District of Chui Province within 60 km distance from Bishkek. The village is included into the village governance board Poltavka Aiyl Okmotu, which also includes two other villages: Maltovar and Poltavka. Our village received its name from the words "orto" – middle, amidst, and "suu" – water. Earlier, there were three small lakes – the size of small ponds on the territory of the village. Now, these lakes have dried out and only in very rainy weather a swamp forms at these places. The Big Chui Canal (BChC),



which was built after the war,<sup>1</sup> also runs through the village. Our village is located in the lowland, and subsoil waters are very close to the ground. In early 1970s, artesian wells were drilled, so one can see fountains of drinking water spouting from the ground.

There are 1,800 people residing in Orto-Suu village, who form approximately 220 households. We have one secondary school (190 students), one boarding school (120 students), a medical center and a club with a plundered building. Residents of the village are engaged in cattle breeding and grow vegetables on plots adjoining their houses. Every family has its own plot, where it grows sugar-beet, wheat, corn and fodder crops for cattle. The medical center, which works on a daily basis, is located in the center of the village. Villagers apply for first medical help to this center, and in case of serious illness – to District and Province hospitals. Our residents also turn to local emchi for medical help. Their help often turns out more effective and reliable and does not require big material costs for transportation and medicines.

The reason, which influenced my becoming an emchi, was my illness. I often had headaches; my legs and arms ached. I consulted with doctors, however I did not notice any improvements after their treatment. My condition was getting worse; different visions started disturbing me; I developed a sleeping disorder. Then, I turned to one traditional healer. She was the one, who told me that I had a gift of a healer, which I needed to use. If I did not use it, I could lose my health. She scared me very much by telling me that my arms and legs could stop moving altogether. Her words "you have guiding patrons" shocked me because I grew up in a family of atheists, and now I did not know what to do.

It turned out that before a person's gift is revealed and he becomes *bakshy*,<sup>2</sup> he gets ill. Then this person starts receiving *ayan*, i.e. an order from above, which makes this person find a sacred site, which is special for him, for example, a spring. It is interesting that

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<sup>1</sup> Here the author speaks of the World War II.

<sup>2</sup> "Bakshy" – a person possessing extraordinary abilities, usually but not limited to medicinal and fortune telling abilities.

during such illness, neither doctor or medicines, nor another bakshy could help the ill. When the person finds this place, he recovers and starts bringing other people to this place. In some cases, bakshy are "obliged" to go and help people, otherwise, they get sick. Some bakshy just like myself, were atheists, however, upon going through all of the trials, they gained faith.

I did not suppose that we had *bakshy* in our family, who were famous far beyond the bounds of our village. My parents never told me about that. They were educated people and did not believe in superstitions. Moreover, practices of *bakshy* and *moldo*<sup>3</sup> were received negatively – they were prohibited to engage in treating patients. For a long time, it was considered ignorance to turn to them for advice or help; it is a pity. I still regret that I did not ask my Grandmother, who certainly knew a lot.

My mentors were Baktygul Apa, Kujur Apa and Kulsalkyn, to whom I am very grateful for their advice and help. If it was not for them, I don't know what would have happened to me. I started treating people in 1992. At first, I did not trust my abilities and often double-checked my diagnosis with other emchi. First, fellow villagers turned to me for help, and now people come from everywhere, even from very remote places. People often turn to me with illnesses of gastrointestinal tract, liver and skin diseases. I also remove the effect of an evil eye, can help to cure depression, as well as radiculitis.

I receive information about a patient and his/her illnesses from spirits-*arbaks*, who give me instructions and recommendations. In the beginning, I was very much afraid of the presence of spirits because they could appear during the day and at night, they can even hit you and cause pain, if you do not obey them. Now I got used to them, can communicate and talk to them.

I assign special role to sacred sites, which make me cheerful and energetic. Moreover, it is exactly at sacred sites, where one can receive necessary information from *arbaks*, who are the masters of these places. It is exactly at sacred sites, where one can enlighten a patient, find out about his past and present and predict future.

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<sup>3</sup> "*Moldo*" – a Kyrgyz mullah.

I have my own sacred site, which I discovered myself. My sacred site is a spring with cool water and medicinal mud, which I use in treating radiculitis and other pains. I named this spring Kashka-Bulak. It is situated in our village, in a desolate field. There is no road leading to it, and I usually go there by feet or by cart. During a visit to the spring, I always read the Koran, submerge my rosary and whip, which are my instruments, into its water. I often bring sacrificial food, which I devote to the master of the spring. After reading the Koran, I become revived with energy and sprightliness and have a meal with great pleasure. I like to rest and meditate at that place. The spring is especially close to me because I discovered it myself -nobody knew about its existence before me.

I often visit Baktygul Apa, she was the one, who told me to clean up the spring located in our village. I searched for it for a long time until I learned from fellow villagers about the existence of the spring Ak-Bashat, which disappeared in the 1970s during the construction of drainage. I started looking for the spring near that place. Reeds and bushes helped me to guess about the presence of water. The spring was filled up with dirt. Water barely came out. I cleaned it and built a small ditch coming out of it. Later, I discovered medicinal mud in it, as well.



*Aichurek and friends near the spring, which she discovered*

When I started developing abilities of a *bakshy*, I started having visions of being present at some place, where I had never been before. For example, I could see myself in a forest, while I was in my own house. At first, I thought that I was hallucinating but later I became certain that it was not so. I had a serious sleeping disorder and I could go without sleeping for several nights in a row. However, once, I had a vision of visiting the Manjly-Ata Mazar. There I felt as if someone covered my head and shoulders with a big scarf. Then, a red-haired man with beard came out and gave me a wooden bowl, a hand mill and a bag made of fabric with the Koran inside. This vision came to me twice.

I had a white lamb with a black mark on its back, which I sacrificed. After that I visited the Manjly-Ata Mazar. Actually, I was born not far from this sacred place. When I came there, I understood that I had already seen that locality in my visions. The red-haired man with beard, who was already familiar to me, showed up here again. He turned out to be the "guardian" of the Manjly-Ata Mazar. After the trip to the Manjly-Ata Mazar, I visited a blind *moldo*. As soon as I entered his house, *moldo* addressed to me as "moldo-kelin", which means woman-moldo. Thus, a blind *moldo* "saw" that I received the "gift", with which I can heal people now.

Sacred sites are special places requiring careful treatment. There are sacred sites in every village and they need to be known and protected. It is better to visit sacred sites in one's own village, than visiting sacred sites located in remote areas. Every person gets help from his/her native sacred sites located in his/her native lands because they are guarded and visited by spirits of ancestors. One should not visit sacred sites out of pure curiosity; one should not disturb spirits. Sacred sites are visited when one receives *ayan*. Sacred sites are also visited upon necessity, for example: health problems, childlessness, etc.

When I found out that the Community and Business Forum (CBF) was implementing a project on sacred sites, I became very interested and excited because someone started working on such important subject. I decided to help the implementation of the project. In September 2004, within the framework of the CBF's project, I

conducted a survey about sacred sites among the residents of Orto-Suu village. I decided to conduct a survey among the residents, who belong to the Maldybai Clan and find out their knowledge about sacred sites and their attitude to this subject.

More than ten small clans belonging to one general Baky Clan, which is part of the Solto Tribe, one of the numerous tribes inhabiting Chui Oblast, reside in Orto-Suu village. I surveyed all of the representatives of the Maldybai clan residing in our village. The name of the clan originated from the name of an individual, who was able to unite people, who were close to each other by blood relationship. Maldybai lived at the end of the 19th century. He was a generous, wise and sagacious head of clan, who protected the interests of his fellow tribesmen. His contemporaries also ascribed to him the abilities of *emchi*. This clan consists of 22 households, 18 of which reside in Orto-Suu village. The rest live in Bishkek, Karabalta, Sokuluk and other places. I surveyed 30 persons over the age of 18. Many of them participated in such survey for the first time. They said that the project on sacred sites was extremely important and necessary for strengthening of health and moral purification.

All of the people, who were surveyed, knew or heard about sacred sites since childhood mainly from their parents or relatives. The older



*Residents of Orto-Suu village, who participated in the survey*

generation, at the age of 60-70, remembers attributes and rituals of visiting sacred sites well. The questionnaire consisted of 15 questions, including name, date of birth, address, education and occupation of a person surveyed. The eldest survey participant was 64 years old. To the question: "Which sacred site can you tell about?" residents of the village pointed out at local sacred sites situated in Orto-Suu village. Many of them pointed out at four sacred sites located not far from the village: Ak-Bashat, Kashka-Bulak, Jyluu-Bulak and Kosh-Bulak. All of the four names meant springs with drinking water. Three current residents of Orto-Suu village pointed out at sacred sites situated in places where they were originally from: Kyzyktyn Kopurosu in Susamyr village, Chargynbaidyn Kumbezi in Kojomkul village, Jangarachtyyn Teregi in Sokuluk District, Kochkor-Ata in Kochkor District, Kumbez Manas in Talas Province. To the question: "Whom did you learn from about this sacred site?" the following answers were provided: "From parents, relatives, neighbors." To the question about location of the sacred site, answers pointing out to the village and district were received.

To the question: "Since what time has this sacred site been known?" many responded that these places had been known for a very long time. Their parents, grandfathers and grandmothers knew about these places. To the question: "What are the special qualities of this sacred site?" many indicated medicinal qualities. Two answers indicated the ability of sacred sites to protect and make pilgrims' wishes come true. One of the answers described a sacred site Yiyk Sharkyratma situated in Sosnovka village of Jayil District, a beautiful place giving people peace, well-being and prosperity. To the question: "Does this sacred site possess medicinal qualities and what illnesses does it treat?" the following answers were received: "Water from springs was used for stomach and liver illnesses." Some pointed out at medicinal qualities of mud, which is applied to joints.

Three answers indicated that people conduct *tule*<sup>4</sup> at sacred sites and worship *arbaks*<sup>5</sup> (Kumbez Manas and Mazar-Too in Susamyr). To

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<sup>4</sup> "Tule" – a sacrificial feast for good purposes.

<sup>5</sup> "Arbaks" - spirits of ancestors.

the question: "Who is the guardian of this sacred site?" only half of the residents responded: "Ancestors, guardians-masters, who are not visible to all but only to clairvoyants; a young of camel, a white snake." However all of them told and knew about the existence of guardians. To the question: "How often do you visit this sacred site?" the following answers were received: "When we read the Koran to remember the spirit of an ancestor;" some indicated the exact number of visits. We also received such answers, as: "Regularly, depending on a possibility, usually on Friday or Thursday." To the question: "Which rituals should be performed at sacred sites?" we received answers: "One has to perform an ablution before the visit; one has to read the Koran; one has to sacrifice a lam or another cattle; one has to burn sham<sup>6</sup> and pray." One resident responded that one had to bow down to the sacred site.

