

# **Mazar Worship in Kyrgyzstan: Rituals and Practitioners in Talas**

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## For Readers

The cultural practice of worshipping at the sacred sites, known as Mazars, is one of the ancient Kyrgyz traditions. Even though the first known date of the worship at these sacred sites is not known precisely, it is several centuries old and has its cultural functions and place in current times as well.

In this book, the Aigine Research Center is publishing its two year research findings of the work conducted in the Talas district of the Kyrgyz Republic.

The first part of the book contains information about the experiences of the cultural practitioners acting as traditional healers, dervishes, clairvoyants, *kuuchus* (*q.v.*) and those who recite the Manas epic. Also included are the voices and experiences of the shaiykhs who have a personal and spiritual relationship to the sacred site, who accepted a duty of a guardianship of sacred sites as their life mission and who revere the sacred sites. Also included are the words of the visitors who come to visit sacred sites from far distances.

The second part of the book contains the thoughts and opinions of scholars who wrote about the sacred sites. The professional and educational backgrounds of these scholars are varied and diverse. They include, but are not limited to, students, historians, medical workers, psychologists, philologists, physicians, biologists, anthropologists and most importantly, people who worship at sacred sites.

Hence, this book that you have in your hands contains both the perspectives of the cultural practitioners who worship at sacred sites and that of scholars who analyze the worship at sacred sites as a cultural phenomenon.

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# TRANSLITERATION

Kyrgyz Alphabet	Transliteration	Pronunciation Notes
А	a	(as in <i>father</i> ) [back vowel]
Б	b	
В	v	
Г	g	[with front vowels as g or back vowels as gh]
Д	d	
Е	e	(slightly palatalized: ye) [front vowel]
Ё	yo	(as in <i>yoke</i> ) [more like yaw]
Ж	j	
З	z	
И	i	(as in <i>inch</i> )
Й	i'	(semivowel, as in <i>yes</i> )
К	k	(soft or hard k) [with front vowels as k or back vowels as q]
Л	l	
М	m	
Н	n	
О	o	[back vowel]
/ [Ө]	ö	(as in German <i>schön</i> ) [front vowel]
П	p	
Р	r	
С	s	
Т	t	
У	u	[back vowel]
Ү	ü	(as in German <i>für</i> ) [front vowel]
Ф	f	
Х	h	
Ц	ts	
Ч	ch	
Ш	sh	
Ы	y	
Э	e	(unpalatalized short e in foreign words)
Ю	yu	
Я	ya	

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

## PREFACE

Mazar worship has existed in Kyrgyzstan for a long time. But the extent of its study and or even simple description is limited. In 2004 the Aigine (ay-gee-neh) Cultural Research Center was preparing a project on sacred sites and was looking for literature to find out how many sacred sites were in the country or in particular regions, when and how they appeared, how and why they are visited and what policy authorities have towards worship practices at mazars. It turned out to be difficult to find materials on these questions and other aspects such as the ecological, social, cultural and religious role of mazars.

I believe that this book, *Mazar Worship in Kyrgyzstan: Talas Practicioners and Rituals*, an in depth study of cultural specialists and their practices of pilgrimage, worship, and healing involving sacred sites in Kyrgyzstan will help fill this gap. This book is based in two years of field research in Talas oblast, which the Aigine Research Center carried out together with Talas residents and students from Talas University, and with financial support from the Christensen Fund.

We have divided the book into two sections in order to show the world of mazars from two positions: the insider perspective of mazar visitors and the outsider perspective of researchers.

The insider position includes people who have long visited sacred sites and carry on mazar traditions, such as healers (bübü, bakhshy), dervishes, manaschys (reciters of the Kyrgyz Manas epic), improvisatory poets, and mazar guardians and custodians. Some of them have university education, but it is in the school of life, through experience and public recognition that they can be considered experts in particular aspects of traditional knowledge.

Some sections of the first section are presented in the form of monologues, others as interviews, discussions and reflections, and some as life stories. For Aigine it was critically important to understand and preserve the specific ideas and characters of those who carry on traditional cultural practices. This book will preserve their vision, logic and language and describe the connection of mazar worship with their lives. This is their own expression, what anthropologists call *emic* understanding: they are using their own language to express events and concepts in ways that feel natural to them.

Readers who know little or nothing about mazar culture may have to make some effort in order to understand the thinking and language of these practitioners. To simplify this process Aigine has provided explanations and comments to key concepts, which usually are located after a chapter or in footnotes.

If in the first section practitioners speak, the second section belongs to researchers, those who prepare research materials, and analyze and theorize about them. The article authors represent various branches of natural, social and human sciences: anthropology, history, folklore,

psychology and psychiatry, literature, ecology, biology, zoology, and geology. They are united by this project of studying sacred places in Talas, they all worked in and continue working in the region motivated by Talas project observations, ideas of which became the topic. Two articles are by Talas University students Nazira Jusupova and Nazgül Asankunova, who have worked with Aigine for two years. This is their first research experience and first publication in their life. Talented and hard working Nazira and Nazgül now study at a provincial higher education establishment, where they were not taught methods for field research nor academic writing. I strongly hope that they will continue to work with scientific literature and grow into researchers who create important and useful theories.

Studying mazars in Talas raised the whole issue of traditional knowledge and how to study it from the points of view of human and social sciences. Studying mazars in Talas raised issues about the relation of theory to practice, as well as how to connect natural and social sciences, and traditional beliefs and Islam. Aigine plans further scholarly activities and publications in these areas.

### **ABOUT THE PEOPLE**

A large number of people made the work on the book and its publication possible.

First of all are former and current Aigine employees: Mukaram Toktogulova, who worked on the first version of the book; Aida Egemberdieva, who prepared the second version; Aida Alymbaeva, who provided logistical support and field work activities in 2005; Guljan Kudabaeva, who undertook technical preparation of the publication; Zemfira Inogamova, who coordinated field activities on bio-diversity; and Gulmira Aldakeeva, who coordinated preparation of the English version of the book.

The members of the Aigine Advisory Board: Dr. Nathan Light, Dr. Anvar M. Mokeev and Dr. Elena S. Molchanova contributed to the concept of the publication and wrote papers for the book.

Students from Talas University greatly contributed to preparing the book. In the beginning there were 24 persons headed by a coordinator, the Talas University lecturer Elnura Kulova. By the end of 2006, six of these students remained committed to the project: Nazgül Asankulova, Begaim Dooronbekova, Nazira Jusupova, Zarima Ibragimova, Alina Osmonalieva and Nazira Satisheva.

Advisor Nathan Light and anthropologist David Montgomery generously shared with the photos taken at events conducted by Aigine. Several of them will be seen in the book.

This book could not have appeared without the open and friendly attitude of Talas informants and mazar visitors. The oldest among them is eighty-five year old Sonunbübü Sooronbaeva who has an exemplary clear memory and perceptions, and has responded thoughtfully to our research. Sixty-five year old Jumadil Mamekov, who has four years of secondary school education, combines academic strictness and logical thought with mythical perception of the world. Each practitioner with whom Aigine works has a unique fate and history related to visiting sacred places.

Three representatives from three generations of Manaschys: Asankan Jumaliev, representative of the old generation, Talantaaly Bakchiev from the middle generation and Ulan Ismailov from the younger generation, told about the inward dimensions of their spiritual experiences at sacred places in Talas and Issyk-Kul.

The Aigine team expresses its deep respect and gratitude to the hundreds of pilgrims whom we met at mazars of Talas and who offered their time and effort to explain to us the wonderful, demanding responsibility of mazar practices.

The English version of the book was edited by specialists in anthropology and sociology. Preface and Chapter One was edited by Dr. Nathan Light, Miami University, Ohio, USA. Chapter Two was edited by Ph.D. student David Montgomery, Rockefeller Visiting Fellow in the Program in Religion, Conflict and Peacebuilding at the Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame.

Chapter Three was edited Dr. John Newman, Indiana University, Indiana, USA.

The Chapter Four was edited by Dr. Edwin Siegal, Department of Anthropology, University of Louisville, Kentucky, USA.

The Chapter Five was edited by Dr. Russel Kleinbach, Philadelphia University, Philadelphia, USA and Liliya Salijanova.

The Chapter Six was edited by Dr. Mary Campbell, University of Victoria, Canada.

Articles in section two were edited by Dr. Nathan Light, Dr. Russel Kleinbach and Dr. Brian Farley.

Aigine is deeply grateful to all of you for agreeing to undertake your tasks and commitment till the end.

### **ABOUT THE ORGANIZATIONS**

A few organizations made the work on the book and its publication possible:

First of all, **The Christensen Fund** (California, USA) supported Aigine projects for studying and providing physical and legal protection for sacred sites in Talas and Issyk-Kul Oblasts in Kyrgyzstan. The Christensen Fund, and the Program Officer for the Central Asian region, Dr. Rafique Keshavjee, rendered valuable consultations and funding for the research, and have strongly supported the development of the Aigine Research Center.

**Aigine Cultural Research Center** located in Bishkek was opened in 2004 to carry out the following missions:

- a) study and preservation of natural and cultural legacy and diversity in Kyrgyzstan,
- b) investigate unknown aspects of cultural and natural phenomena,
- c) seek points of rapprochement and interconnection among esoteric knowledge and science, nature and culture, traditions and innovations, West and East, and other experiences often seen as oppositions.

**The company “Shoro,”** situated in Bishkek, and Larisa Alexandrovna Rudakova, head of the quality control laboratory of the organization, contributed to this effort by donating water analysis of 8 sacred springs for the study of bio-diversity at mazars in Talas oblast.

**“Alex Steward Assay and Environmental Laboratories” LTD** is situated in Bishkek, and Vice-Director Oktyabrin Alymbekovich Sadyrov, contributed by donating water analysis of 8 sacred springs for the study of bio-diversity of mazars in Talas oblast.

Aigine expresses its gratitude to the above organizations for making possible our research and publications about mazar worship, and for helping preserve knowledge about the cultural heritage of the Kyrgyz and its ongoing vigor and viability.

Dr. Gulnara A. Aitpaeva

# SECTION ONE

## Mazars of Talas throughout Ages

### Chapter One

## LIST AND DESCRIPTIONS OF MAZARS

### Foreword

In this chapter, we present to the reader information describing the history of Talas mazars. In order to make it understandable, we begin by introducing the basic terms and concepts.

In Kyrgyzstan, traditionally a sacred site is called *mazar* (*q.v.*). The word mazar originates in the Arabic language, and initially meant a mausoleum or tomb<sup>1</sup>. This word has evolved in people's consciousness to have the sense of a place that is sacred because of the presence of spirits or supernatural forces. At present, there are two types of mazars in our country:

1. natural mazars: springs, mountains, forests, pits, stones, trees, lakes, etc.
2. mazars created by humans: mausoleums of great people, ancient buildings, or graves of people killed innocently.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union traditional practices have begun to re-emerge and be revived on the territory of the former Soviet state, including religious practices. These phenomena have taken a variety of forms. In Kyrgyzstan, the revival of the religious consciousness, first of all through erecting or discovering mazars and worshipping at them, and the shift from an officially atheist state to independence and religious freedom has brought a return to the widespread custom of visiting and worshipping at mazars in the country.

It is reasonable to precisely define the term history too. We mainly understand "history" as information developed, specified, put on paper, and printed as a book or other writings by historians. However, usually "history" is also understood as known facts that start from the very beginning of events and opinions around those events. We can include "Oral history" in this category as well.

In the West, oral historical research has been widely carried out. For instance, in 1930 the U.S. Library of Congress began an Oral History Program to preserve the experiences of

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<sup>1</sup> The Islam Encyclopedia. – M., 1991. – p.15

many Americans<sup>2</sup>. In our social science, the concept of “oral history” is non-existent. Nevertheless, since ancient times, oral information, such as cosmogonic myths, stories, legends and so on have been widely considered to be historical sources. Some people may call such sources “unauthentic”, “not ancient”, but when it is irrefutable that for the Kyrgyz people, their ancestral history has been preserved and reached us through oral sources. Overall, as Western scholars say the role of oral histories in preserving and transmitting historic information from generation to generation is truly great<sup>3</sup>.

When the Aigine Research Center began to research mazars in 2004, it was virtually impossible to find answers in written sources to questions about the number of mazars in Kyrgyzstan, when and how mazars were erected or discovered, who visits mazars and why, what the working conditions of mazars are, and what the public policy in regard to mazars visiting is. The fact that the custom of visiting mazars has been preserved until the present is as obvious as the present existence of Lake Ysyk Köl or Ala Too Mountains, but the social, cultural and religious phenomena related to mazars have not been studied. Strangely, whereas the State Commission on Religious Affairs under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic has registered various religious phenomena, it has overlooked mazars. In the records of this Commission, one may find exact information, for instance, on Islam, various Russian churches, Catholic, Judaic, Buddhist, and even Bahai entities, Protestant organizations, and foreign religious communities, but no information on mazars.

Because of widespread government restrictions, gathering information on and describing mazars, for themselves, has been impossible for quite a while. Let us say, during Soviet times, the sacred sides of the sites we are describing were disregarded and most people understood mazars narrowly as only sites where trees have ribbons tied to the branches, and they rarely visited such sites.

After having started working in Talas and having realized that it was impossible to collect valid sources of information on when each mazar had appeared, who had set it up or discovered it, when it had been destroyed, and who had repaired it, Aigine began to work on recording and analyzing oral histories.

Until the present time, stories about mazars have been preserved and lived only in oral tradition. Orally transmitted information always changes, obtains new content and meaning over time, while some pieces of it might get unspoken and forgotten. Oral culture has a special feature – the same story may be told in numerous ways. Information describing the history of mazars also possesses this feature. You can quickly notice it if you read the history of mazars. For instance, the history of a mazar may exist in many versions that can complement one another. And sometimes one feels that important pieces of information related to the mazar’s history are forgotten, approximated, or even seem to be turning into a fairy tale. But we do not label written information we find as “correct” and “incorrect,” or “trustworthy” and “untrustworthy.” Rather, we present all the information.

In certain cases, the practical uses of mazars are forgotten, or are replaced by fantastic information about supernatural characters or events. In addition, local people themselves try to explore the history of mazars, to prove their antiquity, and to discover ancient knowledge about the sites, which was only known to holy people in the past and is unknown now to the contemporaries. For example, a story about Nyldy Ata [*Ata* means Father] tells us that he lived and passed away before Manas. In other cases, the informants emphasize that an “owner” of a mazar or a holy person that discovered it is their forebear or ancestor. In addition the ability to feel the holiness of mazars is considered to be inherited.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://dictionary.laborlawtalk.com>

<sup>3</sup> <http://dictionary.laborlawtalk.com>

The information presented here consists largely of the opinions of the informants; we tried to transmit the stories as we heard them from the people without any changes. Certainly, we have tried to clarify and explain unclear information, but the manner, thinking, worldview, personal values, and language of the storytellers was preserved. In consequence, each description and story includes a variety of linguistic nuances depending on its nature. The narrative may have its internal emotional background, intent, distance, timidity, or concealed attitudes. The stories are just as varied as the people. However, remembering that people may be biased, the reader should carefully weigh the material s/he reads, assess it, and put it in simple words, and decide for her/himself what to believe. Since this book is not about simple, commonplace phenomena – on the contrary, it is about the sites we believe are sacred, about people and their beliefs – we share with our consultants a responsibility to God and spirits. Hence we would like to emphasize that we do not intend to exaggerate, embellish or belittle the stories.

Because these are oral histories, the mazar histories presented here are each told differently. In other words, if some tell about when a mausoleum was erected and to whom it was dedicated, others tell intriguing stories about the life of the mazar's "owner", and still others link the history of a mazar with other sources or events described in books or by people. So, this provides an opportunity to learn and understand how oral stories about mazars have originated, evolved and been preserved.

Concerning the description of mazars, Aigine researchers described them according to their understanding. In only a few cases, descriptions of mazars by scholars collaborating with Aigine are presented. For instance, in 2004, our archeology consultant, a well known archeologist, Dr. Bakyt E. Amanbaeva, described Manas Mausoleum and Booterek and greatly contributed to a better understanding of the phenomena of mazars. This book also benefited from the opinion of this author regarding the history of mazar site Zulpukor. As we mentioned in the beginning, everything presented here about the mazars was collected by members of the Aigine research team: they saw the mazars themselves, where they are located, how they are set up, and what type they are (spring, wood, tree, stone, anthill, etc.). The saying 'It is better to see something once than to hear about it a thousand times' is a practical truth.