To the question: "Which activities are necessary for the preservation of sacred sites?" the following answers were obtained:

1. Observance of the rules of visit with strict maintenance of cleanness and order.
2. Planting green plantations in the visitors' rest zone.
3. Preservation of sacred sites in their original form; not collecting medicinal herbs growing near a spring; maintaining cleanness and order at sacred sites is the responsibility of village residents; not harming the environment.

I am glad that I was able to take part in the work of this project and make some contribution to the work, which I am involved in and believe in myself. I think that it is very important to inform people about our sacred sites in order to preserve culture, spirituality and history of Kyrgyz people.

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<sup>6</sup> "Sham" – a small torch burnt during spiritual and religious rituals.

## Mazar is People's Wealth

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**Kachkyn  
Asanbekov**



*Kachkyn Asanbekov was born in Kara-Kungoi village in Kochkor District of Naryn Province. In 1993, he studied the imams' course at the madrasah in Bishkek. At present, Kachkyn performs the work of imam at the Kosh-Dobo Village Council and leads an environmental NGO "DJIF". He also studies at the Ecology Department of the Kyrgyz Agrarian University named after Skryabin. Kachkyn is married and has four children.*

My mother used to say: "I brought you in to this world at a mazar, an old man came down from the sky and healed me." Oh, a lot of time has gone by after that. My mother is now 87 years old. I am telling about this in the beginning of my article because I created a non-governmental organization "DJIF" and with Allah's help I started a project on sacred sites. Now I am engaged in preservation of sacred sites (mazars) and their environment. People say: "A word cannot be spoiled by truth." Despite the fact that I am a follower of Islam, I devote myself to protection of sacred sites, which were given to us as present by the Most High Allah, or, to put it more precisely – protection of nature. Thus, I collaborated with women-shamans (women-bakshy) and healers, and taught them about preservation of sacred sites (mazars) and their environment at seminars. I treated them not as shamans, but as common people, who we are all under Allah, in the first place. I did not fuss around as some mullahs saying: "You give rise to doubts in Allah, you sin." Allah is a witness, Allah is unbiased;



He will decide what is right and what is wrong. I said: “Do not destroy the wealth given by nature, in other words given by Allah; do not pollute the environment; is there anything I could do to change people’s attitude towards Mother-earth?”

Some people understood me, others could not understand. Some of my colleagues (mullahs), although did not say it into my face, started looking at me askew. They said that I became a shaman, bakshy. I felt sorry for those, who could not get rid of superficial thoughts and prejudiced points of view. I decided not to justify my actions and explain something. Those, who understood me – supported me. I did not want to sit around doing nothing, telling myself that I was a mullah. I became involved in social work. I founded my own non-governmental organization, created a number of communities and became a Deputy of the Village Council. I was elected a Chairman of the Association of Kara-Kungoi and Kara-Saz Communities, as well as an Executive Director of the Cooperative on Potato Production in Kochkor District. I also became an Assistant to the Deputy A. Japarov of Jogorku Kenesh.<sup>1</sup> What is wrong with that?

Today some people treat mullahs as second-grade people. Probably, they do not say it for nothing: “What you sow is what you get.” I tried to do many good deeds. Some of them turned out well and some of them did not. I had time to do some of them and did not have time for others. However, the most important thing is to desire to do well in the name of Allah. They say: “Only the one who does not work, avoids mistakes.” Perhaps, I, too, can make mistakes like anyone else. Perhaps, I can hurt someone’s feelings or say something wrong. I can only say that life, as it turns out, is both interesting and complicated exactly for these reasons. The more one wishes to work heartily, the more obstacles, hatred, and back-heel there are. One has nothing else to do but to say: “Oh, these dispositions and habits of our people, indeed.” I had told myself that I would not step on the same rakes twice but I had.

I live as everyone else. I do not have any extras. But thanks to Allah I have enough to support my family. I am bringing up four

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<sup>1</sup> *Kyrgyz National Parliament (note by translator).*

children. I am doing a monitoring work on behalf of the NGO “DJIF” in the secondary schools name after S. Orozbekov and A. Ablesov in Ormonkhan village through a competition “The Best Teacher (two teachers) and The Best Student (two students)” announced in the beginning of the school year. At the end of the year, winners will receive gifts and ribbons with inscriptions: “The Best Teacher” and “The Best Student.” So this is how I work with pure thoughts and good intentions in the name of Allah in this life.

*With best wishes,*

Kachkyn Asanbekov

Chairman of NGO “DJIF”

### **The “Chong-Kara Tash” Mazar<sup>2</sup>**

The big black stone is severe,  
There are beautiful flowers around it.  
Pilgrims come here  
To hear secret voice coming from it.  
I wonder if it reminds me of  
Past and Future.

The “Chong-Kara Tash” Mazar is situated on the bank of the Ukok River, 5-6 km east of Ormonkhan village. It is known since the XX century. In the past, there were many flowers growing around the mazar. One can hear horses’ snorting, blades’ clinking, and battle noise, near the sacred stone. It helps believers to recover from an illness. The name of this mazar is directly linked to the stone with the same name, which is halfway split.

### **The “Kosh-Kara Tash” Mazar<sup>3</sup>**

As if made by hand  
The twin black stone.  
Embroidered in the middle,  
Takes soul back to history.  
To those who come to bow,  
Will open mysterious world.

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<sup>2</sup> *Translates as the “Big Black Stone”.*

<sup>3</sup> *Translates as the “Twin Black Stone”.*

The “Kosh-Kara Tash” Mazar is situated 5-6 km east of Ormonkhan village near jailoo<sup>4</sup> “Tash Bulak.”<sup>5</sup> It is known since the XX century. The mazar constitutes a paired stone with a hole through the center. One can hear various sounds, cry of a little young of camel from it. It helps sick people to cure from an illness. The name of the mazar originates from a stone with the same name.

### **The “Sagynbai Ata” Mazar**

The mausoleum is austere  
It holds centuries’ memory.  
An old man lies there,  
Mountain slope is his pillow.  
Inspiring voices are heard,  
Sabers clink, horses stamp.

The “Sagynbai Ata” Mazar is situated 4-km east of Ormonkhan village, near the entrance of the “Aimanbet” tract. It is known since the XX century. The mausoleum is considered sacred site and has beneficial effect on believers and pilgrims. This mazar is a place of burial of the *manaschy*<sup>6</sup> Sagynbai Orozbekov. It is built from hand-made baked brick in the form of a rectangle.

### **The “Kongdoi” Mazar**

A mysterious lonely bush stands.  
There are only stones around it.  
One will not find another such plant,  
If he looks in other places for it.  
“Solve my riddle,” asks the sacred site,  
Swinging with the wind.

The mazar is situated 2-3 km east of Ormonkhan village in the middle of rocky dry foothills. The plant is similar to the dog-rose bush. A woman wearing *elechek*<sup>7</sup> or a young of camel, whose voices and visions are present here, are “masters” of this mazar. It helps to cure

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<sup>4</sup> *Summer pasture.*

<sup>5</sup> *Translates as “Rocky Spring”.*

<sup>6</sup> *A Person, who recites the Epic “Manas”.*

<sup>7</sup> *Female head-dress reminding of a turban .*

different illnesses. It is known since the XIX century. It is named after a bush with the same name.

### **The “Kyz” Mazar<sup>8</sup>**

Not having reached her full age,  
In some old days, times,  
A soul left for another world,  
Shedding light and becoming a ray.  
It heals those, they say,  
Who worship from the heart.

The mazar is situated 4-5 km east of Ormonkhan village on the bank of the Ukok River. It looks as a place of burial encircled by a wall. It is known since the XX century. It helps to cure different illnesses. A girl’s voice and a young of camel’s call are heard.

### **The “Archa” Mazar<sup>9</sup>**

A lonely juniper stands on a mountain,  
It will help those who are in trouble  
It is growing on a rocky surface  
And lives without a drop of water.  
What does its secret matter?

The “Archa” Mazar is situated on the border of Kochkor and Ton Districts, on a one-kilometer long foothill of the southern mountain slope. They say that in old times, a man, who came from China, lived there and was buried under the juniper. The mystery of this mazar consists in the point that a juniper grows in the middle of the mountain, on its rocky part without any water, and there are no other plants around it. It is known approximately from the XX century. It helps to cure different illnesses. A voice of an old man and other voices are heard. People worship this mazar to this very day.

### **The “Ayan” Mazar<sup>10</sup>**

There was an army once,  
And two enemies fought.

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<sup>8</sup> “Kyz” means “girl” in Kyrgyz language.

<sup>9</sup> “Archa” means juniper in Kyrgyz language: The “Juniper” Mazar.

<sup>10</sup> “Ayan” means “vision given from above” in Kyrgyz language

They say many heads were lost.  
Turning into a sea,  
Bitter tears ran down from eyes.  
Having witnessed those events,  
Recount now two big stones.

The “Vision” Mazar is situated 2-3 km north of the Kara-Too Mountain’s foothill, near the village with the same name in Kochkor District. It looks as two black stones standing vertically. According to pilgrims’ testimony, there used to be a town at this place. The master of this mazar is a bird. They say one could hear a sound of some bird. It is known since the XX century. Helps in treatment of skin diseases and nervous system disorders. One can see remainder of an old water-channel and mounds of old graves.

### **The “Ak-Kyrchoo” Mazar<sup>11</sup>**

Two trees grow beside like yurta,  
Attracting people to their site.  
A spring is boiling up –  
Drink its water with pleasure!  
Taking away trouble and sorrow,  
It will cleanse your aching soul.

The “Ak-Kyrchoo” Mazar is situated at a mountain foothill, 2 km west of Isakeev village. The story tells that one man cut down all branches on trees in this locality, thus bringing harm to the environment. This man’s family did not live long, they all died, and those who survived – became paralyzed. It became known that this place was called “Ak-Kyrchoo”. Later, in 1999, the mortality rate in Isakeev Village increased, mainly among the young generation. Then, the village residents decided to sacrifice a lamb. After that, the mortality rate in this village decreased. It helps to cure different illnesses. It is known since the XX century. It looks like two trees, which have grown together tightly in the middle in the form of yurta. It is visited by people.

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<sup>11</sup> “Kyrchoo” is a thick thread used in assembling the yurta, the Kyrgyz nomad’s tent.

## **The Rules on Visiting a Mazar:**

### **1. Purpose.**

They say: what you request from Allah is what you will get. It is not important whether it concerns the mazar or something else, the most important thing is to have a purpose under God. Once you set your aim, it is your duty to achieve it. They do not say it for nothing: "You will receive what you wish for." Thus, wish only for good things.

### **2. Performing ablution before the visit.**

How good it is when your intentions are pure and kind! Before the visit, it is necessary to wash up (ablution, Gusul) and cleanse oneself. An angel comes down only to people with good intentions and clean body. They say the angel avoids unclean people. Thus, it is important to have both pure thoughts and clean body when visiting mazar.

### **3. Dedicating reading of the Koran (prayer) to ancestors.**

When you visit sacred sites, it is necessary to say a prayer to deceased people, ancestors, Muslims. It will bring you only good. Thus, do not forget to read the Koran.

### **4. Making nine breads.**

They say that nine breads are a sacrifice. Making bread and bringing it to a sacred site is a good sign. There is nothing more sacred and more important than bread. Thus, do not forget to bring bread to the sacred site: if you bring something pure, you will get something pure.

### **5. Worshipping sacred sites means remembering about Allah.**

When visiting sacred sites, tell your secret, bow down opening up all your soul. Express your obedience to Allah, who created these places, stones and water, because He sees everything.

### **6. Bringing a candle.**

Bring along 7, 9, 21, 41 – odd number of candles to sacred sites. You will be able to see everything in this candle. It will tell you everything.

**7. Bringing archa for fumigating with its smoke.**

It is good if you bring archa for purifying the place from negative forces and energy, and for purifying yourself. The words: “Alas-alas – deliverance from trouble” – speak for themselves.

**8. Making a sacrifice.**

Making a sacrifice of an animal is a good deed if not for all believers, then for those, who could not afford it. Sacrifice will save you from trouble. If you could afford it, do not spare one animal.

**9. At sacred sites, one should not wish evil for someone else.**

What you ask from God for others is what you get for yourself. If you wish good, then you will get good; if you wish bad, then sooner or later you will get something bad.

*Wishing you a happy journey, good intentions, and health, we say “welcome” to God’s sacred sites – mazars.*

## The Kyrgyz Land - Our Wealth and Our Destiny

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*Burulsun Tolomush Kyzy Kadyrakunova was born in Kara-Koyun village of At-Bashy District. In 1978, she successfully completed a secondary school in the Pogranichnik village and entered the Naryn Pedagogical Institute, which she successfully graduated from in 1981. In 1983, Burulsun moved to Dupkur village of Toguz-Toro District, where she worked at the Hydro-Post for seven years. Later, she worked as a teacher for many years. Since 1990, Burulsun has been on the righteous path of the Most High. She is married and has a son and two daughters.*

### **Burulsun Kadyrakunova**



**O**ur wealth and our destiny are in the Kyrgyz land, which has existed for many centuries. In our mountainous region, where nature strikes by its primeval beauty, the Kyrgyz people, magnanimous as Manas, kindhearted and generous by its nature, has worshiped sacred sites from the earliest times. Our wealth and heritage have been passed from a father to a son, from one era to another era, and we will always remember about that. As they say: "The herald of Allah is a word and the herald of a body is an eye;" if people visited sacred sites, prepared boorsoks,<sup>1</sup> dedicated readings from the Koran to their ancestors, remembered the deceased parents and relatives, asking

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<sup>1</sup> "Boorsok" - a Kyrgyz traditional food in the form of fried pieces of yeast dough.



God for good things, then the people would live in greater consent, and we would not have had to appeal to our youth about honesty and tenderness.

People often have a question: "What is a sacred site? What is mazar?" Mazar is a sacred site. Mazars could be found on peaks, slopes, and at foothills of mountains, in fields, in places with many trees and in places, where water comes out to surface. Heroes, who protected the people from enemies, were often buried at those places. Their graves are usually situated at foothills or in the outskirts of a village, and, sometimes, even in the center of a village. We call sacred sites mazar, and information about them is passed by ancestors from generation to generation. Believers worship these places and leave coins and their belongings there. Dervishes, spiritual mentors, shamans and moldos<sup>2</sup> often gather there.

In old days, Kyrgyz people tried to keep mazars and their surroundings clean. If it were possible, they pulled up grass, cleaned the territory around sacred site and kept it clean. When people went to worship mazar, they performed ablution, put on clean clothes, spent a night near the site, cooked food there, read the Koran, and asked the Most High for all the best. For example, those who did not have children asked the Most High to grant them children, the poor ones asked for cattle. Cattle-breeders suffering from wolves raiding their herds expressed their wishes about this problem. Such legends and tokens exist to this day.

Kyrgyz people consider Issyk-Kul, Chatyr-Kul and Son-Kul sacred.<sup>3</sup> Every mazar has its mysterious secret and power, which gives energy. But not all visitors can see enigmatic manifestations of mazars. I believe that people, who have prophetic dreams, ill people, unfortunate people and those, who cannot have children, should visit sacred sites. People should visit mazars with good intention because they go to worship the Most High. Before going on a trip, people should perform an ablution, cleanse their body and soul and say: "Keep safe from accidental misfortunes and temptation." Our duty is

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<sup>2</sup> *"Moldo" - a Kyrgyz mullah.*

<sup>3</sup> *All three are lakes in Kyrgyzstan.*

to devote the Koran to the spirits of our ancestors and, by calling their names, say: "Be contended, spirits."

When you visit mazar, do not tie pieces of rags on to bushes and trees growing nearby. You create obstacles for their growth. Make sure to remember not to spit on mazar's territory or into waters, running nearby. It is not allowed to perform an ablution near mazar. It is even prohibited to pick flowers growing near a sacred site.

We are all sinners in this life. Let us not forget that we are the servants of Allah and the followers of Mohammed. They say that the Koran is the key to religion, so let us believe that there is God and that he is indivisible.

Sacred sites have their sacred spirits-protectors. For example, the mazars Enenin Koz Jashy, Unkur-Tash, Jumurtka, and Tash-Mazar, where the Prophet Mohammed performed an ablution, have Kydyr-Ata as the spirit-patron.<sup>4</sup> Sometimes he can make himself seen to visitors, gives his blessing to their requests and then disappears. This sacred vision cannot be seen by everyone. Only those, who have a gift, can see it. They say that Mother Bubuzuura also dwells in these mazars.

The Chech-Dobo Mazar also has powerful spirits-protectors. The whistle of our ancestor, Hero Almanbet whipping his horse can be heard. One of the "masters" of this sacred site shows up in the image of a white young of camel. All living creatures at this place ask the Most High for their well-being. Thousands of people suffering from eye illnesses joyously washed with water from the spring situated nearby, worshiping and praying to the Most High all night. Every sacred site has its own sanctity.

It is written in books that the spirit-protector of the Kochkor-Ata Mazar was a deer. At the Manjly Mazar we are greeted by the spirits-protectors, naked male and female twins. A white kid and a black kid play at the Azankech-Ata Mazar. I have become certain that if people ask the Most High to grant them children, then their requests fulfill quickly. Let the land of the Kyrgyz people, rich in sacred sites, of which we can talk endlessly, be in peace and order. And let the sacred mazars protect our people!

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<sup>4</sup> *"Kydyr-Ata" - "Father Kydyr".*

In the Soviet time, religion was strictly prohibited, and Kyrgyz people estranged themselves from Allah. And now, when our republic became independent, we are free in our actions. If we wish - we can believe, and if we do not want to, then we live to the best of our abilities. Although late, but my people's eyes have opened and they have stepped on the path of the Most High. If in the past religion was not valued and sacred sites lost their sanctity and were crushed, nowadays, people's attitude has changed.

Foreign tourists admire our nature, our sacred sites and worship them, when they come to our country. For example, the Englishmen, having visited the Tash-Rabat Mazar and the Chech-Dobo Mazar, said: "It turns out that you have your own Mecca and Medina," and local people are proud of that. Our Creator has given the gift of curing to some of us, and the gift of quackery, clairvoyance, and the ability to determine illness by one's pulse, to others. Despite that, due to life conditions, people are converting into other religions. Well-being is in our own hands. There is only one Most High and there is thousand of angels but religions turned out to be different.

For this reason, my people open your eyes! Choose the righteous path! Purify your thoughts by instructing, teaching and showing the right way to the growing generation. Let us stick to our religion holding it sacred and understanding it correctly without forgetting customs and traditions of our ancestors. Our Allah is gracious and we should praise and thank only Him. Revengeful behavior is inherent only in an infidel, so let us not be revengeful. If you have quarreled - make



*Kumbez of Sagynbai Manaschi  
in Ormonkhan village of Naryn Province*

peace. If a sinner says truth, then the Most High will hear it. Whatever happens, let us ask the Most High only for good things, peace of the earth, peaceful sky and peace for people. Let us worship sacred sites - mazars.

My people, May your earth and water, your mountains, rocks and your mazars, be blessed! May my Ala-Too, supporting the sky with its peak, my sacred Kyrgyz land, my wise people, be blessed! Let us value and preserve our wealth, valuable resources and sacred sites granted to us for ages. Let us not forget that we are the followers of Mohammed - the servant of Allah! That is why let us remember that we are the power and owners of the universe, which was created by the Most High. Let us be grateful for our lives, let us be humble and let us hold on to our destinies.

Everything that happens in our life happens by the will of Allah. If we fulfill Allah's will, then He will grant us well-being. May our consciousness be pure in the eyes of Allah, may our road be without obstacles. May Allah not deprive us of His blessings. Let us be honest and conscientious. May misfortunes pass by without affecting us.

My paternal Grandfather Kadyrakun was born and grew up in China, in the Kashkar region, where his parents had fled. In 1955, he moved to his motherland, to Issyk-Kul Province. Later, he settled at the Pogranichnik Village. The Grandfather was a righteous Muslim. He never missed the Mohammedan prayer, read and translated from Arabic language, and had never tasted alcohol. He was very eloquent - each one of his words had a meaning. He was a special person. Everyone who knew my Grandfather and saw his great deeds still remembers and talks about him with pride.

He had a gift of clairvoyance. Everything that he predicted on a sheep's should-blade bone came true. My Grandfather was also a great healer. He diagnosed illnesses by one's pulse and treated patients through incantation. He also treated mental patients saying that a demon seized the spirit of the ill and it was necessary to say prayers for him. People considered him the great moldo and were grateful to him for helping many people to cure from various illnesses.

My Grandfather, just like his maternal Grandmother, read the Koran a lot. He was a person, who lived his life the right way and gave

good advice and admonition. My Grandfather always gave answers to questions, which were of interest to me, and gave his blessing. He told me to write down all of his clairvoyance cases, as well as the events related to his gift of curing. I still regret that I behaved childishly and did not write them down. Now I think that it is still not too late. I can't keep to myself admonitions given by my Grandfather and decided to write them down.