Here, we are talking about sites that people believe are sacred and where they worship at various times, coming to visit them from far away. Irrespective of the number of people that visit a site – be it ten or a hundred people a day or a month – the most important criterion for us is that the people deem the site to be truly sacred. We considered sites to be sacred even if a few people or a few families come to worship them. People relate only to those things that they believe are true and holy: it is difficult to impose things alien to them.

Another thing to mention is a frequently used word *kyrgyzchylyk* (*q.v.*) which relates to mazars. It should be said that defining this as the totality of qualities relating to treatment, purifying and support of a human being is poor. This notion also applies to many of the guardians who look after the mazars, and take care of it as if it were their fate, as well as some practitioners such as *bübü* (*q.v.*), *bakshy* (*q.v.*), and *emchi-domchu* (*q.v.*), who for some reason believe they are connected with mazars and that is why follow this path. They maintain purely Kyrgyz traditional qualities. More complete information on *kyrgyzchylyk* is provided in the chapter "Mazars and People".

Of course, where there are mazars, there are also rituals. At the minimum, the most important rituals are to bring seven breads, recite verses from the Quran, to perform ablutions (*daarat*) before going to a sacred site, and carry out rituals that are specific to mazars. People also regard performing such rituals as *jar saluu* (*q.v.*), *zikir chaluu* (*q.v.*), *emdöö* (*q.v.*), and other rituals at mazars as relevant and significant. What they are like, how, when and under what conditions they are performed, what their purpose and results are, how they benefit the

performing person, and how these performances appear to onlookers, and so on, will all be covered more fully in following chapters of this book “Rituals practiced in mazars”, since we regarded it expedient to discuss it separately.

## **LIST OF MAZARS IN TALAS OBLAST**

Talas region – 37

Manas region-34

Kara Buura region – 40

Bakai’ Ata region – 46

Overall – 157

### ***Talas Region***

1. Manas Kümbözü (Mauseleum of Manas), not natural (made), Tash Aryk village
2. Manastyn Chakmak, Tölgö Tashy (Chakmak and Fortune Stones Manas) combined, Tash Aryk village
3. Kamyrdin Beli (Grave Ridge) natural, Tash Aryk village
4. Kanykei’ Bulak (Kanykei’ Spring) natural, Ak Jar village
5. Ai’chürök Bulak (Ai’chürök Spring) natural, Ak Jar village
6. Chypynyn Mazary (The Sacred Place of Chypy) natural, Kara Shoro pasture place
7. Öruk (Apricot-tree) natural, Keng Kol village
8. Mechit (Mosque) natural, Keng Kol village
9. Jorgolot (Ambling) natural, Keng Kol Mountain
10. Kyzyl Choku (Red Peak) natural, Üch Emchek village
11. Közönök Terek (A Tree with a Hole) natural, Keng Kol village
12. Ak Bulak (White Spring) natural, Keng Kol Mountain
13. Chachykei’din Kara Tashy (Black Stone of Chachykei’) natural, Keng Kol Mountain
14. Ak Terek or Top Terek (White Tree or Grouped Poplar) natural, Keng Kol Mountain
15. Tashrabat (Stone Wall) natural, Keng Kol Mountain

16. Besh Karakchy (Five Robber) natural, Besh Tash pasture place
17. Koro Kai'yngdydagy Bulak (Spring at the Small Birch) natural, Besh Tash pasture place
18. Char Kai'yngdy (Birch Grove) natural, Besh Tash pasture place
19. Berdikojo uulu Jankoroz Kumbözü ( Mausoleum of Berdikozho's son Jankoroz) not natural (made), Kozuchak village
20. Arashan Ata (Arashan Father) natural, Besh Tash gorge
21. Kumurskanin Uyugu (Anthill) natural, Besh Tash gorge
22. Jankoroz Abanyn Ekinchi Mazar Bulagy (Second Mazar Spring of Jankoroz Brother) natural, Kozuchak village
23. Kyzyl Tashtagy Mazarluu Bulak (The Mazar Spring at the Red Stone) natural, Sasyk Bulak village
24. Kydyraaly Ata (Kydyraaly Father) natural, Sasyk Bulak village
25. Mai'kadam Kalpa Mechiti (Maykadam Kalpa Mosque) natural, Kara Oi' village
26. Ömürdün Bulagy (Spring of Life) natural, Kara Oi' village
27. Bala Mazar or Tash Mazar (Child Mazar or Stone Mazar) natural, Kalba village
28. Altybai' Bulak (Spring of Altybai') natural, Talas town
29. Ilham Bulak (Spring of Inspiration) natural, Talas town
30. Kumurskanin Uyugu (Anthill) natural, Kyrk Kazik village
31. Zulpukor (Arab. *zulfukar*- Strong ), not natural (made), Aral village
32. Jalgyz Tal (Single Willow), Üch Emchek village
33. Sandyk or Mazar Bulak (Chest or Spring Mazar), Taldy Bulak village
34. Altyn Bulak (Golden Spring) natural, Kara Oi' village
35. Shumkar Uya, (Aerie) natural, Taldy Bulak village
36. Mazarluu Tal (Mazar Tree) natural, Köpürö Bazar village

37. Bakai' Tash (Bakai' Stone) natural, Taldy Bulak village

***Manas Region***

38. Kalpa Ata (Kalpa Father) natural, Karacha village

39. Jambash Bulak (Jambash Spring) natural, Pokrovka village

40. Ak Terek (White Poplar) natural, Karacha village

41. Bulak (Spring) natural, Kengesh village

42. Tamchy Bulak (Dropping Spring) natural, Chong Kapka village

43. Sherikbai' Atanyn Mazary (Mazar of Sherikbai' Father) natural, Mai' village

44. Jeti Bulak (Seven Springs) natural, Mai' village

45. Dolono (Hawthorn) natural, Manas village

46. Teke Tash (Billy-goat Stone) natural, Aral village

47. Chech Döbö (Chech Hillock) natural, Chech Döbö village

48. Khan Ordo (Court of the Khan) natural, Aral village

49. Kichi Kai'yngdy (Small Kai'yngdy) natural, Aral village

50. Kochkor Bashat (Ram Small Spring) natural, Sary Bulak village,

51. Babyr (Babyr) not natural (made), Kai'yngdy village

52. Ak Chal (White Old Man) not natural (made), Kai'yngdy village

53. Chatbaz (Chatbaz) not natural (made), Kai'yngdy village

54. Kyzyl Choku (Red Peak) natural, Nyldy village

55. Tash Döbö (Stone Hill) natural, Nyldy village

56. Üi' Mazary (House) natural, Nyldy village

57. Chechek Bulak (Smallpox Spring) natural, Karacha village

58. Ak Terek (White Poplar) natural, Karacha village,

59. Karacha Khan Kyzы Akbermettin Ordo Mazary (The Mazar Court of Akbermet,  
Daughter of Karacha Khan) natural, Karacha village

60. Karool Choku (Guard Peak) natural, Aral village
61. Yrsaaly (Yrsaaly) natural, Karacha village
62. Jalgyz Terek (Single Poplar) natural, Tash Bashat village
63. Kalpa Ata (Kalpa Father) natural, Karacha village
64. Juuguch (Bonewashing) natural, Karacha village
65. Chychyrkanak (Sea-buckthorn) natural, Karacha village
66. Tortkül (Four Flowers) natural, Jai'yngan village
67. Bulak (Spring) natural, Pokrovka village
68. Uzun Bulak (Long Spring) natural, Jai'yngan village
69. Kara Bulak (Black Spring) natural, Kai'yngdy village
70. Yrchy Bulak (Singing Spring) natural, Aral village
71. Tepchime (Wading) natural, Kai'yngdy village

***Kara Buura region***

72. Oljobai'dy Kergen Tash (The Stone Where Oljobai' was Stretched) not natural  
(made), Kök Sai' village
73. Ajydaar Tash (Dragon Stone) natural, Kök Sai' village
74. Tai'lak Tash (Young Camel Stone) natural, Kök Sai' village
75. Kochkor Ata (Ram Father) combined, Kök Sai' village
76. Düi'shön Ata or Jetti Bulak (Düi'shön Father or Seven Springs) natural, Amanbaevo  
village
77. Chong Döbö (Big Hill) not natural (made), Amanbaevo village
78. Kai'nar Bulak (Bubbling Spring) combined, Kai'nar village
79. Talduu Bulak (Spring Surrounded by Trees) natural, Kai'nar village
80. Chymolo (Chymolo) not natural (made), Kai'nar village
81. Kosh Döbö (Couple of Hills) natural, Kai'nar village

82. Archaluu (A Place with Many Junipers Around) natural, Archagül village
83. Bashat Bulak (Source Spring) natural, Archagül village
84. Selkinchek or Apalardyn Bulagy (Swing or Spring of Mothers) natural, Cholponbai' village
85. Kai'nar Bulak (Bubbling Spring) natural, Bei'sheke village
86. Ak Terek (White Poplar) natural, Bei'sheke village
87. Naristeler Bulagy (Spring of Babies) natural, Kyzyl Adyr village
88. Aksakaldar Bulagy (Spring of Elders) natural, Kyzyl Adyr village
89. Bübü Apa (Clairvoyant Mother) natural, Kara Suu village
90. Dubana Ata (Dubana Father) combined, Kara Suu village
91. Chybyr (Chybyr) natural, Bakyyan village
92. Oi'sul Ata (Oi'sul Father), (or Ak Tai'lak – White Camel Calf) and (Kydyr Ata– Kydyr Father) natural, Bakyyan village
93. Tamchy Bulak (Dripping Spring) natural, Tamchy Bulak village
94. Chat (Mountain) natural, Molotov village
95. Chargyn Ata Bulagy (Spring of Chargyn Father) natural, Sheker village
96. Mai'mak Ata (Mai'mak Father) natural, Sulu Mai'mak village
97. Tamchy Bulak (Dripping Spring) natural, Joon Döbö village
98. Sapparhan Atanyn Kai'nar Bulagy (Bubbling Spring of Father Sapparhan) natural, Joon Döbö village
99. Chargyn Ata (Chargyn Father) natural, Kök Sai' village
100. Umai' Ene (Mother Umai') natural, Kök Sai' village
101. Ak Üi' (White House) not natural (made), Sheker village
102. Jer Üi' (Earth House) natural, Sheker village
103. Ak Tai'lak (White Camel Calf) natural, Bakai'yr village

104. Baka Terek (Poplar Tree) natural, Chong Kara Buura village
105. Mazar Bulak (Mazar Spring) natural, Tamchy Bulak village
106. Sai'dagy Bulak (Spring at the River) natural, Bakyyan village
107. Shamchyrak or Tegirmen (Torch or Mill) natural, Bakyyan village
108. Asanbai' (Asanbai') not natural (made), Ak Jar village
109. Tegirmen Tash (Millstone) natural, Üch Bulak village
110. Kara Moldo (Black Mullah) natural, Chong Kara Buura village
111. Ak Mazar (White Mazar) natural, Chong Kara Buura village

***Bakai' Ata Region***

112. Kara Koyun Üngkür (Kara Koyun Cave) natural, Ürmara village
113. Kyzyl Nuura (Red Nuura) natural, Booterek village
114. Booterek (Booterek) natural, Booterek village
115. Kyrk Kyzdyn Üngkürü (Cave of Forty Girls) natural, Madaniyat village
116. Kelin Tash (Bride Stone) natural, Madaniyat village
117. Archaluu (A Place with Many Junipers) natural, Madaniyat village
118. Chat (Mountain) natural, Namatbek village
119. Sei'taaly (Sei'taaly) natural, Ming Bulak village
120. Tortkül (Four Flowers) natural, Ming Bulak village
121. Ak Döng (White Hill) natural, Ak Döbö village
122. Altyn Bulak (Gold Spring) natural, Ak Döbö village
123. Üch Terek (Three Poplars) natural, Ak Döbö village
124. Kyrk Bulak (Forty Springs) natural, Ak Döbö village
125. Kerege Tash (Kerege Stone) natural, Kök Tash village
126. Jalgyz Terek (Single Poplar) natural, Madaniyat village
127. Boztekir Ata (Boztekir Father) natural, Namatbek village

128. Kumuru Baba (Kumuru Baba) natural, Namatbek village
129. Chumgent Baba (Chumgent Baba) natural, Namatbek village
130. Arzymat Ata (Arzymat Father) natural, Bakai' Ata village
131. Sasyk Bulak (Stinking Spring) natural, Bakai' Ata village
132. Akterek Ata (White Poplar Father) natural, Ming Bulak village
133. Osek Ata (Osek Father) natural, Özgörüsh village
134. Dölön Atanyn Mazary (Mazar of Dölön Father) natural, Özgörüsh village
135. Kur Tash (Belt Stone) natural, Özgörüsh village
136. Aty Jok (Nameless or just called The Spring) natural, Kyrgyzstan village

***Mazars of the Nyldy Ata Complex***

137. Köz Bulak (Eye Spring) natural, Özgörüsh village
138. Sharkyratma (Waterfall) natural, Özgörüsh village
139. Ajydaar Tal (Dragon Tree) natural, Özgörüsh village
140. Chong Üngkür or Ordo (Big Cave or Court) natural, Özgörüsh village
141. Ajydaar Üngkür (Dragon Cave) natural, Özgörüsh village
142. Jarylğan Jürök (Broken Heart) natural, Özgörüsh village
143. Küzgü Tash (Mirror Stone) natural, Özgörüsh village
144. Tamchy Bulak (Dripping Spring) natural, Özgörüsh village
145. Jalgyz Terek (Single Poplar) natural, Özgörüsh village
146. Beshik Bulak (Cradle Spring) natural, Özgörüsh village
147. Nyldy Atanyn Jai'ky Konushu (Summer Shelter of Nyldy Ata) natural, Özgörüsh village
148. Darbaza (Gates) natural, Özgörüsh village
149. Ochok (Hearth) natural, Özgörüsh village

150. Bala Mazary or Bala Bei'it (Child Mazar or Child's Grave) not natural (made),  
Özgörüşh village
151. Akkulany Mamysy (Akkula's Tethering Pillar) combined, Özgörüşh village
152. Bel Ooruga Shypaa (Remedy for Backache) natural, Özgörüşh village
153. Nyldy Atanyn Kyshky Konushu (Winter Shelter of Nyldy Ata) natural, Özgörüşh  
village
154. Nyldy Atanyn Tashy (Nyldy Ata's Stone) natural, Özgörüşh village
155. Kyz Bulak (Girl Spring) natural, Özgörüşh village
156. Semetei' Atanyn Turgan Jeri (Site Where Semetei' Ata Once Stopped) natural,  
Özgörüşh village
157. Küi'gön Archa (Burnt Juniper) natural, Özgörüşh village

### **DESCRIPTIONS AND ORAL HISTORIES OF MAZARS**

Even though according to research conducted and gathered information there are about 250 mazars in the territory of Talas oblast, we will talk only about the sacred sites, which were visited by the members of Aigine.

#### ***Mazar of Talas Region***

##### **1. Manas Kümbözü [Mausoleum of Manas]**

Tash Aryk village  
Guardian – Samarbek Ütürov

Type of mazar – mausoleum complex. It is situated 300 meters northeast of Tash Aryk village. On the northeastern side of the Mausoleum, 7 meters away from it, are found *chakmak tash* (q.v.), and *tölgö tash* (q.v.), related to *Manas* (q.v.), then 40-50 meters further is the *Karool Choku* (q.v.) to the north is the museum, and *at mai'dany* (q.v.) to the north-west is Manas Ata's flower garden and the administration of the complex; to the west is *shypaakana* (q.v.) to the south-west is the burial place of *Ajybek Datka* (q.v.) to the south-east, 15 meters distant, is the mausoleum of Kojobek Tölöev (1911-1964), then there is an organized *tülöökana* (q.v.) To the north of the Mausoleum to the west – 3 meters away there is about 50 meters long old cemetery.

The walls of the mausoleum form a square, while its roof is an octagon in the form of a *tündük* (q.v.). The overall height of the mausoleum is 11 meters; the length of each side is 7.77 meters. The walls and roof are made of red brick. The entrance of the mausoleum is on the southern side. The bricks of the entrance side are covered with Quranic verses in Arabic script. Overall, there are three entrances to the mausoleum. In front of the entrance, 10 meters away, there are seats for *zyyaratchy* (q.v) under the shelter with a bench where people sit to recite Quranic verses.

In 1993-1995, the mausoleum was repaired and in 1995 the 1000 anniversary of Manas was celebrated there.

According to the information provided by Dr. Bakyt E. Amanbaeva, PhD in History, scientific adviser of Aigine in 2005:

Manas Mausoleum is a site of republican and even wider importance – no matter what time of year it is, many people make pilgrimages to it. It is located on the eminence of the south-western side of Manas's Peak (Karool Choku, Tal Choku, Manas Supa), which is 1432 meters above the sea level. On the north-eastern side, in the Kamyrdyn Beli hills and hollows there is Keng Kol cemetery dated to the first century BCE. On the northern side, already since 1945 from the peaks of the mountains one could see ruins of the tower and fort in the form of a platform made of rough stones. From the ceramics collected from the top and surroundings of the ruins that date from the 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> centuries CE, as well as from the Arab engravings in the stone (67x47 meters), the year of the structure's erection (1341 CE) and the name of its owner – Muhammed uulu Ali Dervish were discovered<sup>4</sup>. To the south-east of the peak, there is a spacious cemetery, which is currently closed. Around it, researchers of the 1930 and 1940s and later discovered ceramic fragments typical of the late 12<sup>th</sup> and early 13<sup>th</sup> century CE and the Mongolian epoch. Most recently, artifacts from the 17<sup>th</sup> century CE to the present have been discovered and registered. Manas Mausoleum is situated almost in the very center of the citadel. About 1.5 kilometers to the west, there is a spring named after two heroines from the "Manas" epic – *Kanykei'* (q.v.) and *Ai'chürök* (q.v.). The architecture of the mausoleum follows the Central Asian architectural tradition – with a total height of about 11 meters, and each front side 7 meters high. Square in form, it resembles a one-room 4.38x4.48 meters mausoleum. It is foundationless, based on stone slabs laid in several layers.

## Oral history

*Manaschy* (q.v.) Asankan Jumaliev, an employee at the Manas Ordo complex, presented two versions of the history of Manas Mausoleum and about who had constructed it:

*Kanykei'* invited her father. Her father came with many people that built the Mausoleum and left. After *Kanykei'*s father left, *Abyke* (q.v.) and *Köbösh* (q.v.) began to fight each other over *Kanykei'*. While they were fighting, *Bakai'* (q.v.) helped *Kanykei'* and she left Talas.

But another version he told was that he had heard from *Bübü Mariam* (q.v.):

***Kanisyak hatun*** means "Kanisek kyz (kyz means a girl or daughter)". She was a daughter of Ak Bakai' Emir. That woman did not have children. One of the descendants of Chyngyz Khan killed Ak Bakai' Emir. After that, the killer said to Kanisek: "You will marry my son". Then he had her marry his son Juuku. "I will not give birth, I do not want to mix my blood" – having said that, the woman did not give birth. Then her husband (in the epic "Manas", he is called Ai' Kojo) said to his adopted son: "Kill her because she is not going to be my family. She will not give birth to a child from me. All my other wives did, but she will not" and had him give her poison. On her deathbed, Kanisek hatun said: "I have had a mausoleum erected in to the name of my father so that his name will not been forgotten. If I die, bury me there in the mausoleum. My father was buried there; I shall be buried with him". Then, Kanisek was buried in the mausoleum. Kanisek hatun mausoleum stems from that.

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<sup>4</sup> Michail E. Masson, Galina A. Pugachenkova, 1950, pp. 24-25

According to the “The Manas Encyclopedia”, Manas Mausoleum is an architectural monument of the Middle Ages (14<sup>th</sup> century CE). According to the epic and folk legend, it is a majestic building erected in the memory of the hero on his grave by his beloved Kanykei’. It has been preserved until the present. A famous Russian researcher, academician Vasiliy V. Bartold conducted a scientific expedition to Central Asian in 1893 and the establishment of the Turkestan Archeology Amateur Group in Tashkent City in 1895 led to the scientific exploration of Manas Mausoleum... According to another legend, the Mausoleum was constructed by *Semetei’* (q.v.). It is said that in order to make bricks, clay was brought from distant places, goat wool was added to the mortar, and finished bricks were fired in the fat of castrated goat (*erkech*). In the epic, there are the following lines about Manas Mausoleum:

Seven thousand castrated goates were slaughtered at once,  
Bricks were fired hard and laid well.  
So that, until seven centuries pass away,  
The Mausoleum of my man with true worth,  
Would stand inviolable.

Six thousand castrated goats were slaughtered at once,  
Bricks were fired hard and laid well,  
So that, until six centuries pass away,  
The Mausoleum of *Ai’köl* (q.v.)  
Would stand inviolable<sup>5</sup>

Identification of sand elements typical to the composition of Keng Kol River banks in the composition of bricks proves that local materials were used for brick production. On some bricks, there are imprints of animal footprints that must have been there before they were fired. It has been proved that these footprints belonged to animals that originated in Talas valley. However, this mausoleum that had been constructed in the 14<sup>th</sup> century CE and stood all alone in this area, preserved as a whole, was later linked by the people themselves to the name of their favorite hero Manas<sup>6</sup>. Hence, it is not really about whether the mausoleum is truly the Mausoleum of Manas or not, but rather about people’s beliefs.

Jumadil Mamekov, guardian of the Manas Ordo complex (the mausoleum guardian is a different person), tells a biography of a person who decided to dedicate his life to serving Manas Mausoleum, to the duty of *shai’ykyk* (q.v.), as follows:

The Mausoleum site is the inherited territory of my great-great-grandfather Oljochu. Oljochu’s own name is Karaooz. Since he was a treasurer of his younger brother Khan Bürgö, his own name was forgotten and due to the *oljoluu* [successful], the name Oljochu [a man who possesses success] was attached to him. Since the 90s of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Oljochu’s son Toktobai’ worked as a guardian of the mausoleum; after his death (around 1865), this duty passed to his twenty-year-old son Mamek. Continuing his father’s tradition, after Mamek his son Sargaldak took up the *shai’ykyk*, but having gone to the front in the Great Patriotic War in 1941, he was missing ever since. Sargaldak was a younger brother of *komuzchu* (q.v.) Jantakbai’. A famous musician whose daughter was the mother of the famous Kyrgyz composer Atai’ Ogombaev. Toktobai’ was a *moldo* (q.v.), Mamek was a *manaschy*, Sargaldak was a famous soothsaying dervish: the “sacred gift” of former generations was a gift from the sacred power of the Mausoleum.

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<sup>5</sup> Sai’akbai’ Karalaev, 1.238

<sup>6</sup> The Manas Encyclopedia, Bishkek 1995, Vol. I, pp. 436-437

After Sargaldak had left for the war and gone missing, a deputy of the USSR Supreme Soviet, Alymkul Üsönbaev, held a meeting with people at the Manas Mausoleum and asked about a *shai'yk* (*q.v.*) for the mausoleum. When people learnt about Sargaldak, they said, “nobody knows whether Sargaldak will ever return or not” and, having affirmed that it could not go on without a *shai'yk*, brought a man named Teke Baatyr [*Baatyr* means Hero] who was nearly eighty years of age, to *shai'yktyk*. After Teke Baatyr passed away, my father-in-law Alymbai' became a *shai'yk* in 1962. Even though he died, his wife Supai'ra (my mother-in-law) continued the *shai'yktyk* service until 1995, so that the duty of *shai'yktyk* started by Alymbai' and continued by Supai'ra totaled 33 years. Only in 1995 she moved to her house in Tash Aryk village, and recently, in May of last year, died at the age of 82 years. Since then, the position of guardian was re-established at the state-owned Manas Mausoleum.

Out of 33 years of service at the Mausoleum, my mother-in-law Supai'ra had worked for 20 years unsalaried, while during the last 13 years she was paid by the state. During her time, at that site there were only the protected Mausoleum and house of the guardian made of stone. Called “Alymbai's wife”, she was well known by the visitors of the Mausoleum. Her husband Alymbai' was a gardener and, in spite of his old age (he was 65 years old when he became a *shai'yk*), he developed the surroundings of the Mausoleum through his hard gardening work. The contemporary Manas Ata's flower garden is also a result of his work

## **2. Manastyn Chakmak, Tölgö Tashy [Chakmak and Fortune Stones of Manas]**

Tash Aryk village

Guardian – Samarbek Ütürov

Type of mazar – stones. They are situated on the left side of Manas Mausoleum, on an area 1.5 meters wide and 3.5 meters long. Tölgö Tash is bigger than Chakmak Tash.

## **3. Kamyrdyn Beli [Grave Ridge]**

Tash Aryk village

No guardian

Type of mazar – ridge. Its special feature is that if one rides a horse upon it, it thunders. Its base seems hollow. It is located behind the Mountain of Manas Ata. There is a local cemetery for three villages – Tash Aryk, Orto Aryk, Ak Jar. The deceased from these villages were buried here. However, because of advance planning for the upcoming celebration of the “Manas-1000” festival, since 1985 burial there has been prohibited. Now, these three villages have three different places for burial.

There is a horse racing track nearby on the northwestern side. The mazar Kamyrdyn Beli is all about mausoleums. They are hand made. It is 1 kilometer away from Manas Mausoleum to the north. There is a blue marker plate with an inscription “Cemetery”. There is no guardian of the mazar; in general, it is part of the Manas Ordo area. At present, many people go there. However, not many call it Kamyrdyn Beli. Around it grow rushes and trefoil. And there are many barren hills.

## **4. Kanykei' Bulak [Kanykei' Spring]**

Ak Jar village

Guardian – Bekkul Jumanazarov

Type of mazar – springs. Kanykei' Bulak is located 200 meters from the village to the northwest. It consists of 41 springs. Its special feature is that the water differs in taste from

spring to spring. It is said that the 41 springs cure 41 diseases. The springs are located close to one another. The mazar is 80 meters long and 3 meters wide.

### **Oral history**

According to *shai'yk* Esengul's words, when *Jakyp Khan* (*q.v.*) passed away, Manas was still young. He was elected a khan and gathered forty knights. *Chyi'yrdy* (*q.v.*) frankly told him the grave news: "Do not be presumptuous! Your father has died, and the Kalmaks drove away children, livestock, girls and young women". Manas Ata gathered his 40 knights at the present Kanykei' Apa [*Apa* means Mother] Bulak. Kanykei' Apa came over with 41 girls and dug at 41 places – as a result, there appeared the same number of springs. Each knight of Manas washed in each spring, was cured of diseases and ailments, and set out against the enemy. Those wounded by the enemy would return to be cured.

The story of Kanykei' Bulak is as mentioned above. However, at the present time "Kanykei' Bulak and Ai'chürök Bulak are confused – visitors say, 'I have come to Kanykei' Bulak', when in fact they come to Ai'chürök Bulak, or vice versa, making an erroneous pilgrimages. Some people think that it is necessary to preserve the historical location of the springs". These opinions were given to a *bübü* Burul Kojobekova in a vision and, in general, they correspond to the repeatedly mentioned conclusions from studies by people who are indifferent to these mazars. However, for the moment we regarded it right to provide only the information up until now.

### **5. Ai'chürök Bulak [Ai'chürök Spring]**

Ak Jar village

Guardian – Esengul Jumanazarov

Type of mazar – spring. On the right side of the road to Ak Jar village, 500 meters away in the direction of the forest. 30 meters to the east, there is a lake. Ai'chürök Apa Bulak is 700 meters above the lake.

### **Oral history**

According to Jumadil Mamekov, after having married *Semetei'* Ai'chürök came to live here. Swinging on *alty bakan* (*q.v.*) she planted a plane tree herself. From the base of the plane tree, a flow of water started out. At present, this spring is named after her.

According to information from the "The Manas Encyclopedia", Ai'chürök Bulak is located on the right side of Talas River; it is a spring in the lower part of Keng Kol valley. Nowadays, a village has been set up there and the spring is in Tash Aryk village, near the secondary school "Dolono". According to local people, "Ai'chürök turned into a swan and flew looking for *Semetei'*. She landed at this spring and she is said to have met *Chachykei'* (*q.v.*) here; the spring appeared from the mixed tears of grief and joy". In this way, it is related to Ai'chürök<sup>7</sup>

### **6. Chypynyn Mazary [The Mazar of Chypy]**

Kara Shoro *jai'loo* (*q.v.*)

Due to the death of the guardian Kashymbek Abdyraimov, at present Jumadil Mamekov is the *shai'yk* of the mazar.

Type of mazar – tree and ruins. The distance to the mazar from the end of Tash Aryk village is 3 kilometers. Fifty meters to the east of the beginning of the road leading to Keng Kol, on

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<sup>7</sup> The Manas Encyclopedia, Bishkek 1995, Vol.1. 51

the southern side, there is an irrigation ditch with willow trees around it. Then, after 300 meters, there are potato fields belonging to local people. Through these potato fields we turn to the south-west. On the western side, the Keng Kol River is flowing. Near the mazar of Chypy, there are chaotically growing trees, to the east there are high mountains. On the eastern side, there are 3 big willow trees. The mazar is 50 meters to the west of those trees. On the south-western side of the mazar, 10 meters distant, there is a water-wheel from the old mill. On the top of the mazar there are bricks which are ruins of the walls. Its height is 1.5 meters. Rushes grow all around it. Not many people come from outside. It is mainly local inhabitants that recite the Quran and worship there.

### **Oral history**

According to the past guardian of this mazar Kashymbek Ata: Chypy, a holy person, was from Kuschu tribe, from the present day Kara Suu village. He was born approximately in 1782 and died at the age of 80 years on Keng Kol *jai'loo* called Bel Konush. People say that on his deathbed, he said: "Bury me at the Manas Ata Mausoleum". On the way, his corpse fell down on Kara Shoro *jai'loo*. Having regarded it as a sign, people who were transporting his corpse buried him right there. On his deathbed, he foretold the outbreak of *typhratma* (*q.v.*) disease in sheep and wished that his mausoleum would become a mazar for healing livestock. Since then, the grave of Chypy has been a mazar.

When Holy Chypy was a child and said to his peers that it would rain now, it did rain. Also, he is said to have been able to make water flowing downhill flow back.

### **7. Öruk [Apricot-tree]**

Keng Kol village

No guardian

Type of mazar - spring and apricot-tree. The Obo River flows along the border of Öruk mazar. Black rocks are all around. At the bottom of the rocks, there is a big house of *komuzchu* Jantakbai'. There are old apricots. Around the mazar, there are chaotically growing poplars, dense brush, and sea-buckthorn.

### **Oral history**

According to Jumadil Mamekov, once upon a time on the western side of Öruk mazar there was a spring. That spring did not run dry all year round. It is said that a white serpent inhabited it. Those who had seen that serpent called it the owner of the spring and did not disturb that place. There was an apricot-tree near that spring. Unable to have children, *komuzchu* Jantakbai' and his wife Ai'yumkan came there full of hope to worship it. In a year, Ai'yumkan gave birth to a girl. *Komuzchu* Jantakbai' deemed it a holy mazar, built a house and settled down there. He became a *shai'yk* of that site, explained to passers-by and visitors about the holiness of this site, and made it known. Since then, that place has become a mazar.

### **8. Mechit [Mosque]**

Keng Kol village

No guardian

Type of mazar – ruins of mudbrick walls. Mechit mazar is located behind the ascending road. It is about 100 meters away from river Obo. In the 1950s, about 50 households lived in the middle of the old apple-apricot garden. There used to be secondary school that had 7 grades. At present time, the school has been turned into a barn. It is surrounded by the mountains. The ruins are on the eastern side.

### Oral history

According to Jumadil Mamekov, in the 1870s, a person called Kydyraaly made a pilgrimage to Mecca. Upon his return, he built a mosque. Saying that they are foods of paradise, he planted apricots and apples all around. Kydyraaly did not study – he was *moldo* through vision (*ayan*). The mosque was named after Kadyraaly Hadji (*ajy*), over time a village has grown around it.