- Wake up early. If you sleep until the sun is up, you will lose your luck.
- One should not make noise and talk loudly at a cemetery or it will lead to misfortune,
- Instead of mourning over the deceased, it is better to read the Koran for that person, and you will do a deed that will please the Most High.
- Only the Most High can do all out of nothing and nothing out of all.
- Blind man is not guilty of his blindness and lame man should not feel ashamed of being lame.
- No matter how one tries to hide an illness, death will reveal it all the same.
- The fire of hell awaits those who do not believe in the Most High.
- A person should not insult another person; a man should not consider himself stronger than another man; a woman should not think herself higher than another woman; do not look down on other people.
- The Most High has the power on earth and in heaven.
- The one, who is even-tempered and patient, will achieve prosperity.
- Read the Koran and repent; do not miss the Mohammedan prayer; be grateful for what you have; do not be greedy... my Grandfather used to give this kind of advice often.
- If you do even a small deed in the course of a day, the Most High will be pleased with you.
- Be accurate and honest at work.
- Deliberately sinful deed is much worse than a sin through ignorance.

- Never deceive... my Grandfather used to admonish. It is easier not to sin than trying to redeem sins later. In order not to sin, it is necessary to remember about the Most High always. If you forget about the Most High even for a moment, Satan will take over your consciousness immediately. Since he is Satan, he tempts human being, incites him to do foul deeds and a human being starts sinning.

My Grandfather used to ask often: "Sing us songs about my China, where I grew up" and

was very glad and thanked my sister and me when we sang for him. He became absorbed in recollections, feeling as if he were in Kashkar, where he was born and raised. My Grandfather always said: "I have fallen off the skewbald horse twice, if I fall off for the third time, then most likely to death. " When I was in the 10th grade, my Grandfather died by falling off his skewbald horse. I wish I remembered or wrote down all of my Grandfather's words! I regret it very much... But what can I do...

In August 1971, when I was in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, my uncle Jahke took me away for holidays. My maternal relatives lived in the village named Bash-Keltebik near the cemetery called Jake Sarai. In the village, everyone called my maternal grandfather Johke moldo. At that time, there were rumors about upcoming an earthquake, and then my Grandfather built a shelter out of yurta's<sup>5</sup> pole. My Grandfather and I decided to spend a night in kumbez<sup>6</sup> and my Grandmother and Aunt Aitbubu – in the shelter. My Grandfather told us: "If a strong earthquake starts suddenly, say kelme,<sup>7</sup> run out, take a handful of earth and, while saying kelme, throw it on the ground with force." Grandfather took his ax and a sack with him and we went to the kumbez. He warned: "If you suddenly see spirits inside of the kumbez, do not be frightened. They will come in white robes and start disturbing me singing and laughing loudly." I was surprised to hear

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<sup>5</sup> *"Yurta" - a Kyrgyz traditional house made out of wooden poles and covered with felt rugs.*

<sup>6</sup> *"Kumbez" - a dome, grave construction.*

<sup>7</sup> *"Kelme" - a Muslim symbol of faith.*

that. The earthquake was light and stopped quickly. We spent three nights at the grave. I waited for a long time until what my Grandfather told me about would happen. Once before dawn, I saw how Grandfather was waving his ax with his arms open wide, but I could not see anything else.

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In 1973, I was in the 5th grade. Our house stood by a cemetery at that time. One evening I decided to go to bed. I walked to an iron furnace and went to bed. I looked and saw an old woman standing there with a stick in her hand. Every time I raised my head, she beat me on the head with her stick. When I lay down, she stopped. I got afraid and woke up my younger brothers. They could not see anything and told me: "Sister, lay down quietly, do not scare us." And the children of my uncles Sadybakas and Jooshtai told me: "Now, get up and point out, and we will show them!" and strived toward the furnace with a stick in their hands. I spent many days in such a way. In my sleep, I felt how something heavy was pressing down on me. When I told about it later, they would tell me: "It is probably albarsty,<sup>8</sup> you should have pulled out some of its hair." As far as I was concerned, I could barely pronounce kelme at these moments: "Bismillah Rahman Irrahim." I asked my Father: "I was screaming, didn't you hear me? I could not sleep the whole night, I saw some old woman by the furnace," and he answered: "That means your Grandmother Kalicha came. She probably does not like how you play and laugh loudly all the time, Honey. Behave yourself," and read the Koran. After that he added that we should fry boorsoks and read the Koran every Thursday in remembrance of Grandmother. I found out that my Grandmother died from jaundice, when I was two years old.

Thus, changes started taking place in my life. Usually, when I sleep or even during daytime, when I am alone, I feel as if someone is following me around. Someone calls me by my name; I turn around

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<sup>8</sup> "Albarsty" - a demonic creature in the image of a woman squeezing a throat of a sleeping person.

and cannot see anyone. Sometimes, when I am home alone, I feel as if the house is full of people and I talk to them. Sometimes, I scare and amaze myself.

In 1974, we were in jailoo<sup>9</sup> Koenduu-Kolot. Makesh's wife had an arm fracture, which grew together crookedly. I used to say: "Look, how she bakes bread with her crooked arm, we cannot do it even like that." As they say: "Do not laugh at someone else or the same thing will happen to you." I broke my arm in the summer and it grew together crookedly. It happened in the following way.

Farmers-zootechnicians came to visit us. They ate meat, played cards, and went to bed late. I was welcoming the guests, so I got very tired and fell asleep. In my dream, I put on men's hat. Then, suddenly I dropped the hat into water and it floated away. I tried to catch it three times, finally I managed to get it and put it on again. I woke up when it was already daylight. I heard someone saying: "The horses went over the Arashan Mountain. Let the brother go there and have somebody else look after the sheep," and then I noticed that our guests forgot the playing cards, which turned out to be new. I put them away without showing them to anyone. After that, I took my younger brothers Kurmanbek and Sultanbek and went to look after the sheep.

While playing cards, I did not notice how time went by. I saw that the herd went over the mountain. I wanted to go through the marshy water on the very brink, where there was a pass made of four stones. I remember stepping on one stone... When I opened my eyes, I saw my brothers sitting next to me crying and trying to lift me up. It turned out I broke my arm at the elbow. Uncle Bazarchy's wife, who lived in the mountains, bandaged my arm and I went home. My brothers stayed to tend to the sheep.

On the way home and I turned around and saw that a gray wolf was following me. I was frightened, ran home and told my uncle's wife but she did not see anything and was surprised. As it turned out, she was ill at that time but recovered shortly after. My arm grew together crookedly, but Assein-Ata cured it by dubbing on some badger's fat.

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<sup>9</sup> "Jailoo" - a high altitude pastures, where Kyrgyz shepherds take their cattle.



The white rabbit, which used to seem to me in the past, turned into a gray horse. When I told my Father about it, he said: "Remember about the Most High and repent." When I was returning home late after school with my classmates, the gray horse pursued me. I told them: "Here it comes," they got frightened and said: "Moldo's daughter, do not frighten us."

\* \* \*

On January 13, 1989, I had a dream. In my dream, my Father Tolomush and my younger brothers Kurmanbek and Sultanbek were in our house. I was going to give them tea, when my Father said: "Your younger brother is going to leave, give him his instruments." I look down and see that I have pliers in my hands. I went outside, and my brother had already untied his horse from a pole. Suddenly, a pair of horses appeared and dragged my brother after them. All of our family members ran out on the street screaming. They also tried to catch the horses, but they, too, got dragged falling and lying down on the ground. My Father's knee was torn and his arm was dislocated. I cried loudly. When I woke up frightened, it was already half past two at night.

The next day, I was worried and went to the post office and called my relatives. It turned out that my Grandfather Kadyrakun and his older brother passed away. The pair of horses turned out to be the two relatives. The torn knee and the dislocated arm turned out to be the two Grandfathers. Oh, Allah! What sign you gave me," I thought and started crying.

This year was difficult for me. I received a telegram saying: "Father is ill, come." I barely made it back to the village. My Father was stricken by paralysis and hospitalized to the Tokmok hospital. We brought him to Bishkek and showed to doctors and a healer by the name of Rakhat. My Father's condition did not improve; he was discharged from the hospital and I took care of him myself for twelve days.

I understood that my Father would not get better. My Grandfather used to say that he left his gift to my Father. My Father told fortunes

with the use of 41 stones and all of his predictions came true. He used to admonish me: "Do not wash clothes on Thursday, spirits will drown in soap. Friday is a difficult day; a Muslim person should rest for two days. Do not go outside between two and four o'clock at night - it is Satan's time; one can catch something bad at this time." But my Father got sick because he did not have a strong desire to follow his gift and acknowledge it. So it happened that he fell asleep on hay at the barn and his one side became paralyzed.

A woman by the name of Sofa appeared in Fergana at that time. We sent her a handkerchief so that she would read over it for my Father and they brought it back in 1991. When my Mother saw the handkerchief, she said that my Father's special gift was too strong and because of that Sofa could not send any signs for my Father's healing on it. I said that a person with rosary should not go in and went to spend a night at another house.

The next day, I came back and dressed my Father into a white shirt. After that I started fingering rosary and saying prayers to the Most High. It was around eleven o'clock at night. Mother Sofa's angels appeared quietly and started lifting my Father's blanket by its edge. I asked to cure, heal my Father from this illness, so that he could at least go outside without assistance. I dedicated readings from the Koran to my Grandfather's spirit and asked him to protect my Father. After a while, folded white sheet of paper fell down from the ceiling. I caught it and read a sign: "Go to Arabia." I wanted to give the rest of it to be read by someone who knew Arabic but some hand stroked me, as if saying: "You have already read." While I was sitting amazed, that white paper turned into a blue headscarf. After that, someone said: "Hold on to it tightly," tied the scarf on my head and left.

In the morning, I took off the shirt from my Father and saw a wet spot at the same place, where they took a test sample from his spinal cord. I went to visit my ancestor's graves, read the Koran for them and left for Naryn after giving instructions to watch after my Father well.

\* \* \*

In 1990, before starting my practice, I went to Osh with two women. Before that, my brother-in-law's sister Daira and myself spent

a night at my brother-in-law's, and I had a dream that a big Uzbek man entered the room at two o'clock at night. It seemed to me as if my daughter Cholpon was lying next to me, and he is walking towards us. I woke up frightened, took a knife and ran outside. I knocked on the neighbor's door and said: "Somebody entered the house." They asked surprised: "Could it be thieves?" When I went back into the house, my brother-in-law's sister said: "I won't sleep next to you anymore, I got scared." I replied to her: "Leave that aside, look what he is doing. He is taking glass out of windows and putting it on the floor," and she told me: "Where? I don't see anything." I closed the door and that man put the glass back into the windows and left. I was able to fall asleep only around five o'clock in the morning.