His son was Bei'shenaaly *moldo*. There were very few such big *moldos* at that time. In this valley, Bei'shenaaly *moldo* was the second biggest *moldo* after Ümöt *moldo*. He died in 1963.

### 9. Jorgolot [Ambling]

Keng Kol Mountain

No guardian

Type of mazar – road. The road running uphill to the Kyzyl Choku along the slope. It is surrounded by the mountains. Ömürkan, a herdsman, told Jumadil Mamekov that once at dawn he heard some giggling and then saw eight 12-13-year-old girls looking very much alike, just like rabbits, walk through this place in the direction of the mazar Chachykei'din Kara Tashy and then disappear. Both the person who told this and the person who listened suppose that the grace of this mazar has also moved to the direction of Chachykei'din Kara Tashy.

### 10. Kyzyl Choku [Red Peak]

Üch Emchek village

No guardian

Type of mazar – mountain. Its height is about 100-150 meters. On the eastern side, one can see 5 caves. This mazar is located 5 kilometers to the northeastern side of Üch Emchek village. This mazar is surrounded by the mountains on the north, east and west. 600 meters before the mazar, on the right side of the road there is a ruined house. Only the house walls remain. 300 meters before the mazar, there is a house with a newly built yard. On the north-eastern side, 100-150 meters distant there are barns. On the eastern side of the mazar, there is a small mountain river. The mazar is located 50 meters away from the road, on its left side.

### 11. Közönök Terek [A Poplar with a Hole]

Keng Kol village

No guardian

Type of mazar – tree. River Obo flows from the north to the south. Along its shore there were trees. At present, the area is only a small rise. Nearby, there is a livestock barn. On the banks, there are willows, poplars, sea-buckthorn, and dense thickets.

### Oral history

According to Jumadil Mamekov, once upon a time there was a large 50-meter-tall, plane tree here. Its girth was more than three men's arm spans. That tree had a hole in which a human being could fit. People saw a barefooted boy there. Then, after people passing by began to recite prayers from the Quran there and their dreams began to come true, it turned into a mazar. Later, in the 1960s, during the *kolhoz* (*q.v.*) period, it is said that people cut it

down for construction purposes. Since then, it has no longer been a mazar. At present, only the people that know it used to be mazar worship it.

- 12. Ak Bulak [White Spring]**  
Keng Kol Mountain, Terek *jai'loo*  
No guardian

Type of mazar – spring. It is a mazar situated on the mountain side of the mazar Sharkyratma. There is a small beach near the spring.

- 13. Chachykei'din Kara Tashy [Black Stone of Chachykei']**  
Keng Kol Mountain  
No guardian

Type of mazar – stone. This very stone is described in the “The Manas Encyclopedia” as “Chachykei'din chaty” as follows: “Woman’s footprint on the stone. On Keng Kol River, further south than Ochoi’, near the shallows of the river, there is a two-three tons heavy, red stone flat on the top. The water has been grinding the face of the stone for centuries, and despite the deep penetration of water into the stone, it looks as if a deep footprint of a barefooted woman has been imprinted into newly dried white clay”<sup>8</sup>

#### **Oral history**

According to Jumadil Mamekov, once upon a time Ai'chürök, daughter of Akun, landed there on a hummock. Having hidden her swan appearance, she came out to Chachykei', who was washing her hair: “Sister, I have come to you. I am the fiancée of Semetei'. Semetei' does not know about it. Our fathers have agreed to our marriage. Now *Chynkojo* (*q.v.*) and *Toltoi'* (*q.v.*) want to marry me and are forcing my father to agree to that”. Playing a trick, Chachykei' replied: “Semetei' will not marry anyone but me. Are you crazy? Get lost now; otherwise I will have you killed by the knights”. Then Ai'chürök said: “Sister, I have come to you and solicited your help. I meant to be your friend, not a rival – you have refused. I will be at Shabyr Köl as a swan and I will drive away Semetei's *Ak Shumkar* (*q.v.*). Willy-nilly, if not for me, for the sake of his *Ak Shumkar* Semetei' will follow me. No doubt, he will marry me. You shall be responsible for your own troubles!” and disappeared. Indeed, when Semetei' lost his *Ak Shumkar* he asked Külchoro (Semetei's knight) to find out why: “If someone knows, it is surely Chachykei'. Ask your sister-in-law. In the morning she told me three times ‘Do not you go anywhere tomorrow!’”. Külchoro came to his sister-in-law Chachykei' and explained the problem. She said: “How do I know about your falcon? I do not know anything”. Külchoro beat her. Having said “I will kill you”, he struck her in the ribs and broke one. “Hey, boy! I will tell you everything” she said and told him what had happened. Külchoro dismounted from the horse, begged his sister-in-law to forgive him, and told Semetei' the story of Ai'chürök as *süyünchü* (*q.v.*). Then Chachykei' leaned against the black stone and cried, fearing that she would break up with her husband. It is said that her tears dropped onto the stone and stayed on it as footprints up until now.

- 14. Ak Terek (Top Terek) [White Poplar (Grouped Poplar)]**  
Keng Kol Mountain, Terek *jai'loo*  
No guardian

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<sup>8</sup> The Manas Encyclopedia, Bishkek 1995, Vol.2, 332

Type of mazar - tree. The mazar Ak Terek is situated in Keng Kol valley, on the south-western side of Terek *jai'loo*. On the north-eastern side of the mazar Ak Terek, in 60-meter distance, there is a barn. If one turns south of the Keng Kol *jai'loo* road, the Keng Kol River flows there. Above that river, there is a small, hand-made bridge. Over the bridge, 400 meters to the south-east, between two high mountains, on a 3-meter eminence is the Ak Terek mazar. At the bottom of the Ak Terek mazar, there is a small waterfall. Thistle grass, petty grass, and yellow and red flowers grow there. Further on, the mountains grow into high peaks. One can see the grouped roots of poplars here and there. On the north-eastern side of the mazar, there is a big poplar. That tree is 60 meters away from the mazar. Along the way to the mazar, there is a signpost with the sign 'mazar'. Some sea-buckthorns grow near the mazar. The total area of the mazar is equivalent to the area of a house. There are many trees there. On the top of those two peaks there is a wide plateau. The water comes from several ditches.

#### 15. Tashrabat [Stone Wall]

Keng Kol Mountain  
No guardian

Type of mazar – an isolated large tree and spring at the bottom of the tree. It is surrounded by the mountains. There is a place surrounded by big stones for people to stay overnight. The spring water does not flow, but sinks into the earth.

#### 16. Besh Karakchy [Five Robbers]

Besh tash *jai'loo*  
No guardian

Type of mazar – *molo tash* (*q.v.*). There are 5 stone images and some of them have cement. They are located in five different places. Description of each one of them is as follows:

**1<sup>st</sup> stone:** This stone has a triangular form, and is whitish. There is a line that goes around with about 1-meter radius. Width – 70x50 cm; length – 155 cm.

**2<sup>nd</sup> stone:** This is 2 meters away from the 1<sup>st</sup> stone. Its width is 120 cm, length is 140 cm. The face resembles a smile. The edges are sharp. On the bottom is carved “1978 13 VII.” On the top of the stone, there is a Z-like inscription in red.

**3<sup>rd</sup> stone:** 1 meter away from 2<sup>nd</sup> stone. Its height is 120 cm, width is 40 cm. On the bottom is carved “K 1978”.

**4<sup>th</sup> stone:** It is 1.5 meters away from 3<sup>rd</sup> stone. Its height is 140 cm, and the face is 70x40 cm. It is brown. The face resembles a smile. On the bottom is carved “H M”.

**5<sup>th</sup> stone:** Its height is 138 cm, and its face is 50x40 cm. It is a black-brown color, with a face resembling a smile. On the northern side, at the bottom of the cement, is carved “P 1978”.

The mazar is located 38 kilometers from Kozuchak village, at the center of Besh Tash *jai'loo*. The pass over to Toktogul is called Terek. That pass is on the south-western side of the mazar 500 meters away. On the north-eastern and western sides, there are yurts and tents of shepherds in the summer. The mazar is on the right side of the road that goes up for 300-400 meters.

#### Oral history

According to a pilgrim *bübü*, 86-year-old Sonunbübü Sooronbaeva, the Besh Karakchy were the 5 sons of one person. They repudiated and left their parents, committed outrages, and lived and hid in Besh Tash. They were robbing passers-by. People could not go there on horse, or on foot. Then someone recognized them and told their father: “They are

your children, I recognized them”. Their parents said: “Let’s go there together and see if they will not recognize and rob us too?” and set out. On the way, at the place called Besh Karakchy, their children attacked them, and one of them was about to throw his father off the horse. Looking at them, his mother recognized a birthmark on the ear of one of her sons. His name was Mengdibek [a person with birthmark]. Then she screamed: “Hey, Mengdibek! Take your hands off! This is your father, you cursed boy!” The reckless boy took his hands off and began to run away. Saying, “His hands struck me hard. May the five of you turn into five robbers!” the father gave them cursing wish (*ters bata*). Our ancestors said that while the five of them were running away in different directions, they turned into five stones. When one looks at them from afar, they resemble five people in caps. I heard that when the mines were developed and roads built, they were all knocked down and that year the herdsmen of Kozuchak gathered them together and put them as they stand now.

**17. Koro Kai’yngdydagy Bulak [Spring at the Small Birch]**

Besh Tash *jai’loo*

No guardian

Type of mazar – spring. This mazar is located 17 kilometers away from Kozuchak village, on the left side of the road to Besh Tash *jai’loo*, to the east. On the right side of the spring flows Besh Tash River. 20 meters before the spring, there is a bridge made of 2 cement slabs. The spring is fenced around with stones. There are many birch trees around and many small springs nearby. On the north-eastern side of the mazar, 500-600 meters away, there is the house of a man called Shai’loo.

**18. Char Kai’yngdy [Birch Grove]**

Besh Tash *jai’loo*

No guardian

Type of mazar – birch trees. This mazar is located 10 kilometers away from Kozuchak village, on the left side of the street, at the base of the mountains. There, on the hill 2 meters above the road there is a group of birch trees. It looks like someone planted them altogether at once – the birches seem to be of the same age. It is very shady in the birch grove and ideal for taking a rest. Around it, there are small plants, namely: sea-buckthorn, sedge, syndow, dog-rose, etc. About 10 meters to the west right of the mazar flows the Besh Tash River. The right and left sides are surrounded by the mountains.

**19. Berdikojo uulu Jankoroz kümbözü [Mausoleum of Berdikojo’s son Jankoroz]**

Kozuchak village

No guardian

Type of mazar – mausoleum. It is located on the south-western side of the old cemetery of the village. Behind the mausoleum, there are other ruined mausoleums. It is surrounded with a chain. At the entrance of the mausoleum, there are 2 spears. Inside the mausoleum, there are two inscriptions “Berdikojo uulu Jankoroz” and at the base “(1834-1910)”. Along the sides, there are images of snow leopard. In front of the graves, there are small bushes. There is a one-room wooden house built especially for pilgrims. Near it is a stone-made hearth. Inside the house, there is firewood, a big teakettle, and salt. People come there to make sacrifices.

**20. Arashan Ata [Arashan Father]**

Besh Tash gorge

Type of mazar – springs. This mazar is located 5 kilometers away from Kozuchak village, at the beginning of Besh Tash gorge. There are three springs in the thick brush. The Besh Tash River flows along the west mountainside. The mazar is surrounded with logs. On the other side of the river, there is a one-room house built specially for pilgrims. There is a protected hearth for cooking and a bridge over the river. Above the bridge there are 7 iron piers. One has to bow to go under these 7 piers.

### Oral history

According to Bai'ysh Beknazarov, guardian of the mazar, it is said that Arashan Ata was a holy knight who, like Manas Ata, led people. He was buried there. But at present the mazar Arashan Ata is somewhat further than the original location, because trees around the mazar have been cut down. A bird flew out of those trees and landed on the site of the present Arashan Ata mazar. However, the former location of the mazar was not a place of burial. Frankly speaking, the trees around mazar should not be cut down or broken. It is said that some Russians cut down three trees there and eventually they moved away and disappeared.

The second opinion from one pilgrim says that once upon a time there was a prophet called Arashan. When he died, he was buried here. Then, passers-by began to recite the Quran there and it turned into a mazar. The third opinion provided very simple information. Once upon a time, a young infertile woman prayed for a child at this site and not long after gave birth. Since then, it has been a mazar. People affected by the evil eye (*közükkön*) that come to the mazar to worship fully recover. *Asa tayak* (q.v.) mostly originates in the mazar Arashan, because it is a mountainous area.

### 21. Kumurskanyn Uyugu [Anthill]

Besh Tash gorge  
No guardian

Type of mazar – anthill. It is located in the upper part of Arashan Ata mazar. It is surrounded by beautiful trees and shaded by the tree branches. The pilgrims scatter grain and bread crumbs there. Everyone who makes the pilgrimage to Arashan Ata also comes to this mazar. It is said that mainly infertile women come here.

### 22. Jankoroz Abanyn Ekinchi Mazar Bulagy [The Second Mazar Spring of Jankoroz Brother]

Kozuchak village  
No guardian

Type of mazar – spring. The mazar is located at the beginning of Kozuchak village, in the apple orchard. The distance from the village is 300 meters. On the right side of the mazar, Besh Tash River flows. There is sea-buckthorn around.

### Oral history

According to Toktosh Eje [*Eje* means Sister], a resident of Kozuchak village, this spring was dug by Jankoroz Aba [*Aba* means brother], and is therefore called Jankoroz Aba Spring. There is no precise information about the year in which the spring was dug. Jankoroz Aba was an extremely powerful holy man. When he gave benediction with the words “May you be delivered of a child” (*eteginnden jalgasyn*) in a little while women would get pregnant from the blessing. It is said that if he looked at a person he disliked, that person fell sick from

the evil eye, and at times even died. There is a supposition that Jankoroz Aba dug this spring as a remedy for people's illnesses.

Once, when he was passing by with his followers, one person said: "Oh, Hadji is coming, let's get his blessing, collect your sheep!" Out of that many sheep, he happened to select a sheep with one short ear. Then he put the captured animal in front of Hadji Ata and asked for a blessing. Hadji said: "My dear, may you become the father of a boy with one ear short next year about this time!" Next year, a child without one ear was born.

Once, when they were returning from some place, an old woman from the local poor came out, having poured *jarma* (*q.v.*) for them. However, the *jarma* had got somewhat rotten and my brother (Jankoroz) told one of his men to drink it, but that man would not, and my brother drank it, having said, "This is an obstacle" in order not to offend the old woman.

One person named his son after my brother and when my brother was passing by with his men, the mother of that child was scolding her boy and calling his name. She said: "May you die, so-and-so!" Then, my brother (getting mad because he heard his name being insulted) must have said to the mother "May your mouth be twisted!" and it happened as he had said.

Once upon a time, our brother had a green mausoleum – mausoleums are built for holy people to show respect and so that they would be called so-and-so's mausoleum. The mausoleum of my brother was made of green roofing iron, but due to famine people stole its mudbrick, went to Ketmen Töbö and sold it. Then, the holy man forgave him having said: "Let him make his living!" Otherwise, he would have destroyed everything. Then, the mausoleum was re-built of brick, a house was erected, livestock was slaughtered, and the people organized a fest.

### **23. Kyzyl Tashtagy Mazarluu Bulak [The Mazar Spring at the Red Stone]**

Sasyk Bulak village

No guardian

Type of mazar – springs. It is located 1 kilometer away from the village to the south-east, on the right side of Talas River, in the middle of Kyzyl Tash Mountain. The spring has 16 eyes (bubbling centers) – people mainly worship at seven of them. If a child with rickets is washed in the spring water, even though it may be cold outside, the child does not get cold and its body steams.

#### **Oral history**

According to *bübü* Kalia Atakeldieva, a pilgrim: It is unknown when and by whom the mazar was discovered - it has been there since long ago. Since the springs are located near Kyzyl Tash Mountain, it was called the mazar spring at Kyzyl Tash. Once upon a time, our ancestors extracted salt on the top of Kyzyl Tash Mountain. White salt was extracted there. Only one person knew where the salt deposit was, so after that person died, nobody else knew the location of the deposit and no more salt was extracted. There is a supposition that the salt comes down and mixes with the spring water, therefore the spring water must be good for suffocating conditions such as bronchial disease.

### **24. Kydyraly Ata [Kydyraly Father]**

Sasyk Bulak village

No guardian

Type of mazar – spring and mausoleum. It is located 1.5 kilometers away from Sasyk Bulak village to the north-east, on the left side of Bala Chychkan River and on the right side of the

canal. Kydyraly Ata discovered the spring and looked after it, and the mazar was named after him. Then, 9 years ago, Toi'chu, a young resident of this village, cut down trees near the mazar and brought the wood home. After having collected firewood, at dawn his 5-month-old baby died and Toi'chu fell sick himself. "All these are the curse of the mazar – the trees from that area should not have been cut down, nothing should have been taken away from the mazar" – the local people said. They sacrificed a cow at the mazar and begged its pardon, and built a mausoleum to Kydyraly Ata near this isolated tree and spring.

### Oral history

According to 48-year-old Nurlan, a pilgrim: Once upon a time, a man named Kydyraly lived here and looked after the spring. He was a holy man. After his death, his daughter took care of it. As that spring appeared during the time of Kydyraly Ata, the mazar was named after him.

### 25. Mai'kadam Kalpa Mechiti [The Mosque of Kalpa (q.v.) Mai'kadam]

Kara Oi' village

No guardian

Type of mazar – ruins of a mosque. The mazar is located 300 meters away from the village, at the intersection of Chong Chychkan River and Üch Koshoi' River. Sown land surrounds it. The mosque has decayed and at present there are only ruins left. Near the mazar, there is a spring where Mai'kadam Kalpa took made ablution (*daarat*). The local black mud is good for leg-aches. Since this site is very powerful, once upon a time up to 50-60 livestock were sacrificed per day, people were coming from outside to make pilgrimages and sacrifices here, and since then the human flow did not stop.

### Oral history

Mai'kadam Kalpa Ata was a man from Manas rayon [administrative territorial division]. He moved here as a result of persecution. He was a clairvoyant prophet (*közü achyk oluya*) and very powerful Hadji. This mosque was built here 100 years ago by Mai'kadam Kalpa and later turned into a powerful mazar. In 1904, that man went to Hadj and died in Medina. His power was in that he could see people's illnesses and would whip them to cure their illnesses. It is said that after he passed, having whipped them, sick people would fully recover from their illnesses. He spent most of his time at the mosque. There is a spring near the mosque where Mai'kadam Kalpa Ata made ablutions. Aware of his power and holiness, most people respected him.

He built up a relationship with *bolush* (q.v.) Ai'daraaly and lived there. Children of Ai'daraaly grew up weak and bad. Our Kalpa Ata said: "If you marry a girl whose urine pours down vertically, you will have good children". Ai'daraaly and his men set out to look for such a girl. In Kazakhstan, he met a girl that was the only child in a poor household and married her. He paid a high bridewealth (*kalyng*). His wife delivered a boy. Kalpa called them to give blessing (*bata*). Ai'daraaly brought the best young of camel in order to get.

"May wealth never leave your head!

May no one overtake you!

May God bless your son!"

said Kalpa and ordered the boys nearby, "slaughter the young camel and share its meat". Then, Ai'daraaly said: "I brought the camel to you to ride. Had I known you would do that, I would have brought you a worse one". Kalpa Ata replied: "Then, it will be of use to me

in the other world. When you return home, do not look back!” He agreed, but on the way thought “Why did he say this? Why should not I look back?” and he did look back. He saw two tigers – many-colored and black – playing and following them. It turned out that the two tigers would have become two sons, but when he looked back, one of them turned back and left. The name of his son was Üsön, he was a *bolush* in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Later, on his deathbed, Kalpa said: “If you guard my grave well for 3 days, it will be useful both for livestock and people”. The boy on guard fell asleep at the dawn of the third day. When he opened up the grave in the morning, there was only the shroud left – an eye-of-a-needle-size hole was in the grave. When, having heard about Kalpa’s death, people were coming for praying, Booterek Ata said: “Look, I saw Kalpa after the morning prayer. He was going to the west on a white camel”. Kalpa Ata let him see himself. The gathered *moldo* had an unmarked black sheep slaughtered and buried in the Kalpa’s place. Just as Kalpa Ata said, if sick livestock eat grass from the area surrounding this site, they quickly recover.

One day, *bolush* Ai’daraaly decided to move to the great Echkilüü Mountains. He gathered all people. During that time, the waters of Talas River rose and people could not cross it. Then Ai’daraaly called Kalpa and told him: “Well, now protect the people, show your knowledge, and display your *jai’chylyk* (*q.v.*). Kalpa Ata said: “All right, you could have saved yourself the trouble of asking, but once you have said so much. I will get your people across the river – collect all your people. When I say ‘go’, follow one another straight without looking back”. So, Kalpa Ata sat down covering his face with *körmöch* (*q.v.*). At that moment, the current divided with its western part flowing west and eastern part flowing east, leaving a land lane in the middle. The people all crossed the river with all their things and livestock. A young woman was walking at the end. She only had a single ox. Worried about whether her only livestock had crossed the river following her, she looked back and at that second she was carried away by the water.

According to Keseksary Isakov, a resident of Kara Oi’ village of Talas rayon, Mai’kadam Kalpa was his ancestor: “Since he was a religious person, all his life he had been persecuted. He was one of the first men who built a mosque in the Talas valley. The mosque was constructed 100 years ago. Three holy men are buried in the mosque. Many people were coming to his mosque – the religious heart of Talas was there. The Talas *oluya* (*q.v.*) and *pir* (*q.v.*) were coming here. Mai’kadam Kalpa went to Mecca together with famous *Shabdan Baatyr* (*q.v.*). He did not return from that holy place. Respect to his personality grew many times over after his death. People said “people that die there go straight to paradise – pure people favored by God and holy people die there”. He was able to cure people regardless of their diseases. It is said that he always wore a long robe and if only a collar or the edge of the robe touched a passer-by, that person would recover.

His mosque consisted of three rooms. After he saw people, he would not leave the mosque and go out for 40 days because he was refilling with energy. In order to build the mosque, he invited experts from Tashkent. It is amazing that although the mosque is 100 years old, at present one of its walls and ruins remained. Saving the wood from the mosque from being trampled by people, my father brought it home and built a recess for prayers. We still have that wood – amazingly, it is still unrotten and well-preserved. This man did not err in what he said. He was a holy man capable of foreseeing future events. In his mosque, people not only from Talas, but also from other regions were coming to worship. Much can be said about Mai’kadam Kalpa – to mention one thing, *Shabdan Baatyr* met two *oluya* in his life. It is said that Mai’kadam Kalpa was one of them. His prophetic power was strong”.

According to 63-year-old Kalpa Isakova: “this mazar possesses qualities that remedy blindness and infertility, leg-aches, mental illnesses and colds”.

## 26. Ömürdün Bulagy [Spring of Life]

Kara Oi' village  
No guardian

Type of mazar – spring. It is located 400-500 meters away from the village, surrounded by sown land.

### **Oral history**

Information from a pilgrim: This mazar appeared about 100 years ago. The reason that it is called the spring of life is because a man called Ömür [Life] built a mill and lived there.

### **27. Bala Mazar (Tash Mazar) [Child mazar or (Stone Mazar)]**

Kalba village  
No guardian

Type of mazar – spring. It is located 3-4 kilometers away at the foot of the peak, on the left side of Kalba River. It is surrounded by poplar trees. The primary special feature is that it is good for childless women, babies that have caught colds, and those suffering from misfortune.

### **28. Altybai' Bulak [Spring of Altybai']**

Talas town  
No guardian

Type of mazar – spring. It is located on the swamp called “Altybai' swamp”. It is a hilly area and there is a small ditch nearby. This mazar was created by nature. Due to its convenient location, many people visit it.

### **Oral history**

According to 67-year-old Bübüsara and her 17-year-old son Mirbek: Long ago, six rich men who were well-known locally lived in this swamp. These six *bai* (*q.v.*) were brothers. On every holiday, they organized horse races with big prizes. For this reason, this spring is called the mazar Altybai' Spring. It is also said, that Ai'chürök Apa landed at this mazar.

### **29. Ilham Bulak [Spring of Inspiration]**

Talas Town  
No guardian

Type of mazar – spring. The spring is surrounded with sea-buckthorn. There is a small ditch nearby.

Nazgul Asanakunova, a researcher with Aigine and student of Talas University, wrote down the following poem called “Ilham Bulak” from 60-year-old Jeenbü Apa who was worshipping at this mazar:

At the swamp of Altybai' Aba,  
There is a streamy spring.  
My children and grandchildren,  
Listen now – I am going to tell a lot.

To the unaware, that spring  
Flows slowly.

But I see the sign given to me,  
By the candles smiling in the spring.

That streamy spring,  
Is inviting me saying "Come over!"  
Before I get old,  
It speeds up to take the pen.

God has come to help,  
With pleasure, I am stretching my arms.  
"Show me the right way" I said,  
Having begged him with a plea.

Dressed in white,  
On the top of the gold thrown.  
*Umai Ene (q.v.)* is sitting,  
I cannot approach her.

I bow low,  
Showing my submission.  
Whatever you tell me  
I am keen on fulfilling it fast.

If I find a pure source,  
It smells totally different.  
I cannot turn away and leave  
Until I drink enough spring water.

When I am burning with thirst,  
I turn to the spring.  
It is ready like the white *sabaa (q.v.)*  
It meets on my way,  
It is my inspiration and my energy...

- 30. Kumurska Uyugu [Anthill]**  
Kyrk Kazyk village  
No guardian

Type of mazar – anthill. It is surrounded by Kyrk Kazyk forest, trees are all around, but the surrounding area is very unpleasant.

- 31. Zulpukor [Arab. *zulfukar* – Strong]**  
Aral village  
Guardian - Altyn Ibraimova

Type of mazar – mausoleum. The mazar is located on the south-western side of the village. On the southern side of the mausoleum is the cemetery of Aral village. One hundred meters to the west is the house of the guardian. To the north and east there are sown fields. The mausoleum is very aged. It has doors on 4 sides. The walls have become ruins.

Zulpukor Mausoleum is an architectural monument. Along the Talas-Suusamyr road, on the bank of Kara Kol River, it is located 1.5 kilometers away from Aral village of Talas rayon, near the cemetery, on a small eminence. According to a folk legend, it was built in the memory of the battle, during which the double-edged sword of Manas Baatyr called Zulpukor broke down. The area of the monument outside is 6.75x6.5 meters, and inside is 4.24x4.42 meters. The mausoleum is built with square fired bricks. The decorations have not been preserved and the front and interior ornaments dimmed. Based on the style of the signs, the time of the monument construction seems to have been between the 12<sup>th</sup> and the early 14<sup>th</sup> century. It is an interesting example of a medieval memorial construction<sup>9</sup>.

### **Oral history**

According to regular pilgrims of Zulpukor and people coming here to be cured, once upon a time, a splinter of the sword of Aziret Ali [Prophet Ali] fell down at this site. At that time he cried: “The childless shall have children here, the sick shall get well”. The splinter of the sword was forked.

One of the pilgrims, Zulpukor Sultanmuratov, described his grandfather as a knowledgeable man, literate in Arabic, who named his grandson Zulpukor after having read a book. This word is pronounced differently in Arabic and has two meanings. He links a story from one of the Washington Irving’s books directly to the name Zulpukor:

After the battle with his relatives, Prophet Muhammed fled to Medina... Close relatives of Muhammed were from the Kureishi tribe. In the south of the Arabian Peninsula, there is Israel, in the north Syria, Palestine, and then Medina in the middle. On the way, the head of the Augustian City would not let the caravans go through, and start a fight. Muhammed won in the short battle. Under their customs, after victory in the battle, the arms, ammunition and so on had to be put altogether in the center and divided. As part of the division, Prophet Muhammed got a sword. Prophet Muhammed always took it with him. Then, on his deathbed, since his three sons had died in childhood and he would not have other sons, he handed down the sword to Aziret Ali, husband of his youngest daughter Fatima. He and Aziret Ali were relatives through their fathers anyway. Then, it is said here that it is the place where the sword of Aziret Ali fell down. In fact, it is a holy heritage of Prophet Muhammed. It is said that the splinter of the sword fell here in the 7-8<sup>th</sup> centuries CE, when the Chinese were ousted and the religion of Islam was spreading – it is then that the sword broke. All these accounts are found not only in the books, but also in the people’s Oral history<sup>10</sup>.

The scientist Bakyt E. Amanbaeva repeatedly stated that the monument dates back to the 10-11<sup>th</sup> centuries, which was proved by another scientist Svetlana Y. Peregudova based on its style of construction and decoration. However, when it got the issue of the time when the monument was constructed, she said that in her opinion and in the opinion of her other colleagues, it is actually rather later than the time mentioned earlier. It is built of the bricks from the destroyed constructions of the Karakhanid epoch. Based on the three types of bricks there and on the evidence that upon those bricks there are constructions that do not belong to the Karakhanid period<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> The Manas Encyclopedia, Bishkek 1995, Vol.1, 236

<sup>10</sup> Washington Irving. *Life of Muhammed*. – M.: SP “Interbook”. The Charitable Fund of the USSR “World and man”, 1990. pp. 91-101.

<sup>11</sup> Bakyt E. Amanbaeva. *The Mausoleums of Talas valley*. – Based on information provided by the scientist to “Aigine”.

Also, our informant Turgunbek Nurmanbetov, a 77-year-old man, expressed an opinion that Zulpukor was a daughter of a wealthy man. When they were on a nomadic migration, she died here.

It is unknown who built it. The locals say that its bricks came from another place. The bricks in Manas Mausoleum and Zulpukor Mausoleum are alike.

Toktosh Ümötalieva, who will soon celebrate her 40 years on the path of *bübüchülük* (*q.v.*), calls Zulpukor “four doors”. According to her words, Zulpukor was a sword of the great man Satybaldy. It is said that during a fight, Satybaldy was slashing with a great *kojo* (*q.v.*) and a tip of his sword fell down here. But this is not the case. At that moment, that man screamed and fell down and when he was straining his every nerve, his soul stayed here and his blood spilled here. Then this place became a mazar. He became a martyr, fallen for the religion of Islam (*Shei’it*). That man was as pure as milk.

According to another pilgrim, Kanatai’ Ümötalieva, the Zulpukor mazar is passed down from her great ancestors. “Sagyndyk, one of our great ancestors-in-law, is buried here. He sowed land on this site and when he was returning from some place, he must have had a vision. While he kept vigil through the night with the intention to dig for water, the Kuschu tribe was astonished: ‘A beast from the Kolpoch tribe has come and says he is going to dig for water here. How is he going to do it, if it is the driest of the dry plains?’ So, when he was keeping vigil, closer to dawn he heard the sound of water and woke up the people. He showed them the place where dig the beginning of a ditch and had them dig, and a spring started there. Then, he slaughtered his saddle-horse and held a *tülöö* (*q.v.*) for the people. All the Kuschus kneeled down and prayed. My son’s name is also Zulpukor. As I cannot call my father-in-law’s name, I call him Akubai’ because of *tergöö* (*q.v.*)”

### **32. Jalgyz Tal [Single or Isolated Tree]**

Üch Emchek village

No guardian

Type of mazar – tree. The mazar is located on the south-western side of the village, 3 kilometers away, in the middle of the fifth mountain. At the bottom of the spring there is a big old tree. Its roots come out to the surface.

The spring has been there since for a long time. One man from Communism village had planted that tree. It is said that thereafter the mazar has been called Jalgyz Tal.

#### **Oral history:**

Ardak Boobekova, 47-year-old pilgrim, provided the following information about the history of Jalgyz Tal: “A man from Communism village is said to have planted this isolated tree. That site had previously been a spring. Then, that man planted it and people went to worship there – basically, they are the ones who developed this mazar”.