Our plan to spend a good time in Osh was not realized. We became witnesses of the Osh events.<sup>10</sup> We barely made it back home; we had to walk for two hours from Kazarman to Dyupkyur. In my absence, Baidylda Sarnogoev and Orozbek Kutmanaliev, who came on a concert tour, visited our house and gave their blessing to my husband: "May your wife return home alive and in good health, and you be well, too, son." There was nothing that I did not see in Osh! After that, I could not become myself again and sleep normally for ten days.

Changes started to happen in my consciousness. Once I saw a big man in my dream, who hit me in the ear. I woke up from fear, turned the light on, woke up my husband Zarylbek and asked him why he hit me, and he replied: "it is probably one of yours, who hit you." My ear started aching and hearing ability became impaired. However, my Father's spirit protected me. In my dream, he told me: "Take away my rosary, which was given to Grandfather Makesh. Or get the rosary for reading the prayer for the repose of the dead, which was given to Grandfather Kojoniyaz. Take the last rosary, which will be used to beat you while repeating "when your ears will hear," and perform the Mohammedan prayer." After his words, I, just like my Father, started performing the Mohammedan prayer loudly. Since that time, I have been regularly performing the Mohammedan prayers.

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<sup>10</sup> *The author speaks of the ethnic conflict between the Kyrgyz and the Uzbek communities in Osh Province in 1990.*

One day a mullah came into our house and said: "I saw your Grandfather Kadyrakun in my dream; he asked me to visit you and find out about your health. My dear, your gift is an assignment passed to you by your Granfather's spirit. It turns out that you have it in your family, that is why hold on to it tightly. There are many evil eyes around, my child. Your have special abilities yourself; so do not go to others because they can take away your gift. Your Grandfather said that your abilities were forever." After that he said: "Open your mouth," spit, hit me with his rosary, gave his blessing, read the Koran and left. I felt such ease from the feeling of gratefulness because my wish came true.

I started healing people. This year, my sister-in-law Ainura's ear was achine for three months and could not be cured, and, according to her, it already stopped hearing. I told her: "Don't tell anyone, I will treat you and cure you." In my dream, my Grandfather Kadyrakun came to help me and taught me. Thus, I cured my sister-in-law's ear completely.

Time passed by like sand, words went hand in hand with actions; I started gaining people's trust. I burnt sham,<sup>11</sup> weighed all pros and cons, and stepped on the path of truth.

We did not have a house of our own and we wanted to buy one; but houses cost not less than ten thousand. We looked at one more house; and agreed on six thousand. I had a dream that the gray horse is taking away my daughter Jyldyz. I thought to myself: "Why did she mount on it? What if she falls down?" and went to meet the horse in order to help my daughter to get off. And she replied: "I mounted to make you tired - I made three circles." Then she jumped off abruptly, let the horse go with the saddle still on and walked away holding the whip. I woke up and woke my husband up, as usual, and told him: "We will not buy this house. The owner will ask for three thousand more." My husband said discontentedly: "What happened to you? We shall see about it tomorrow." The next day, the owner asked for nine thousand.

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<sup>11</sup> " Sham" - little torches made out of cheegrass and cotton balls soaked in oil, which are burnt during religious rituals.

In August 1993, we decided to visit the Tash-Rabat Mazar for the second time and bow down. There were nine people altogether. Choluk's son Jumabek found a car. Jumabek had a surgery on his stomach, but they left a thread inside. Everything ended well after my taking him to the Manjly Mazar. I read an incantation there and took out the thread.

\* \* \*

May Allah watch over you! May there always be peace in our land, may our people live in peace, may there be a lot of grain. As they say: "Well-being beats evil." If we do not sin, if we devote the Koran to the spirit of Manas, if we ask the Most High, and if support each other, then we can achieve many things. Let there be health, respect and trust in each other. The world, where disorder rules, is coming. Do not drink alcohol and stay away from bad deeds. Everything got mixed in the country, the climate has become worse. The people are like a sea rising in waves, wherever you direct it - there they will go. Wealth is an illness; it spoils people and makes them greedy.

I live at a place, where a spring originates from, at the foothill of the Ala-Myshyk Mountain. I pray, saying: "Give your grace." We are guests in this life. May the fire in your hearth never go out. Do not forget that you are Muslims. Take care of your land and your people. Water goes away but river-bed stays; heroes leave but the land stays, so let us value life.

I have had many misfortunes, because I knew the Kyrgyz traditions and understood the dreams and signs granted to me but did not perform the requirements of my gift. It is my gift given to me by the Most High. If I did not perform my duty of a healer properly, then the Most High Allah would punish me in His own way. That is way I obeyed and am doing it with pleasure.

I usually get the knowledge at mazars located in mountainous and rocky places, as well as through my dreams. When I work, I meet the spirits of ancestors, who help me, and I do what they tell me. When relatives ask to help them to meet with sinners, who already left his world, I do all I can. Some of those, who sinned in this life, do not

return after death. That is why, do not offend anyone and ask for forgiveness in this world. It is a difficult job to help them meet. I have become convinced that there is life after one mother-in-law and her daughter-in-law, who had never met before, found each other in the next world.

I hope this article will help readers to understand secrets of the true clairvoyant healers. I think that readers will make their own evaluation of the writing and express their opinion. All praises are only for Allah! At present time, I work a lot. People everywhere need help. I went to Osh Province recently. The trip went well. Local people invite me to work.

I express my appreciation to Cholpon K. Dyikanova, who helped me to establish an NGO and promoted the development of our work, as well as to all staff of the organization. I wish you success in your work! May luck be with you! May all your wishes come true!

## ❖ PART II ❖

### About the Work on the Project "The Sacred Sites of Kyrgyzstan"

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*Taalaibek Dyikanov was born in Bishkek. In 1978, he graduated from the Department of Mechanics and Mathematics of the Kyrgyz State University. Afterwards, he did his graduate studies at the Department of General Topology of Moscow State University. In 2002, Taalaibek completed a distance-learning program of the Law Department at the Kyrgyz State National University. He worked in educational institutions, including ten*

#### **Taalaibek Dyikanov**



*years of work experience at the Department of Higher Mathematics at Moscow Energy Institute. Taalaibek also has considerable work experience in international projects funded by the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and other international organizations. He is the manager of the Community and Business Forum's project "The Sacred Sites of Kyrgyzstan". At present, Taalaibek also works as the Assistant Professor at the Department of Mathematics, Information Science and Cybernetics of the Kyrgyz State National University. He is the author of more than 30 scholarly works and participant of many scholarly conferences.*



**Jarkyn  
Samanchina**

*Jarkyn Samanchina was born in Bishkek. She joined the Community and Business Forum's (CBF) core staff in September 2004. Her main duties include work on the CBF's pilot project "The Sacred Sites of Kyrgyzstan." In the capacity of Projects Coordinator, she also assists with implementation of other CBF's projects. In May 1999, Jarkyn graduated with a Bachelor's degree in International Relations (Magna Cum Laude) from San Francisco State University (California,*

*USA). In July 2004, she completed her Master's degree in the same field at Middle East Technical University (Ankara, Turkey). Her Master's thesis was on the topic: "U.S. Foreign Policy Toward Central Asia: 1991-2003." Jarkyn has extensive work experience with non-governmental and educational institutions both in Kyrgyzstan and abroad. She is a member of Sigma Iota Rho International Relations Honor Society.*

## **Introduction**

In January 2004, the Community and Business Forum (CBF), with support of an international conservation organization Flora and Fauna International (FFI) and the Christensen Fund (TCF), an organization assisting in the arts, natural sciences and education, started an implementation of a pilot project "The Sacred Sites of Kyrgyzstan." This project was aimed at the study and conservation of sacred sites on the territory of the Kyrgyz Republic.

Geographically, sacred sites are located in various localities: steppes, plateaus, caves, highlands and peaks). There are sacred sites, which are visited by members of local communities, in all regions. On the whole, they could be divided into three categories: cultural/museum sacred sites (Kumbez Manas), natural sacred sites (trees, springs) and landscape sacred sites (stones, cliffs, mountains).



Sacred sites have always played an important role in the history of Kyrgyzstan and in the life of the Kyrgyz people. They have deep connection with culture, traditions, as well as ethnic, historical and other aspects of the Kyrgyz people's life. Currently, there is a threat of "modernization" of sacred sites and loss of old traditions related to them.

The project researched sacred sites in the northern regions of Kyrgyzstan (Chui and Naryn Provinces) by means of expeditions to sacred sites, workshops and a round table for stakeholders. As a result of the project's work, "The Strategy and Action Plan for the Sacred Sites of Kyrgyzstan " was developed.

## **The Importance of the Project for Kyrgyzstan**

In the past, the Kyrgyz people lived in harmony, unity and agreement with Nature, adjusting and adapting to its essence, laws and demands. As tools improved and agriculture developed, the nomadic lifestyle became more settled and people started getting further and further away from Nature. A human being started feeling himself superior to Nature. Consequently, due to the loss of habitual forms of natural resource management shaped in the earliest times and inherent to nomadic lifestyle, the problem of biodiversity has emerged.

There is a threat of losing the knowledge about sacred sites of Kyrgyzstan due to the two following reasons. First, for a long period of time, the Soviet system struggled against vestiges and tried to extirpate practices of sacred sites' worship, even resorting to destruction of some of the sites. Second, the elder generation leaves this world, and the information about sacred sites leaves with them.

At present time, mainly information about sacred sites with medicinal properties has been preserved. There is a very small group of population, who has some knowledge about sacred sites and knows how to behave towards them. There is a need for identification, classification, regulation and determining the influence of sacred sites upon the consciousness of the Kyrgyz people. Preservation of sacred sites could become one of the key factors in preserving the biodiversity on the Kyrgyz land.

## The Activities Undertaken

The first step of this project included the research of sacred sites in the northern regions of Kyrgyzstan (Chui and Naryn Provinces). Next, the CBF identified and held series of workshops for stakeholders. The purpose of these workshops was to identify sacred sites and the main problems related to them. During the identification and consideration of problems related to sacred sites, the CBF used the SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) provided by the FFI. The CBF developed a special questionnaire, which was used during workshops and meetings with stakeholders. The questionnaire included the following questions:

1. Name:
2. Date of Birth:
3. Address:
4. Education:
5. Employment:
6. What sacred site(s) can you tell about?
7. Who told you about this sacred site?
8. Location of this sacred site? (district, village)
9. Since what time has this sacred site been known?
10. What are the special properties of this sacred site?
11. Does this sacred site possess medicinal qualities? What illnesses does it treat?
12. Who is the "guardian" (*Ayan*) of this sacred site?
13. How often do you visit this sacred site?
14. What rituals need to be performed at this sacred site?
15. What measures/activities are necessary to preserve this sacred site?