### **33. Sandyk (also known as Mazar Bulak) [Chest Mazar]**

Taldy Bular village

No guardian

Type of mazar – spring. The mazar is located on the very top of the mountain. The front side of the mountain is snow white. One climbs the mountain along the stream. Since the mountain is high, it is not possible to measure its height. The mazar is surrounded by juniper and other plants. The stream begins in the hole in the middle of big rocks. The water in the hole does not lessen no matter how much water is taken out, nor does it overflow. Its level is the same in summer and wintertime; in the winter, it does not freeze. The water does not flow here from

anywhere – it appears here on its own. At the base of the rock with the water, there is a bush of juniper full of ribbons that are tied to the branches. There is also a mug for drinking water tied to the bush. Around the spring, there are stones with people's names written on them. As the water is not purified, it is somewhat muddy.

Sandyk is the name of the mountain, and refers to it being shaped like a box or chest. The name of the mazar is Mazar Bulak. However, the mazar is also called by the name of the mountain. The top of the mountain is wide. The mazar mountainside is sheer. On the right side of the spring, 10 meters away, there is a withered juniper. The juniper at the bottom of the spring is not very tall – 2.5 meters.

There are many marmot holes around the spring. The depth of the spring is close to 0.5 meters.

**34. Altyn Bulak [Gold Spring]**

Kara Oi' village  
No guardian

Type of mazar - spring on the rock. 1 kilometer to the north of Kara Oi' village, there is a rock called Kyzyl Tash. It is 20 meters high and looks red. Water slowly comes out at its base. It is surrounded by rushes, cheatgrass, wormwood, and willow.

**35. Shumkar Uya [Aerie]**

Taldy Bulak village  
No guardian

Type of mazar – rock. It is located 5 kilometers north of Taldy Bulak village. The height of the rock is 150 meters; its form is a quadrangle. The front of the rock is bluish and patterned. Since it is situated at a high altitude, there are no any plants in its surrounding.

**36. Mazarluu Tal [Mazar Tree]**

Köpürö Bazar village  
No guardian

Type of mazar – tree. It is located 1 kilometer to the north-east of Köpürö Bazar village. The pussy-willow tree is 3-4 meters tall and covers the area of 200-300 m<sup>2</sup>.

The decorative surroundings include: mountains on the eastern, northern, and western sides, and a birch tree on the southern side.

**37. Bakai' Tash [Bakai' Stone]**

Taldy Bulak village  
No guardian

Type of mazar – spring. It is located 6 kilometers to the north-east of the village. The spring covers an area of 100 m<sup>2</sup>; its depth is half a meter. It is surrounded by high hills mountains to the north, south and west sides.

*Mazars of Manas Region*

**38. Kalpa Ata [Kalpa Father]**

Karacha village

## No guardian

Type of mazar- hawthorn with a rock and spring. In Karacha village, there is only one big street. The mazar is located 50 meters away from the house of a man named Kanai' who lives at the beginning of the street. The distance from the mazar to the spring is 30 meters. Behind the mazar, there is a river and hill, and farther up are mountains. The mazar is located near a rock that rises to a peak, and there is a hawthorn there. 10-20 meters away from it, two springs are situated close together. The ditch and village houses are very close to the mazar. Further on, there is a cemetery in which all the spaces have been used, and at present it is no longer used for burial. The mazar covers approximately 1500-2000 square meters. When the person living next to it set up a kitchen-garden and fenced it the springs were included within his homestead. One of them is full of water, while the other one is less full. The top of the peak is rather wide, surrounded and somewhat elevated by the rocks. There is a legend that Quran was buried there.

### Oral history

According to 58-year-old Ai'chürök Eje, a regular pilgrim to this mazar, there were many *kalpa* in Talas valley. "In Vodnyi' village, there are four *kalpas* – I know them all. Itii'bas, Sarpash, Choko and Bechel were four brothers. All four of them were famous *oluya*, and all four of them originated from the tribe Alakchy. There was Mai'kadam Kalpa. In Kara Oi' village of Talas rayon, a mosque was named after Mai'kadam. Maikadam went to Mecca for Hadj with *oluya* Chong [Big] Shabdan (Shabdan Baatyr). When he was heading off to Mecca, he was penniless and he left without a loaf of bread. When asked why he chose to travel in this way, he replied "I have left empty-handed because I hope to see the power of God. If it is true that the God exists and manages 18000 universes (the Earth and all other God's creatures), he will provide me with bread along the way. I am not taking anything with me".

His 5 sons filled saddle-bags (*kurjun*) with food, took money and followed their father. Mai'kadam told his children: "Hey, you are being stupid! God exists, God will provide for me, and if God is saying he will give me what I need, why should I take your stuff? There is no need for that, I am not going to take it!" However, his 5 sons still followed him starting from Kara Oi'. Mai'kadam continued to tell them: "Go away! After traveling towards the direction of Mecca (*kybyla*), I will not look back. Go away!" So, his children would return one by one saying their father would not accept what they had brought. When his last son reached the beginning of Ak Döbö village, Mai'kadam got into a temper and told him: "Hey, stupid, go home! All right, give me your bundle," and stretched his arm without looking back. After he took the bundle, his son returned.

That year, in 1912, there were many Russian, Turkish and other minority orphans in Ak Döbö village. On the way, orphans asked him: "Ata, please, give us some bread!" He opened up the bundle and gave away all the money that was in it.

Later, at the Jambyl railway station, he met Chong Shabdan. Then, both of them took the train, and the Kazakh and Kyrgyz happened to be in one car. When they asked one another where each one was going, they found out that all of them were going on the Hadj. When they asked Mai'kadam where he was going, he replied he was likewise making the Hadj. When they asked him about his luggage, he replied that he was traveling without any. Saying to Mai'kadam, "You do not have any food, clothes or money. How are you going to go? You do not have even a handful of bran. Come on, it is a shame! I am a khan. If I do not give you anything, I will be ashamed," Chong Shabdan forcefully handed him a packet of money.

Later, when the train stopped, Mai'kadam went out and again gave the money to orphans. When Chong Shabdan saw that, he thought Mai'kadam was mentally retarded or

crazy. Later, when they got to the Tashkent railway station, Mai'kadam met him on the platform and welcomed him as if he had arrived there one day earlier. Chong Shabdan could not believe it. On the way to Mecca, they met and greeted each other 99 times. When they went to the Kaaba in Mecca, Mai'kadam arrived very fresh and handsome, as if he had not undergone the burden of long travel – he reached the place looking even better than before. When he met them, Chong Shabdan and the company had been through 3 months of difficult travel. While they had traveled by ship, and ridden camels in the desert, Mai'kadam looked as if he had arrived there in a single day.

Chong Shabdan kneeled down in front of Mai'kadam and kissed his feet. When the Hadj was over and people were returning from the pilgrimage, Mai'kadam told them: “Do not be in a hurry! Bury me here. I am staying here – it is my destiny. Wait 3 days!” For 3 days they circled around the Kaaba Stone. While walking around it, Mai'kadam stumbled upon a stone and fell down. As there were many people there, he was trampled under feet. Chong Shabdan washed, shrouded and buried him.

In advance, Mai'kadam had said to Chong Shabdan: “I have 5 sons – tell them about my death. One of my 5 sons is Junushaaly Kalpa – bond with him and make friends forever (*akyret dos bol*)”. In accordance with this request, Shabdan came to Junushaaly, bonded with him and made friends forever.

Later, Chong Shabdan built a mosque for his people. Once after Friday prayer (*juma namaz*) he was riding with about 15 of his men. He saw a man waving his hands near some deserted ruins and sent one of his young boys there. When that boy approached him, the man asked: “Is Chong Shabdan around?” When the boy answered positively, the man asked him to call him. The boy told Shabdan that the man was calling him. When Chong Shabdan rode up there, he saw Mai'kadam. Buried in the far away land, he was alive here. He said: “We will not talk long. Find me white camel calf (*ak tai'lak*). I have come for it. It must be snow white, with no black spot whatsoever”. Unquestioning, Chong Shabdan said he would find one.

After spending some time searching for the white camel calf all over and found one, he paid gold, silver and 100 camels, cows, and horses in exchange. He brought the camel to the ruins. Mai'kadam was still sitting in the very same position. When he gave the camel's reins to Mai'kadam he respected his promise not to talk. Mai'kadam took the rein and disappeared.

From then on, until his death, Chong Shabdan always called to “Mai'kadam Ata” whenever he had any troubles, because when he did so, the troubles were resolved. Mai'kadam became a spiritual patron of Chong Shabdan. When he was asked about his patron, he replied “Mai'kadam”. Every Muslim needs a patron. For example, Mai'kadam is the patron of the Kuschu tribesmen. Junushaaly, a son of Mai'kadam, was a *kalpa*. Having been prepared by his father, he made eternal friends with Chong Shabdan. They dedicated prayers, rosary (*tespe*) and Quranic prayers to each other. They did not give and take livestock from each other, because friends forever do not keep livestock.

### **39. Jambash Bulak [Jambash Spring]**

Pokrovka village

No guardian

Type of mazar – spring. It is located 3 kilometers to the west of the village. The distance to Talas is approximately 55 kilometers. It is situated in a large clearing in a swamp. It is a small spring surrounded by sea-buckthorn and low trees. The nearby trees are full of ribbons tied to the branches. It borders Jasölkön village of Kazakhstan. According to some information, this area became a mazar after *oluya* Jambash Ata was buried here.

**40. Ak Terek [White Poplar]**

Ak Tash village

No guardian

Type of mazar – tree. The mazar Ak Terek is located in the gorge, 3.5 kilometers to the south of Ak Tash village. On one side of the gorge there is a high rock, on the other side there is a high mountain. The mazar is situated on the prominence between the rock and the mountain, 15 meters above the ground. 20 meters away from the mazar, there is a poplar tree. Once can hear the sound of flowing water, but cannot see where it is flowing. The mazar Ak Terek is surrounded with wire-net. 15 big and small white and black poplar trees grow in the area around the mazar. There are two springs inside the mazar – they flow out and sink into the earth. The sea-buckthorns around the springs are full of ribbons tied to the branches.

**41. Bulak [Spring]**

Kengesh village

No guardian

Type of mazar – spring. The mazar is located 400 meters away from Kengesh village near the river. There are three springs next to the river. Their waters combine and flow into the river. On the right side of the mazar Bulak, there is a grave. On the left side, there is pasturage and a sown area. Trees and sea-buckthorn grow along the stream banks.

According to Ai'man Eje, local resident, there was once an old woman called Ai'sha Apa. She has moved in the direction of Jambyl and now lives there. She used to worship there and clean the spring.

**42. Tamchy Bulak [Dropping Spring]**

Chong Kapka village

No guardian

Type of mazar – spring. The mazar Tamchy Bulak is located 35 meters away from the Kirov Reservoir. The Talas-Jambyl road is right above it – the road was built across the mountainside. Above the mazar, there is a small rock, about 10 meters high – the water drips from the rock. In order to collect the dripping water, a tube was installed there. A motor road separates the spring the river. Near the spring, there is a cemented table intended especially for worshippers. In front of the spring, there are roses, 2 birch trees, and 31 poplar trees.

**43. Sherikbai' Atanyn Mazary [The Mazar of Sherikbai' Father]**

Mai' village

No guardian

Type of mazar – big spring. The mazar is located at the border of Mai' village, between Dui'shebaev and Choi'bekov streets, in the garden of a house. The distance from the house to the mazar is 500 meters. The spring has a round form and covers 100 m<sup>2</sup>. The depth of the spring is half a meter. The main special feature of the spring is in that it seethes and bubbles. Its western side is full of rushes, the southern side has many trees, to the north are houses, and the eastern side is covered with sedge. The spring is surrounded by marsh grass.

**44. Jeti Bulak [Seven Springs]**

Mai' village

No guardian

Type of mazar – spring. It is located 300 meters to the north-west of Mai' village, between Jolonov and Akjabaev streets, in the kitchen-garden of a house. Seven natural springs are situated far from one another. The depth of one of the eyes of the spring is 1 meter. The total covered area is 200 m<sup>2</sup>. The surroundings are as follows: houses to the west and east, trees to the north and rushes grow to the south.

**45. Dolono [Hawthorn]**

Manas village

No guardian

Type of mazar – spring and hawthorn. It is located at the foot of the Kyzyl Adyr Mountain, which is to the south of Manas village. The distance from the village to the mazar is 1 kilometer. The hawthorn bush is 80 cm tall. The covered area is 50 m<sup>2</sup>. The bark of hawthorn bush is yellowish. The southern side of the rock is covered with algae-like grass and wormwood; the northern side is covered with poplar trees, white and yellow flowers, and wormwood; the western side is full of rushes; and on the eastern side, there is Kyzyl Adyr Mountain. There too, there is a spring, whose water is used by people from two villages. A tube is installed in the spring.

**46. Teke Tash [Billy-goat Stone]**

Aral village

No guardian

Type of mazar – stone. It is located on the north-western side of Aral village, between the river called Jylkychy Bet and Tuyuk. The distance from the village to the mazar is 5 kilometers. The special feature of the mazar is the stone surface is covered by ancient petroglyphic carvings. The stone is grey, cone-shaped, and 50 cm tall.

**47. Chech Döbö [Barn Hill]**

Chech Döbö village

No guardian

Type of mazar – hill. It is located 3-4 kilometers away to the north of Chech Döbö. The hill has a round shape with the total area of 500 m<sup>2</sup>. It is surrounded with black poplars and fenced round with wire-net.

**48. Khan Ordo [Court of the Khan]**

Aral village

No guardian

Type of mazar – a broad sown area. It is located 300 meters away to the north of Aral village. Its area is 1 hectare. It is surrounded by sedge. Passers-by recite the Quran here. Other than these incidental visitors, people have stopped making pilgrimages to it

In interviews with local people, they provided only superficial information about the history of the mazar: “This site was once the court of a khan, but which khan or when it happened we do not know”.

**49. Kichi Kai'yngdy [Small Birch Grove]**

Aral village  
No guardian

Type of mazar – spring. It is located 200 meters away to the north-east of Aral village. It is surrounded by ravines and situated near the mazar Khan Ordo. Its special feature is that water from the spring near the Khan Ordo mazar flows to Kichi Kai'yngdy.

**50. Kochkor Bashat [Ram Small Spring]**

Sary Bulak village  
No guardian

Type of mazar – spring coming out from the base of a rock. It is located 3.15 kilometers to the north of the village. There are two sea-buckthorns near it – one of them covers the spring. The sea-buckthorn is full of ribbons tied to the branches. A teakettle and a bowl are also tied here.

It is surrounded by the valley and mountain on the north, valley and village on the south, mountains on the west, and Sary Choku Mountain on the east. The mazar is situated in a valley. A stream flows near it and a road goes by. A car can drive as close as 3 kilometers to the mazar. It is called Kochkor Bashat because visitors are said to see a ram there.

**51. Babyr [A person's name]**

Kai'yngdy village  
No guardian

Type of mazar – mausoleum. It is 3-3.5 meters tall and made of mudbrick or adobe. It is located 150 meters to the west of Kai'yngdy village. The mazar Akchal is near it. The surroundings include the village on the east; a barn and bridge on the west; and a river on the north. On one side of Kai'yngdy River, there is a swamp; on the other side there is a grave.

There was a respected man who governed the village. His name was Babyr Ata. The time when the mausoleum erected in his memory was built is unknown.

**52. Ak Chal [White Old Man]**

Kai'yngdy village  
No guardian

Type of mazar – mausoleum. It is quadrangular with a round roof, 3-4 meters tall, made of mudbrick. The area of the mazar is 200 m<sup>2</sup>. There are other mausoleums near the cemetery, but no surroundings around it. It is located 150 meters away to the east of Kai'yngdy village. The village is to its west, to the east there is a barn, to the north plains and pasturage, and to the south a river.

There is information that Akchal was a *bii'* (*q.v.*) who governed the villagers. It is unknown when the mausoleum was built and when it began to be the goal of pilgrimages. There is a bus stop named after this man in the village.

**53. Chatbaz [A person's name]**

Kai'yngdy village  
No guardian

Type of mazar – mausoleum. It is situated on a 30-meter high eminence. The mausoleum is made of mudbrick. There are other mausoleums nearby. To its south is the road; to the north

and west the village and plains. The mazar is located 300 meters away to the east of the village. It is unknown when it was built.