Before holding the workshops, the CBF also developed its first press release informing the public about the project. The press release was translated into Kyrgyz language and distributed among the workshop participants. Later, based on the information collected during workshops, as well as other information gathered from

various stakeholders, the CBF developed 11 more press releases, which were also translated into Kyrgyz language and distributed in local communities through non-governmental organizations collaborating with the CBF.

Next, the CBF developed three leaflets in Kyrgyz language containing information about mazars and rules of their attendance. Two articles about the project's work were published in the local Kyrgyz-language newspapers: *Kyrgyzstan - A Sacred Land* in "Chui Bayany" on January 25, 2005 (Chui Province) and *Protection of Environment is the Inalienable Part of Our Culture and Traditions* in "Tenir-Too" on January 21, 2005 (Naryn Province).

In the duration of the project's work, many trips and events with the purpose of identification and familiarization with sacred sites took place. Here, we would like to present some of the most significant ones.

### ***The Expedition to Sacred Sites of Kochkor District, Naryn Province***

On June 3-8, 2004, the CBF staff organized folklore ethnographic expedition aimed at scientific and practical research of mazars in Kochkor District. The expedition route was Bishkek – the Kochkor Valley – Bishkek. The main sites of the expedition were the Kochkor-Ata Mazar, the Ak-Mazar and the Archa-Mazar. The expedition participants visited ritual services, conducted audio and video recordings, took photographs and surveyed pilgrims and ministers of religious worships.

The expedition demonstrated that pilgrims, who, according to the most ancient tradition, worship sanctuaries of Tengrianity, Zoroastrism, Shamanism and Islam, visit the Kochkor Valley mazars.

1. *Tengrianity* is the worship of the celestial sphere – *tenir*, as well as the earth, fire, water, stone and spirits of ancestors – *arbak*.
2. *Zoroastrism* is the belief in one god Ahuramazda; contrasting two world sources – good and evil, – with the faith in the victory of good.
3. *Shamanism* is based on the notions about extraordinary communication of the minister of worship with spirits during a shaman ritual. In Kyrgyz language, shaman (ecstasy, excitement in Evenk language:) is called *bakshy*.

4. *Islam* is one of the major world religions of the Middle Ages and modernity. Islamic rituals are performed strictly in the presence of *moldo*.

We were able to observe that some of the ministers of worship assign themselves several functions, which do not always coincide with strict observation of the rules of worship. Moreover, some of them discredit the sacred predestination of *moldo*, *bakshy* and other practitioners by their actions. However, we were also able to meet some ministers of worship, who served the traditional deities with utmost sincerity and enjoyed trust of pilgrims, who turned to them for help. One of such persons was Kenje Suranchieva, a seventy-four-year-old practitioner. She is a healer and a foreteller. She is also called *ak joldogu bakshy*, which means *bakshy*, who works only for good purposes.



***Kenje Suranchieva with her ritual stick "Asa-musa"***

### ***The Workshop in Orto-Suu Village, Chui Province***

On September 11, 2004, the first workshop for practitioners on the subject "The Sacred Sites of Kyrgyzstan" was held in Orto-Suu village of Chui Province. The CBF staff told the village residents about the project, its goals and methods. We tried to prevent any kind of criticism by fellow participants, encouraged discussions and recorded all valuable information. The audio recording of some of the parts of the workshop discussions were made. Aichurek Kydyralieva, a local traditional healer – *emchi* from Orto-Suu village, assisted in the organization of the workshop with great enthusiasm and helped the CBF to survey 18 households in her village to collect information about sacred sites and to determine the level of the local residents'

awareness on the issue in study. For this purpose, the questionnaire developed by the CBF was used. Later, Aichurek used the information recorded in the questionnaires to write her interesting article about her experience as a practitioner.

### ***The Workshop in Naryn, Naryn Province***

On September 18-19, 2004, the CBF conducted a two-day workshop for practitioners in Naryn of Naryn Province. The workshop took place at the office of "Tendesh", a non-governmental organization, which kindly provided its assistance in the organization of the workshop. We were also assisted by the non-governmental organization "Eco-Joomart", which helped us to identify and invite practitioners to the workshop. The workshop was organized in the same format as the one conducted in Orto-Suu village. Unfortunately, some of the invited practitioners refused to participate in the workshop because they were afraid that other *bakshy* could rob them of their abilities or have a damaging effect on them. Based on the information recorded in the questionnaires, we were able to get the following answers, which were generalized to avoid repetition:

1. Sacred sites have been known for centuries.
2. Information about sacred sites is passed from generation to generation, from parents to their children; they are the heritage left by the ancestors.
3. Sacred sites protect from troubles and have various properties.
4. People, who visit a sacred site with faith, can recover from any illness.
5. Sacred sites have their "guardians", which can make themselves seen to people in different images, e.g.: a deer, a girl, a horse, an old man, etc.
6. Bakshy visit sacred sites with different frequency depending on when they feel an urge to visit such places.
7. People must maintain sacred sites in clean condition.

As result of the workshop, we were able to identify 33 sacred sites in Naryn Province, which were numbered and mapped (please see the map of Naryn Province in the Appendix).

The next important step was to identify the three main problems concerning sacred sites. A total of ten problems were identified by the workshop participants. By means of discussions and voting about their priority, we reduced the number of problems down to three, as follows:



**At the practitioners' workshop in Naryn**

1. Keeping the environment around sacred sites clean.
2. Developing and publishing information about sacred sites (books, brochures, etc.)
3. Constructing hygiene and sanitary installations near sacred sites.

With regards to the first problem, Sotsial Kurenkeeva, one of the most outstanding practitioners from Naryn, expressed the following opinion:

*People should visit sacred sites in clean and tidy shape. They should read the Koran and say a prayer at the site. They should not pollute the sacred site and its surroundings, as many people do these days. Bakshy usually go and clean these places from garbage. It is not allowed to drink alcohol at the site. People, who come to the sacred site must have pure souls and thoughts, the better (purer) a person's thoughts are, the more successful his trip to the site will be.*



**Sotsial Kurenkeeva,  
a practitioner from Naryn**

Sotsial told us that she usually goes to sacred sites, when she feels like it. She often visits sacred sites to clean the territory around them. Sotsial told us that visions of the sacred sites' guardians do not show up for no particular reason; one has to sit down, concentrate and say a prayer, and then

a guardian might appear. Sotsial heals people. She usually treats women's illnesses, illnesses of lungs and other internal organs. Sotsial said that people, who come to her with faith, recover quickly. She also said that people should make sacrifices at a sacred place, for example, sacrifice a sheep, bake bread, make tea, etc. The important thing is not to leave garbage afterwards.

With regards to the second problem, the workshop participants said that in order to raise the people's level of education, the Kyrgyz people should try to raise their awareness about their culture among the population, as representatives of other religious denominations do, by means of publishing and distributing brochures, books and other materials. The participants supported the idea of organizing a round table and said that they were not against addressing this issue on television. They also expressed the idea about the possibility of organizing a non-governmental organization of practitioners in future. They also did not mind against conducting scientific research and running, for example, chemical tests of water in sacred springs and other research addressing physical properties of sacred sties.

The third problem was closely related to the first one. For example, when people attend sacred sites, they often have to stay there for several days. Since people perform sacrificial rituals at these sites, construction of hygiene and sanitary installation there is an absolute necessity.

In general, there was a common feeling of the complexity of the subject.

### ***The Workshop in Bishkek, Chui Province***

On October 2, 2004, we held a workshop for the practitioners of Chui Province in Bishkek. The workshop took place at the CBF's office. The workshop format was the same as of the previous ones. The answers to the questions asked in the questionnaire were similar to those, collected earlier with some exceptions. Below are some of the different answers:

1. Information about sacred sites was obtained from other people, literature (books, magazines, newspapers), but, mainly, from *ayan* – an inspiration from above.

2. Sacred sites possess various healing properties, for example medicinal mud, water, etc. Water in some springs helps for eye illnesses, in others – for illnesses of the respiratory tract.
3. Sacred sites are visited on Thursdays by inspiration of *ayan* or the ancestors' spirits.
4. At a sacred site, one has to read the Koran, pray about his wishes and requests, make a sacrifice and burn *sham*. However, a note was made that the matter was not in sacrifices, but in the prayers addressed to Allah.
5. Maintaining the surroundings of sacred sites clean can preserve them; their preservation also requires faith and help of *bakshy*, who walk on the path of Allah.

During the workshop, 17 sacred sites in Chui Province were identified and mapped (please see the map of Chui Province in the Appendix).

The project participants identified 11 problems with regards to the sacred sites' issue. As a result of prioritizing, the four main problems were decided as follows:

1. Knowledge about location of sacred sites.
2. Knowledge about problems, which could be solved by sacred sites.
3. Increasing awareness and involvement of local communities' members in protection of sacred sites.
4. Not bringing harm to sacred sites.

Bermet Askarbekova told us that she was suffering from an incurable cough. She receives *ayan*, which tells her to visit seven mazars to recover. In the morning, usually around 5 a.m., she hears noise and signals reminding of a squeak. When she closes her eyes, then for about five minutes she can see writings in the form of ancient inscriptions on rocks, but she has not been able to read them, yet.



**Bermet Askarbekova, an emchi  
from Orto-Suu village of Chui  
Province**



Bermet does not believe in dreams – her visions happen in reality. For example, she saw the spirits of heroes Manas and Almanbet. The spirit of Manas is so great that an ordinary person reaches only his knees. Bermet cannot read the Koran; she works by the inspiration of *ayan*.



***Bakshy Omurbek Boronchiev  
demonstrates his Bal Kitep***

Another lively participant of the Bishkek workshop was Omurbek Boronchiev. Omurbek received the gift of clairvoyance at the age of nine. When he was a little boy, he walked outside and saw images of tigers and other predatory animals, and *ayan* told him to go to a specific house and tell the person living there to prepare for death. Soon, people became afraid of him and said that he was possessed by *jins* (evil spirits). Then, a *moldo* living in his village put him in a deep pit and started "treating" him. Omurbek stayed in the pit for 40 days and fed on one raisin and one spoon of water per day. Usually, after such "treatment", a person either died or gained extraordinary abilities. He says that no other *bakshy* can "open" another person's eyes. Only Allah can do that. Another person can only "show" the way. Omurbek's eyes "opened". He belongs to the category of "white bakshy". He treats people with the use of *Kasiyda* and *Bal Kitep*, special books containing prayers from the Koran and incantations, which can tell about past, present and future. *Bal Kitep* is passed from generation to generation and Omurbek is the 160th person to possess it. He received it from his teacher – *moldo* and he would not give it up even on pain of death.