**54. Kyzyl Choku [Red Peak]**

Nyldy village

No guardian

Type of mazar – mountain. It is located 700 meters away to the west of Nyldy village. In the distance, it is surrounded by mountains. One can see a red rock that looks like a peak. Not all its sides are red. The side looking at the village is red, the other side is white. Nearby, there is a path. In its lower part, in the ravine, there were two springs. They were covered under stones following a mudflow. The remaining five springs are located further away near the path, at the same level. In general, the springs are situated far from one another. The eyes of the springs are blocked and turning into swamps. Following along the path, above the springs there is a watermill. It is still functioning at present. The area in front of the springs is wide. The Red Peak and the springs are located far away from each other. Its special feature is in that the peak stands in isolation.

**55. Tash Döbö [Stone Hill]**

Nyldy village

No guardian

Type of mazar – rock and spring. The spring is located 700 meters away to the north of Nyldy village, in the ravine under the hill standing in isolation. It is approximately 12 kilometers away from Talas. Its special feature is a big hill with a very level top. On the top, there is a cemetery in which only infants and children are buried. The surroundings are as follows: to the right, there is a wide plain, hill and mountains; in front of it – kitchen-gardens and village; and at the bottom – a ravine.

**56. Ui' Mazary [House Mazar]**

Nyldy village

No guardian

Type of mazar – yellow mudbrick on a low eminence. It is located in Nyldy village, behind the house of the villager Umakeeva. Young trees were planted around it. Nearby, there is a bigger tree. It is situated close to the street. There is a small ditch near it. The covered area is 200-300 m<sup>2</sup>.

**57. Chechek Bulak [Smallpox Spring]**

Karacha village

No guardian

Type of mazar – stream and tree. However, the stream does not bubble like most springs, but oozes out from under the great stones. It is located 1 kilometer to the north of Karacha village, in the valley. The distance to Talas is approximately 44.4 kilometers. To the north, there is a valley full of bushes. To the east, there is an eminence, plain, and cemetery and one can see the village. To the west, not far away there is a bush.

**58. Ak Terek [White Poplar]**

Karacha village

No guardian

Type of mazar – big white poplar tree. It is located 1.5 kilometers to the north of Karacha village. Is about 42 kilometers away from Talas. The mazar is located on a hill 11 kilometers above the valley. The tree is very tall and its girth is about three men's arm spans. The mazar covers an area of 5 hectares and the tree is considered to be its center. On the way to the mazar, there is a big mountain stone – people with heart diseases go there. There are several similar sites. There is a small tree near Ak Terek and below, at the river, there are bushes; on the left side, there is a small marsh.

**59. Karacha Khan kzy Akbermettin Ordo Mazary [The Mazar Court of Akbermet, Daughter of Karacha Khan]**

Karacha village

No guardian

Type of mazar – high hill. It is located on the main street of the village, on a rise. Below, 30 meters away along the river are houses. It is a very big hill – its top is covered by very green grass. It resembles a courtyard. The young trees in front of it were planted by people. Its special feature is in that it is very high.

**60. Karool Choku [Guard Peak]**

Aral village

No guardian

This mazar is located at a very high altitude. It is located on a hill north of the village. The top of the hill is wide and the mazar is surrounded by rocks. Its special feature is that the Manas Complex in the Talas region can be seen from this mazar.

**61. Yrsaaly [A person's name]**

Karacha village

No guardian

Type of mazar – spring. It is located 1.5 kilometers away to the north of the village, in the valley. Just before it, there are barns – it is said that *azizs* (*q.v.*) inhabit this area. To the north, there is a valley, mountain, and hills; on the south – a valley, barns, and village; on the east – hills and valleys; and on the west – a valley and hills. Not many people come to this mazar, because most people do not know about it. In the old days, people did visit it, but nowadays they visit less. It is said that once upon a time, it was a big fortress. It is good for epilepsy and depression. It is unknown when it became a mazar and when people began to make pilgrimages to it.

**62. Jalgyz Terek [Single Poplar]**

Tash Bashat village

No guardian

Type of mazar – black poplar tree. It is located 3 kilometers away to the south of the village, at the foot of the mountain. Nearby, there is a big ditch.

It is surrounded by a plain on the east and west, the village on the north, and hill and mountains on the south. It is unknown when it became a mazar and since it has been made a pilgrimage to.

**63. Kalpa Ata [Kalpa Father]**

Karacha village

No guardian

Type of mazar – stone. It is located close to the village – 30-40 meters away to the east.

It is surrounded by the hill and mountain on the east; a path, ditch, houses and big road on the west; a path, Kalpa Ata mazar, houses, forest, and mountain on the north. To north-east, there is a hill, ridge, grave, and mountain. To the south, there is a path, ditch, river, and bath-house.

**64. Juuguch [Bonewashing]**

Karacha village

No guardian

Type of mazar – hill. It is located on the flat plain, just a little bit above it. It is surrounded and raised up by unfired bricks, however the bricks are softening and are about to dissolve into the soil. It is 2 kilometers away to the south of the village.

It is surrounded by the plain and village on the north, plain and Talas-Pokrovka road on the south, plain and Sögöt village on the north-east, and plain and road to Karacha village on the west. At present, not many people visit the mazar.

**Oral history**

According to local people: Close to our village, there are site called Chechek spring, Ak Terek, and Juuguch. *Kalpas* lived in these big mazars. In general, there were 4 *kalpas*: Itii'bas, Sarpash, Choko, and Bai'sal. Itii'bas was buried in Vodnyi'. Sarpash Kalpa was buried in Karacha village. Itii'bas Kalpa divided a river in two parts right in the middle. When people were nomading and could not cross the river he said: "My lap got wet – I have suffered injury from the river, now one of my sons will die in the water". Just as he said this, while Sarpash Kalpa was riding a donkey, he was carried off and died in the small stream. His yurt (*boz üii'*) was at the present Juuguch site. He was brought here, his body was washed here, and he was taken out from here. Since then, this site has been called Juuguch. That site still exists. It is surrounded by a sown area. One year, when people decided to add it up to the sown area and began at its border, the tractor broke down, while the tractor driver could not drive it at all. When Sarpash Kalpa passed away, one woman from the village kept his cap for luck. Later, that childless woman gave birth to a boy named Askar. This is what their holiness and power were like.

Such people did not amass wealth or livestock. There was a man called Bei'shebai'. He was going to sacrifice a sheep to God, but in fact did not. Since it had been promised, this sheep should have been slaughtered, cooked and served out to people in order to get credit and rewards for good deeds (*soopchuluk*). It is wrong to just to name an animal for God and not slaughter it. When that sheep of Bei'shebai' multiplied and its offspring made a yardful, Sarpash Kalpa took them all and had them slaughtered, cooked and served to people as a sacred meal. He had all the sheep served to people within a week.

**65. Chychyrganak [Sea-buckthorn]**

Karacha village

No guardian

Type of mazar – spring. It is located 3 kilometers away to the north-west of the village. It is unknown when it became a mazar and since when people have made pilgrimages to it. It is located in the valley.

It is surrounded by the valley, mountain, and hill on the north; hill, mountain, and valley on the west; valley, hill, mountain, and plain on south; and hill, and mountain on the east.

**66. Törtkül [Four Flowers]**

Jai'yrgan village

No guardian

Type of mazar – spring. It is located 20 meters away from the village. It is situated on the north-west. To the east one can see a big ditch, village, the first street, and houses. To the north – a swamp, allotted land, village, and the third street. To the west – a swamp, plain; and to the south – a swamp, big ditch, and Pokrovka village. To the north-west, there are thick rushes.

In general, the mazar is situated in a swamp. Few people come here. A woman that lives nearby says that she and her husband often see a woman pilgrim there. Once upon a time, this site was called Törtkül. Along the banks of the ditches, there are thick rushes, weeping willows, and young trees. The spring is surrounded by low marsh grass.

**67. Bulak [Spring]**

Pokrovka region

No guardian

Type of mazar – spring. The mazar is located in the village, on the left side of Trudovaya Street, to the south. It is a big round spring, with the iron bridge at the border. Nearby, there is a stream – water from the spring flows into it. In the middle of the spring, there is a thin iron armature, which is specially straightened up and put into the center of the spring. Its upper end is forked. In the spring, one can see the roots of many trees. Black and white poplar trees, bramble, dodder grass, and weeping willow grow nearby. Cherry and petty grass grows along the banks of the stream.

It is unknown when it became a mazar and when people began to make pilgrimages to it. It is surrounded by the stream, street, houses, and swamp on the north; kitchen-gardens, houses, and a street on the south; a street, swamp, and the road on the east; and the stream and houses on the west.

**68. Uzun Bulak [Long Spring]**

Jai'yrgan village

No guardian

Type of mazar – spring. It is located 8 kilometers north of the village. There is a road and the spring is on its side. Nearby, one or two big trees grow, and a bit further there are two or three more trees. The government has laid cement around the spring.

To the north, there are two barns, a hill, a valley, and a mountain; to the north-east – electric posts have been put up; to the east – hills, road, and a pasture; to the south – road, plain, wheat field, and the village; to the west – ridge, hill, and rises. It is unknown when it became a mazar and when people began to make pilgrimages to it, but there is information that the present residents of Jai'yrgan lived there and later moved away. When they lived there, they buried their deceased here, which is said to be why it became a mazar.

## 69. Kara Bulak [Black Spring]

Kai'yngdy village

No guardian

Type of mazar - spring. This particular spring is located on the right side of the way to Nyldy Ata Complex in Manas region. Approximate distance is 2 kilometers.

All around the mazar it is dark. Even if there grow usual grass the place feels as a special place. Spring also seems as black when one looks from far in reality it is very transparent. Spring is surrounded by bushes and trees.

*Manaschy* Asankan Jumaliev 8-9 years before has planted several trees and apricot trees.

### Oral History

Information below was provided by *manaschy* Asankan Jumaliev:

No one is aware about since when this particular spring became a mazar. However, local communities, particularly those who have witnessed a miracle of the spring are astonished by special feature of the spring. I am one of the persons among those kinds of people. Let me share with the story that I have personally witnessed.

After having finished 8<sup>th</sup> grade I did not continue my studies further and stopped attending school. I was working as a shepherd instead. Then while I have been pasturing sheep near Kara Bulak (if some people call this particular place as Bel Bashat, others call it as Kara Bulak). So, I have witnessed the following story. I do not know the mystery of the story but whenever I would pass by that place I would hear weeping of a camel. Specifically, weeping voice of a camel calf. It would be felt as if camel calf was following his/her mother. Moreover, everyone would tell that: "It is an "owner" of that sacred site and from time to time one can hear various sounds. There is no need to be afraid of it".

I was interested in it and decided to go there. It was a small spring. Someone had cleaned it and put small stones around it. Since I was a child, without realizing my actions I have destroyed 4 or five stones. Then I have been blocking the water and playing with it. Then after a while I have opened the blocked spots and left that place.

When I came back in the evening and started counting sheep, there were missing 27 of them. "Hey, where did you pasture them?" - "I have been pasturing here". We have been looking for them for two days and could not find them. Because of that elder shepherd shouted at me and I would cry. It was a lambing period for them and I would cry about it. I walked forward and asked God: "Dearest God I wish that sheep would be found and they would not shout at me". Afterwards we came to Kara Bulak and we wanted to look for them around since I have been pasturing them exactly there. I have been looking but I could not find and my tears would "flow" down. It was isolated and spacious place. Then I came to the spring and with thoughts in my mind that 5 or 10 minutes would not make any changes, I sat near to spring and have been rebuilding the stones that I had destroyed yesterday.

I took out litter around the spring and then I have decided to go. I have been walking for 50 meters and I heard sound that sheep makes. When I came back there, I saw one sheep standing there. It was one of the sheep that I would be pasturing. I was looking around for other sheep but could not see others. Then I had intentions to catch a sheep and tie it somehow. I wanted to catch a sheep but it ran away towards the mountains. I have been chasing after the sheep but it ran away and then stopped for awhile. But whenever I got close to sheep it ran away again. While I was chasing after sheep we have passed around 2 kilometers if not more and came to runway. There were a lot of rush growing at a runway. I

found out that all of the sheep went into the rush. It seemed to me that if one who would look for them without following a sheep would not be able to find them. Size of rush equaled to a household of one family. If 20 or 25 sheep would go into it would not be possible to see them. I was very confused and thinking whether that was my sheep or it was a mysterious power which felt sorry for me while I was crying and which made me follow it and helped to find other sheep. Thus I found the sheep. It was a mystery that I have personally witnessed. As for other people they tell different stories about what they have witnessed.

#### **70. Yrchy Bulak [Singing Spring]**

Aral village

No guardian

Type of mazar - spring. On the eastern direction of the village there is a lake which is located in 2- 2, 5 kilometers far. It is higher for 300 meters from the lake with man made origin. Yrchy Bulak is located at the bank of a small river called Kai'yngdy. Around it – there are rocks and stones, and lower part is ravine, swamp.

#### **Oral history**

Information below was provided by *manaschy* Asankan Jumaliev:

The reason why this spring was called as Yrchy Bulak is that most of the famous singers, improvisators, *manaschys* (all of their origins are from Aral village in Manas region) have drunk water exactly from this particular spring. Thus, with the help of quality that possess water they were able to reach a “peak” of their own creation. When we were children, we would talk a lot about the spring. They would tell that person whose name was Erkebai' took Alymkul singer to that spring. We were not able to see Erkebai' he was subject to repression in a year of 30<sup>th</sup>. Kayum Miftakov in 1923 year from 12<sup>th</sup> of August till 18<sup>th</sup> of August was staying at house of Erkebai' and was able to write down fragments from Manas epic, precepts of wisdom and different kinds of songs as well. Those who have seen Erkebai' tell that he was great orator who would not let other talkers to speak. In case if two nations would be in conflict or if two heroes would fight between each other, or if two sides would be in disagreement he was able to reconcile them and bring peace among them within the time in which a cattle of water boils.

Later he was elected as *bii'* and people suspect that he became a subject to repression because of that. It appears that he would have a thick note book which was hand made. I have seen that note book with my own eyes. A person who took that note book was together with him in prison, and when he was close to be set free Erkebai' told the following to his fellow-villager: “Only God knows whether I would be released from here I do not think that I would be back. Take it to my daughters and sons so that they will keep it as a memory” – thus he made a will while was passing his note book. Jamankul gave that note book to his son Sei'it. Sei'it was keeping it and then left it for his son Dönönbai'. Even if I was begging Dönönbai': “Please give me that note book I will give you one sheep instead” – he refused to give it to me. When I went there after awhile I was not able to find a note book they have lost it. In note book were written poems in Arabic language. Only one poem which was called “Farewell” I was able to write down it by chance. I was not able to write down other poems, there was a poem which he read when he was leaving his village; I was able to write down only that poem. I publish them in newspapers as poems of Erkebai'.

It was a false accusation that he was a *bii'*. A point was that he was descendent of rich people. On 30<sup>th</sup> he was object to repression here in Bishkek. That person made Alymkul to visit Yrchy Bulak. This particular story was told by elder person in the village who is 100 years old now. He still plays *Kök Börü* (*q.v.*) and he does it with a high enthusiasm. Recently I

have organized a visit of television on the district level in order to tape that particular event. He became very energetic that he has been racing for 2 kilometers. All people were impressed by it and were telling him: "Watch out! You might fall down!" but it did not stop him. So, he was telling about how Alymkul had taste water from the spring. He was informed about it since Alymkul got marry to his sister. Her name was Sei'il. Alymkul had two wives: Zamirbek's [famous improvisator] mother was different one and a mother of first children was different as well. Her name is Sei'il.

Thus, Alymkul was taken to the spring by Erkebai' and he would talk about it by himself when he would come to village. He would believe that spring possess special qualities and powers. There is a black *balbal* (*q.v.*) near to a spring. In the previous book that was published Aigine has indicated this place as "Kara Choku" (Black Peak). Alymkul would tell the following: "Perhaps Erkebai' have noticed my abilities and capacity to sing and he told me: - "Let me to take you to Yrchy Bulak" Afterwards when we get there he said: "Well since we came to here let's spend a night out here. Where we shall go to in the middle of the night?"