The practitioners noted that some of the fundamentally oriented representatives of the Muslim clergy could come forward against the subject of the preservation of sacred sites. They deny worshipping the nature and its creatures because, in accordance with the Muslim religion, a human being must worship only Allah. They said that youth, atheists and doctors could also be against this subject. However, it is important to remember that Kyrgyz people and their faith from the time

immemorial carries in itself elements of fire worshipping, shamanism and Tengrianity. That is why, Kyrgyz people must try to preserve those special features, which are peculiar only to their culture and spirituality. In order to avoid conflict with conservatively minded Muslim clergy, it is necessary to conduct meetings with the Committee on Religious Affairs and the local muftis.

### ***The Workshop in Kochkor Village, Naryn Province***

On October 5-7, 2004, the CBF staff made a trip to Kochkor village in Naryn Province, where we met with local practitioners and visited sacred sites in this region. Kachkyn Asanbekov, an imam and a leader of the local environmental non-governmental organization "DJIF" helped in the organization of this trip. With his assistance, additional sacred sites in Naryn Province, which were also described in his article for this publication, were identified and mapped. Kachkyn also published an article about the work of the project in the Kochkor District newspaper "Daer Ayan".

The practitioners from Kochkor said that despite possible problems and the fact that not all people visited sacred sites, it was necessary to inform people about these places to make sure that they would not do harm neither to themselves, nor to others through ignorance. To prevent possible damage, they said it would be a good



***A group of bakshy from Kochkor District of Naryn Province***

idea to consult with *bakshy*, the practitioners, about sacred sites, which could or should be visited and the rituals, which should be performed. *Bakshy* have special connection to nature, and we, people, are inseparable from nature.

### ***The Round Table in Issyk-Ata Resort, Chui Province***

On October 9-10, 2004, the CBF conducted a two-day Round Table for stakeholders, who included scientists and scholars from various scientific, cultural and social fields, including: biology, physics, psychology, cultural anthropology, philosophy, ethnic musicology and other areas. The Round Table participants listed the following problems with regards to the sacred sites' issue:

1. Providing for the zone of alienation and legal status of sacred sites (laws, decrees, etc.)
  - a. Prohibiting cattle grazing near or on the territory of sacred sites.
  - b. Prohibiting construction work near sacred sites.
2. Problem of awareness about the issue of sacred sites' protection and preservation at the level of local communities – lack of information.
3. Identification and consideration of sacred sites in territorial development and planning.
4. Problem of protection of sacred sites.
5. Absence of institutes coordinating the work on sacred sites.
6. Problem of rituals related to sacred sites – lack of tolerance.
7. Forming of an ecological consciousness and ethics among the population.
8. Identification of value properties of space.
9. Preservation of sacred sites as micro-reserves – revival of natural landscapes.



***Shaken Begaliev,  
the Director of the Issyk-  
Ata Resort, welcomes the  
Round Table participants***



***During the Round Table for stakeholders at Issyk-Ata Resort***

As a result of voting, the stakeholders identified the following four major problems:

1. Legal status of sacred sites.
2. Identification and registration of sacred sites.
3. Information about sacred sites and forming of an ecological consciousness.
4. Establishment of a public committee on coordination of activities related to sacred sites.

The work of the Round Table was very productive. The stakeholders contributed many valuable ideas for the writing of "The Strategy and Action Plan for the Sacred Sites of Kyrgyzstan".

## **Conclusion**

Our sacred sites make up the priceless historical and cultural heritage of Kyrgyzstan and we cannot afford to lose them. Sacred sites are one of the most important value properties of space. The important aspect of this project was its addressing the preservation of biodiversity and to human ecology and moral principles. The project was especially interesting because it studied the importance of sacred sites, which are non-natural resource (compared to geographical resources), as an important element for sustainable human development.

The result of the project's work is the development of the document "The Strategy and Action Plan for the Sacred Sites of Kyrgyzstan" aimed at preservation of Kyrgyzstan's riches.

## ✦ PART III ✦

# **The Strategy and Action Plan for the Sacred Sites of Kyrgyzstan**

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### **Introduction**

Sacred sites or mazars, which are important to the history and spirituality of the Kyrgyz people, could become places, where biodiversity could be preserved. The Kyrgyz people considered mazars as forbidden sanctuaries for hundreds of years. They were beautiful and mysterious places with their own rules. One of the most important rules was not to take anything from or bring damage to mazars. Such approach helped to preserve the nature of the Kyrgyz land. However, at present time, due to the problem of loss of national traditions, some people do not fully comprehend cultural and spiritual value of sacred sites.

Unfortunately, there are no purposeful programs on preservation of sacred sites in Kyrgyzstan. Moreover, there is currently a privatization process being implemented, and sacred sites could fall under the land reform. As a result of these actions, territories, on which sacred sites are situated, could be destroyed or access to these places will be denied.

That is why, it is important to restore the ancient culture of the Kyrgyz people. Understanding of everlasting values and reestablishment of forgotten forms of management, which provide for harmonious relationship with nature, will come along such renaissance. The cultural rebirth will lessen negative influence on the environment and lead to favorable conditions for conservation of biodiversity in Kyrgyzstan.

## **Explanation of the Strategy and Action Plan**

The present document "The Strategy and Action Plan for the Sacred Sites of Kyrgyzstan", is the result of the pilot project "The Sacred Sites of Kyrgyzstan" presented to broad public attention.

The strategy on preservation of sacred sites in the Kyrgyz Republic includes:

- The main goal on preservation of sacred sites in Kyrgyzstan
- Several main objectives, which will promote the achievement of the main goal

A five-year plan has been developed to achieve the strategy. A number of strategic activities, which will be undertaken for attainment of objectives have been identified. Each activity has a series of associated sections that demonstrate how the activity could be implemented and prioritized; these sections include:

- Type of activity and its priority
- Timeframe
- Budget

## **Methodology Used to Develop the Strategy and Action Plan**

This plan was developed as a result of the pilot project "The Sacred Sites of Kyrgyzstan", which is part of the institutional development currently being implemented by the CBF. In this work, the CBF was supported by the Flora and Fauna International (UK) and the Christensen Fund (USA). All three organizations hold environmental and cultural issues as priorities in their activities.

The FFI served as the primary advisor during the implementation of the project. It organized special trainings for the CBF's staff on project planning. The TCF provided funds for the realization of this project. Local non-governmental organizations, consultants-specialists, consultants-practitioners, workshop participants and other stakeholders consulted the CBF staff in the course of the project's work. The decisions with

regards to the content of the plan were made based on discussions, prioritization and voting on the issues presenting the greatest interest for stakeholders.

The biodiversity conservation is the most important aspect of the CBF, FFI and TCF's work. Biodiversity is also important for the people of Kyrgyzstan, whose spiritual development is deeply rooted in nomadic culture. Traditions of nomadic people, who constantly moved from place to place, were tightly bound to the nature. Since nomads did not possess capital buildings, they greatly depended on the nature, and, therefore treated it with respect. The Kyrgyz people believed that they could communicate with nature if they needed rain and understand language of animals. Thus, the forms of national economy, which had been developing for centuries, were in harmonious relationship with nature, and people never took from it more than they really needed.

If sacred sites gained the status of officially protected sites in addition to their historical and cultural status of forbidden places, they could serve as perfect places for conservation of biodiversity, as they are located all over the country. In such a way, sacred sites could serve as the effective means of the indigenous species conservation.

The present publication is intended for the general public, including but not limited to the environmental non-governmental organizations and persons interested in cultural and environmental issues. The activities proposed in the plan are to be implemented by the national Coordinating Committee and a network of local organizations, which are to be established, as well as other relevant stakeholders. While, the plan intends to involve certain stakeholders, such as practitioner, scholars and other non-governmental organizations, the plan intends to collaborate with all interested parties.

At present, the question regarding funding of the proposed plan remains open. However, attempts will be made to seek financing from the international donors, international cultural donors, religious groups and private donors to implement this project.

## **The Strategy**

The main goal of the plan is *Preservation and rational use of sacred sites and landscapes of Kyrgyzstan with a view to form ecological consciousness and sustainable human development.*

For achievement of the main goal, it is necessary to accomplish the following main objectives:

1. Creation of institutional basis on forming and realization of action plans on sacred sites.
2. Improvement of the legislation of the Kyrgyz Republic on preservation of sacred sites.
3. Use of sacred sites with a view to increase activity and interest towards spiritual and ecological values among the population.
4. Increasing of public involvement of the Kyrgyz Republic's population in preservation of sacred sites.

Strategic activities, which will be used for realization of the aforesaid objectives are included in the plan below.

### ***The Strategy and Action Plan for the Sacred Sites of Kyrgyzstan***

<i>The Preservation and rational use of sacred sites and landscapes of Kyrgyzstan with a view to form ecological consciousness and sustainable human development.</i>		
<b>Activities</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Amount in US\$*</b>
<b>Establishing national level committees and networks to support the protection of sacred sites</b>	3 months in year 1	
<b>I. Committee</b>		
1. Establishment of a public committee and creation of a work plan (at the national level) to promote the sacred		



sites' issue, coordinate the NGOs' work and facilitate activities related to the protection of sacred sites		
2. Establishment of resource centers, which will work in close collaboration with the Coordinating Committee at regional level (neutral persons) for further identification of stakeholders and interested organizations	6 months in year 1	
3. Scientific practical conference to bring together specialists in this area to learn and exchange knowledge and ideas on the problem of sacred sites	2 months in year 1	
4. Creation of informants and activists' network	12 months in year 1	
5. Assistance in establishment of local public committees (at regional level), which will work in close collaboration with the Coordinating Committee (charters are to define the scope of their activities specifically)	15 months in years 1 - 2	
6. Writing of the national strategy on preservation of sacred sites at the national level		
<b>Sub-total Amount</b>		
<b>Developing a legal basis for the protection of sacred sites</b>		
<b>II. Legal Status</b>		
1. Writing of the draft of law on the protection of sacred sites to be passed by Jogorku Kenesh (Parliament)	3 months in year 1	
2. Writing of the draft of regulations (issues of construction, preservation	3 months in year 1	

and land) to be adopted by local governments		
3. Preliminary information and propagation campaign to make the public familiar with the sacred sites' issue for successful adoption of laws	12 months in year 1	
- Conference		
- Brochures		
- Press-releases		
- Mass media (articles, brief radio and TV programs)		
- Calendars		
<b>Sub-total Amount</b>		
<b>Identification and registration of sacred sites for collecting solid research data and developing official documents on sacred sites</b>		
<b>III. Sacred Sites' Identification and Registration</b>		
1. Data collection and synthesizing (mass media and literature)	6 months in year 1	
2. Organization of expeditions to local communities to collect information on sacred sites at first hand	12 months in year 1	
3. Obtaining technical equipment to support the project's work		
4. Developing preliminary lists and property descriptions of sacred sites		
5. Creation of Data Bank for collected information: software		

6. Developing of a preliminary cadastre on sacred sites of the Kyrgyz Republic (unofficial document)		
7. Mapping of sacred sites on regional and country maps		
8. Collection and publishing of folklore material (legends, popular beliefs, etc.)	years 1 - 4	
9. Scientific research to identify/ understand the special properties of sacred sties	years 2 - 5	
- Chemical composition tests (water, soil, etc.)		
- Geographical research (geological and mineralogical tests)		
- Radiation research		
- Biodiversity research to create favorable conditions for protecting the environment through protection of sacred sites		
10. Survey among students to determine their level of knowledge about sacred sites for further development of educational materials for secondary schools		
<b>Sub-total Amount</b>		
<b>Dissemination of information about sacred sites to raise public awareness and ecological consciousness</b>		
<b>IV. Information and Ecological Consciousness</b>		
1. Web-site creation to inform the interested parties about the sacred sites of the Kyrgyz Republic; the website to be	12 months in year 1	

maintained by the Coordinating Committee		
2. Information about sacred sites in mass media	12 months in year 2	
- Newspapers	2 times per year	
- TV	2 times per year	
- Radio	2 times per year	
3. Prize competition on articles and video-films about sacred sites	6 months in year 3	
4. Prize exhibition of photographers and artists' works	year 3	
5. Publishing of informational bulletin	1 per half year starting from year 1	
6. Exhibition of shamans' ritual attributes with a view to create a museum	2007	
7. Creation of local museums on sacred sites at regional level (2-3)	year 4	
8. Conference of traditional healers	year 3	
9. Guidebook on traditional medicine		
10. Small grants program on preservation of sacred sites (\$2,000 to \$5,000) to be given out to local NGOs to conduct various types of work leading to protection of sacred sites and preservation of biodiversity	year 4	
11. Regional seminars for teachers of ecological education and ethics (trainings, development of materials)	year 1 (2 times)	
12. Development of manuals on sacred sites for secondary schools	year 1	
13. Publishing of informational bulletin on sacred sites at the national level	year 1 (2 times per year)	

14. Developing of a tourist guidebook on sacred sites	year 1	
15. Involvement of sponsors into protection and development of sacred sites (tree planting, construction of hygiene and sanitary facilities)	Starting from year 1	
16. Organization of public events similar to <i>Ashars</i> - volunary community work		
17. Use of sacred sites with the view to increase public interest and activity towards spiritual values of the people and revival and reconstruction of traditions and holidays related to sacred sites with an aim to form ecological consciousness (e.g.: Nooruz, Babadyikan, etc.). Organization of model celebrations (4 holidays)	year 2	
18. Organization of pilgrimage to sacred sites through contact telephone number of the coordination center (informing population about upcoming trips and organization of trips)	year 2	
19. Establishment of the people's bank on sacred sites for consolidation and distribution of funds on the principles of Muslim banks - interest rate free loans for communities residing in the areas of sacred sites <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Open an account</li> <li>- Create assessed contribution (sponsors)</li> <li>- Other capital (donations)</li> <li>- Control – foreign bank</li> </ul>	year 3	
<b>Sub-total Amount</b>		
<b>Total Project Sum</b>		

*\* The CBF and stakeholders have developed an estimate budget, which will be published later, when funding is available.*

The plan was developed according to suggestions made by project stakeholders. It will be further developed, refined and improved. Since there is no funding available at this time, we did not include figures in the plan. The CBF proposes to attract attention of international donors, international cultural donors and private donors to further implementation of this project. The present plan is published in Kyrgyz, Russian and English languages.

## **Expected Results**

Suggested plan is a long-term project, since it includes a number of important and broad components. Upon completion of the plan, it is planned to achieve the following results:

1. Institutional basis on forming and realization of the Strategy and Action Plan on Sacred Sites will be established. The Coordinating Committee and the network of supporting organizations will provide for an effective protection of sacred sites and issues related to them by raising public awareness through various educational means, lobbying the issue at the parliament and facilitating activities leading to further revival and preservation of sacred sites in Kyrgyzstan.
2. Legislation of the Kyrgyz Republic on preservation of sacred sites will be improved. The legal protection of sacred sites will ensure that inappropriate use of sacred sites and construction at such sites does not take place.
3. Sacred sites will be used for increasing the population's activity and interest towards spiritual values and ecological consciousness. The people of Kyrgyzstan will become knowledgeable and respectful about their great cultural and spiritual heritage. Furthermore, the people will become more aware of the environmental issues and concerned about the preservation of Kyrgyzstan's biodiversity through their support of sacred sites.
4. Public participation in preservation of sacred sites will be increased in Kyrgyzstan. This will ensure that the people use sacred sites in a more respectable and appropriate manner and there is the public will to preserve the sacred sites for future generations.

## ❖ PART IV ❖

### Contributors to the Project's Work

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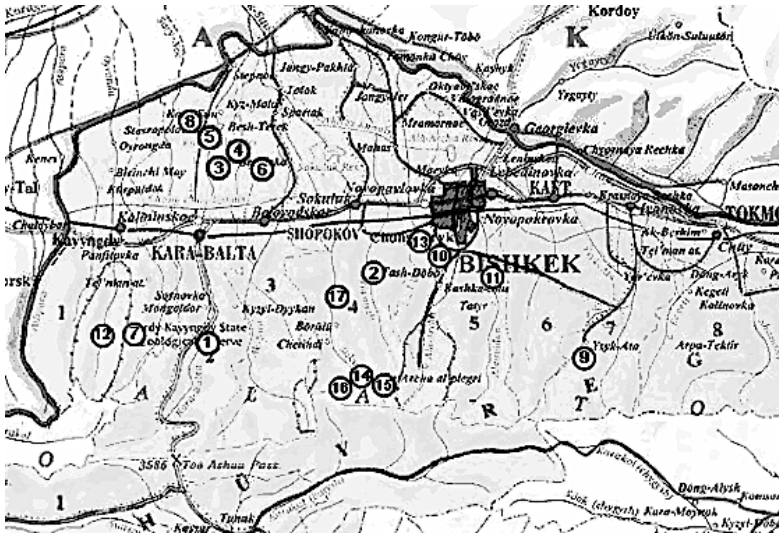
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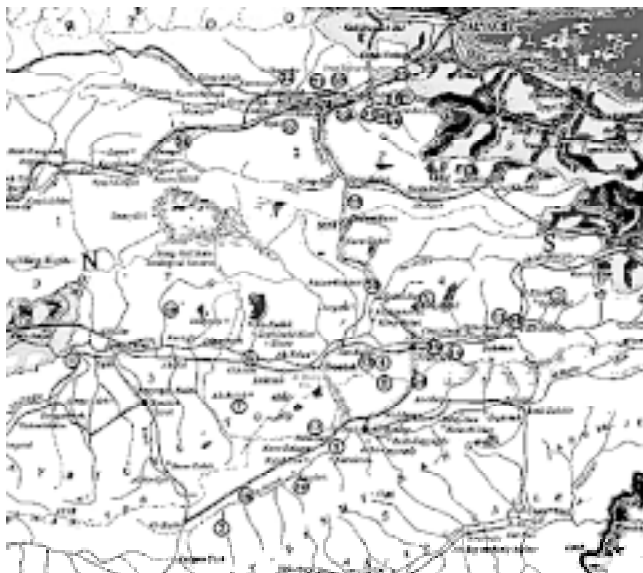
## Chuy Province (Western Part)



### Identified Sacred Sites:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. Sharkyratma Mazar – waterfall       | 10. Baitik-Ata Mazar – mausoleum          |
| 2. Jangarach-Ata Baiterek Mazar – tree | 11. Tashtar-Ata Mazar – mountain          |
| 3. Kashka-Bulak Mazar – spring         | 12. Turan-Ata Mazar – tree                |
| 4. Ak-Bashat Mazar – spring            | 13. Baitik-Atany Chokusu Mazar – mountain |
| 5. Kosh-Bulak Mazar – springs          | 14. Kaldybai-Apa Mazar – waterfall        |
| 6. Egiz-Bulak Mazar – spring           | 15. Bulak Mazar – spring                  |
| 7. Chinar-Terek Mazar – tree           | 16. Jalgys-Tal Mazar – tree               |
| 8. Kok-Bulak Mazar – spring            | 17. Bulaktuu-Jar Mazar – springs          |
| 9. Issyk-Ata Mazar – mountain          |   |
| • Kempirdin Unkuru Mazar – cave        |   |
| • Oluya Atany Namaz Okuu Mazar – stone |   |
| • Talduu Mazar – tree                  |   |
| • Toonun Namazduu Mazar – mountain top |   |

## ***Naryn Province (Central Part)***



### ***Identified Sacred Sites:***

1. Chech-Dobo Ata Mazar - mountain
2. Tash-Rabat Ata Mazar - caravan sarai
3. Er-Tabyldynyn Kara Tashy Mazar - stone
4. Ala-Myshyk Toosu Mazar - mountain
5. Kyz Mazar - burial place
6. Boirok-Bulak Mazar - spring
7. Toorum-Kyzdyn Mazary - burial place
8. Jalgyz-Archa Mazar - tree
9. Kondoi Mazar - bush
10. Sagynbai-Ata Mazar - burial place
11. Jyluu-Suu Mazar - hot mineral spring
12. Tash-Bulak Mazar - hot mineral spring
13. Toguz-Bulak Mazar - springs
14. Salkyn-Too Mazar - gorge
15. Teke Sekirik-Bala Mazar - waterfall
16. Ak-Tash Mazar - stone

17. Koshoi-Korgon Mazar - burial mound
18. Tailak-Batyr Mazar - burial place
19. Kazybektin Mazary - mosque
20. Kyzyl-Unkur Mazar - cave
21. Ak-Mazar - burial place
22. Kochkor-Ata Mazar - stony hills
23. Dolon-Biy Ata Mazar - mountain
24. Sharkyratma Mazar - waterfall
25. Chon-Tash Mazar - stone
26. Archa Mazar - tree
27. Chon-Tuz Ata Mazar - caves
28. Baba-Ata Mazar - mountain
29. Chon-Kara Tash Mazar - stone
30. Kosh-Kara Tash Mazar - binary stones
31. Kyz Mazar - burial place
32. Ayan Mazar - binary stones
33. Ak-Kyrgoo Mazar - bush

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