I was sleeping and in the middle of the night one elder person came to me and I have noticed that his beard was down till his belly. He said to me: "Hey, red plump boy, open your mouth" – when I have opened, he put rice into my mouth. Then he said to me: "Be as sweet as rice and be of use to your nation as rice it is. Be so, that songs and words would flow out from your mouth." Thus he had blessed me by saying to me "be so, that songs and words would flow from your mouth" and had disappeared."

Alymkul singer would tell that since then he had a willing to sing. Before Alymkul was taken to the spring he would play on *komuz* (*q.v.*) together with three of his peers. Who were Kydyrbek and Karabai' and Alymkul. All three of them would play on only one *komuz* which would be hidden at the lower part of Black *balbal* at cave stone. The one who would come first to this place would keep playing *komuz* till the evening but they would not sing. It seems that Erkebai' had noticed that they do not sing and since the time when Erkebai' took Alymkul to the spring he started singing. They have another peer whose name is Ynash. Ynash became a *manaschy* and I have learned my skills from Ynash. Alymkul met with famous improvisators (singers) as Toktogul, Ümötaaly. However he was not able to meet with Jengijok since when he went to meet him it was a time of "40 days". Alymkul met with famous improvisators as Toktogul, Ümötaaly. As for, Jengijok when he went to meet him, at that time relatives of Jengijok were conducting *kyrk ashy* [40 days] from his death. He would tell that he could not meet with him. I have personally heard it from him. Moreover, not far from Yrchy Bulak there was a stop over settlement of Tursunaaly who is Estebes' father. I saw those old houses only later in my childhood. There was a house and mill of Tursunaaly. Also there are still stones stored in the yard that Estebes used to play with. Then he told the following to Estebes and to his mother: "Oh! You should spend here two or three nights together with Estebes. From my observation, your son seems to have a special ability." Thus, Alymkul brought him to here before he became a singer. Sister of Estebes and himself who was her nephew; they took his advice and spend seven nights in a raw nearby spring. Moreover there is a mill called Mill of Üsönbai who was father of Alymkul. It is located 500 meters above.

Hence, all people who have talent start visiting Yrchy Bulak. I was taken there by Ynash. Alymkul was brought to here by Erkebai' and Erkebai' also drunk water from here and became an improvisator, *manaschy*, and orator at the same time. There were written many songs by Erkebai'. However I was able to collect from people only about 20-30 of them. Also I have a song which is called "Koshtoshuu" [farewell] and made a copy from notebook that Sei'it had. The way he would recite Manas epic, would be incredible. Moreover, Alymkul was well-known *manaschy*. He seemed to be concentrated only on his singing abilities more

and thus he stopped reciting Manas epic. People, who live in the village where Alymkul is from, talk about him with positive impressions. It was proved that if Alymkul would start reciting Manas epic in the evening then he would stop it only in the morning. But if he would start reciting it in the morning then he would stop reciting it only in the evening. Only later in 1932 years when there was a fear that he will be exiled for reciting Manas epic, he stopped reciting it and carried on his singing activities. Since, he was searched by entitled ones and who were told “Find Alymkul who recites Manas epic”. Soviet time was an obstacle for most of the things.

Another interesting thing about this particular spring is that it has special quality. Only once in a year this spring has warm water coming out of it. So, only at that exact time one has to manage to drink water out of it. It is not definite when exactly it will happen, during winter or summer. For instance, as for me personally, when I was taken to spring it was during winter and water in the spring was warm. Person, who knows about this exact time, has to acquire certain skills to calculate this time by using certain numbers. Only for one day spring retains warm. Ynash also would know how to calculate those numbers and to define that exact time. Such improvisators as Estebes, Abdylda Muraliev, and Aaly Tutkuchev, both of them are from that village (meaning village where the spring is). As you know Shai’loo Kydyraliev is becoming cognate. So, he is also from the same village. This year he studies 10<sup>th</sup> grade of his school year. Alymkul and Zamirbek as well, are from the same village. Also Anatai’ Ömürkanov who is at present time works as a head of Writers’ Union of Kyrgyz Republic is also from the same village.

Another thing that I would like to underline is that in every second family in the village has a *komuz* and it is not an exaggeration. Also the members of every second family can sing and play on *komuz*. During *joro* (*q.v.*) residents of the village sing *sarmerden* [love songs] non stop. There are also couples of women who can improvise songs. I am also from this particular – Aral village.

#### **71. Tepchime [Wade]**

Jai’yrgan village  
No guardian

Type of the mazar – gorge, spring and two trees. It is located 1 kilometer to the west of Kai’yngdy village.

#### **Oral History**

According to the words of Asankan Jumaliev:

The reason that this particular place was called Tepchime – this place seems as if it was specially curved and made by human being. This is the name which remained since ancient times. There are a lot of people in the village who have witnessed mysterious things at this place. It has the following features: Every year people see there different kinds of visions. There is a bridge at the lower part of village, on Eastern part of it. Once Cholponbek Abykeev also used to work here as a head of the village administration. He would work at place of his in-laws. He made some publications in “Aalam” (newspaper). Now, let me tell you the story that I have witnessed personally. My sister-in-law has been getting married and as you know in Kyrgyz culture we have tradition *jygylyp keluu* [come to bow], it is when family of in-laws come to show their respect and gratitude to the family that gave them their daughter.

So, they came to us in accordance with *jygylyp keluu* tradition. We live in Aral. As for them, my father-in-law, they live in Kai’yngdy village. Later in the evening we had parents of the son-in-law as guests and they were about to go. They also live in Aral which was not that far. Afterwards we accompanied them and have been chatting in solitude. Then we decided to

go back by saying: “Well, 9 kilometers it is not that much to walk. It is likely that in the morning there will be people taking animal to pasture and others as well. So, we will get there.” It was 2 or 3 am and it was during autumn time. I am not sure whether it was the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 22<sup>nd</sup> of November, in short it was a date that had number 2. On the way back we went close to Tepchime and all of us were a bit tipsy. When we got there, I will not be shy to tell about but I wanted to urinate. I was not really thinking about anything and it was left about 10 or 15 meters before I got to bridge. As for them, it was a group of 6 or 7 people and they passed by. I was detached from them and came up to the bridge.

When I came to bridge I saw a horse standing there which was saddled and a rope of the bridle was hanging on saddle. As for the, halter it was lying on the eastern part of the bridge. Since it was dark in the evening I was not able to recognize whose horse it was. It was a dark bay horse. And then I thought may be some one was drunk and fell down right at here and scrolled down the bridge. I thought may be one was holding end part of the halter. I went bit forward and found out that no one was there but halter was lying free. It was a moonlit night and no one was there. So, no one was holding halter as I thought before. Then I thought may be that person fell down the bridge or something bad happened to him. I still was confused and was looking down the bridge. No one was there. Then I thought to ride a horse and catch up a group of people from whom I was detached. I wanted to call them back and try to find owner of the horse, but then suddenly I recalled to my memory that other people would see different kinds of things at Tepchime. I was scared that I might see some visions as well and wanted to pass round a horse. I wanted to keep going and to catch up my group. I passed a bridge and looked back, but nothing was there. There was no horse that was standing there. I think I was running as fast as I could and caught up my group. I was manipulated by fear I guess. I was asking them: “Did you see a horse when you were standing there?” They replied: “No”. Nobody except me did see anything. This was a vision that I have seen personally.

Aaly Tutkuchev’s grandfather was a person whose name was Tursunbek. As for, his father’s name was – Tokombai’. People talk about Tursunbek a lot. Once he was going back from Aral village and it was in the evening. On the way he saw a lamb which was standing on the stone. Those stones were located very close to the main road. He had intentions to gallop to the direction of the lamb to catch a lamb. He galloped and was able to catch a lamb. He had intentions to slaughter a lamb for food and was plumed that he could catch it. Then, I am not sure after a while or right after he put a lamb on his horse, he wanted to find out whether it was a male or female lamb. While he was touching a lamb to find out whether it was a female or male, and “Are you plumed?” –asked a lamb. He was shocked by it and did not even remember how he did throw it off. He galloped straight to his house and became very ill. He was ill for the whole week and was suffering a lot from his disease. All around his face was covered by herpes. He recovered well by conducting *tülöö*. Aaly’s fathers were very talented parodists. The way that they would talk would be like a special way of singing. They would talk telltale things. Aaly and also his father Tokombai’ were very talented. They would not sing but the way that they would talk would be eloquent and expressive. Many people saw him in their prophetic dreams.

This is the story that was happened recently: A boy whose name is Amangeldi was driving his car and right when he reached Tepchime his car was broken. He was thinking may be it is not enough oil for the engine and wanted to check it out. He went out of the car, opened engine jacket and shook some of the devices in order to check whether there was enough oil. He fixed it, closed engine jacket and was about to carry on. Suddenly, he saw a sheep standing right in front of the car. Then he had intention to catch it and put it into the car. But when he wanted to catch a sheep, it ran away. Sheep was escaping him when he was about to catch him. He was running after a sheep and they passed a bridge. They were moving

on eastern direction, but on the western side of the bridge there was a cliff. Before it was a hillock and since people were taking soil from one part of it, later it became a cliff. The sheep went up to that small cliff and he kept chasing him-her. Amangeldi had his son with him. The distance between the place where the car was stopped and cliff was about 20-25 meters far. When he was about to catch a sheep disappeared. When he wanted to move forward, his son shouted: "Father, do not move! You will be dead." If he would not manage to stop, he would fell down the cliff. Height of the cliff was about 20-30 meters.

Such different kinds of phenomena happened. People consider that place as a mazar. Those who pass by, they perform Quran.

### *Mazars of Kara Buura Region*

#### **72. Oljobai'dy Kergen Tash [The Stone where Oljobai' was Stretched]**

Kök Sai' village

Present guardian – Jekshenaaly Abdraimov

Type of mazar – stone and tree. The mazar Oljobai'dy Kergen Tash is located 1-1.5 kilometers away to the south of the center of Kök Sai' village, near the resort Sary Üngkür, in the mountains, on the hill on the right side of the road (Kürküröö River flows 10-20 meters away to the west). On the way, there is the beginning of Chat Mountain on the left side.

There is a 1-2 meters stone at the mazar. On the stone, the name Jekshen is inscribed below the following poem:

Uncle (*tai'ake*) Kuduke caught him and,  
Stretched him on the stones, put him on the thorns.  
He also drove livestock across him,  
To separate Oljobai' from Kishimjan.

Small stones are laid on the area 2-3 meters long and 1-1.5 meters wide. Upon these, there is a silhouette of man. Stones are put along the silhouette line. Two trees are planted here (these two trees are in front of each other bending over).

Near the two young trees, there are 2 red stones with diameters of about 1 meter that have inscriptions and prominent edges.

#### **Oral history**

The mazar Oljobai'dy Kergen Tash is located in Kök Sai' village of Kara Buura region dedicated to beloved couple *Oljobai' and Kishimjan*. Following his father's will, Jekshen Bai'ke [*Bai'ke* means Brother] put a sign on the site where the tears of this loving couple fell down. After that, this site has been worshipped by *bübü* and *bakshy* and regular people.

Jekshen Bai'ke explained the history of the mazar's appearance as follows: "I remember how my father Narkul took me as a child to this site and told me the story of Oljobai'dy Kergen Tash with inspiration. Oljobai' fell in love with his aunt (*tai'eje*) Kishimjan. But Kishimjan had already been asked in marriage by another man. Nonetheless, the lovers discussed it and decided to flee to a place nobody had heard of and nobody saw. One day they took off at dawn. Wandering across the land, they eventually came to this place called Chuk Terek. It was covered with deep forests full of berries, rivers full of fish, and

mountain ridges full of partridge – in short, an excellent place to live. Exhausted, the lovers lay motionless, without the energy to move a finger.

As days passed, they began to live happily, singing freely like nightingales that have left the cage. Unaware of what tomorrow would bring, the two lovers continued to live and enjoy their love. Just like a black cloud, their uncle Kuduke, who was searching for them all over, darkened their lives. Allegedly for the sake of ensuring people would long remember it, having beaten Oljobai' to unconsciousness, he laid stones, put thorns atop, and stretched Oljobai' face down, and drove livestock across him – killing him in terrible torment. Nobody paid attention to Kishimjan's howls.

Having put his corpse on the back of the horse, they made their way back. Due to the heat, the dead body began to smell so they dug a grave in the present Kazakh-Kyrgyz place called Kulandy Sai'. Before burying the body, Kishimjan asked her uncle a permission to step into the grave to say good bye to Oljobai'. Having kissed Oljobai' in the forehead and said to him: "Life without you is dark night to me, therefore we must be together for good," she stabbed herself in the heart with the formidable dagger she had brought with her to the grave. Kuduke, who realized his mistake, boiled with anger and said: "I will not let you be together even after death!" And he had a second grave dug nearby, stuck two twigs from Chuk Terek into their graves and left. Those twigs took root and grew into a single plane tree. That plane tree is said to grow and flourish even now due to God's power. The leaves of the plane tree rustle, saying that even though their graves are separate, they were together when alive. And I brought a rock and put it at the head of the grave, planted two trees, and inscribed "Oljobai'dy Kergen Tash" on the rock. On another side of the rock I inscribed a poem.

### **73. Ajydaar Tash [Dragon Stone]**

Kök Sai' village

No guardian

Type of mazar – stone. It is located 1-1.6 kilometers away to the south of the center of Kök Sai' village, near the resort of Sary Üngkür, close to the mountains, on a rise on the right of the road (Kürküröö River flows 10-20 meters away to the west). It is situated on the left hand side, at the base of Chat Mountain, straight to the east of Kürküröö River 5-10 meters further. It is 70-100 meters further away from the mazar Oljobai'dy Kergen Tash. On the top of the stone, there is an image of a snake. It is 1.5-2 meters in size; there is hollow on the surface of stone. Nearby, there are large stones.

#### **Oral history**

According to Jekshenaaly Abdyraimov, guardian of the mazar Oljobai'dy Kergen Tash, once upon a time, long ago in the past, near the bank of Kürküröö River, at the place called Jii'deli (present day Sary Üngkür) there lived a dragon. He made a stone along the road his home. The dragon fed himself eating passers-by and livestock. People that heard about it were frightened and stopped going between the mountains and plains. Growing day by day, that dragon swallowed everything he met. Nobody would challenge the dragon. The old men convened a council to discuss it. Everyone lost heart and looked down. The old men cursed: "Damn it! There is no knight of woman born". Then, the younger son of Chökön Baatyr stepped out.

In his time, Chökön Baatyr took part in *er sai'ysh* (*q.v.*) and always won, but by that time he got old, his power decreased, his back became bent, and his eyes failed. He grieved that the terrible serpent inspired such fear throughout the entire valley. He was extremely happy that his son Ötö stepped out from so many people. Hopeful, the people lifted up their

heads and looked up at the old man Tengir. Tengir felt all the people's eyes upon him and stretched his arms and gave his blessing (*ak bata*).

Deceived by his youth and bravery, Ötö decided to take the field next day. He met his beloved Dildejan to say good bye. Next morning, he mounted his horse, put on his sword and was about to leave, when the elder Chökön gave his gold ring to his son and said: "Son, I have done many feats of arms. This ring always added up to my power, supported me, and I won. May it bring you a victory too!"

His dark bay horse went off like a bird. A day was gone, but there were no news from Ötö. People began to despair and fear. Anxious inside, Dildejan put on her hunting clothes and left at night. Unafraid, perhaps due to the power of love, she cleared her soul of fear and collected herself. The dragon brought a big stone and put it on the side of the mountain across his lair. She was hiding behind that stone until the dragon returned. In the afternoon – may your eyes not see this horror! (*közün jamandykty körbösin!*)– the giant dragon came back to his lair. Having put his head on the stone, he fell asleep. Under the bright sun, at his full strength, the monster felt secure and did not suspect it would soon leave the world forever. Confident that the dragon was deeply asleep, the woman hero Dildejan aimed at the head and shot her bow. The poisoned arrow pierced in the head of the sleeping monster. The monster soared into the sky, spewed fire and plummeted down. The deep forests of the Jii'de area blazed up in fire. The fire spewed from the dragon's mouth burnt Jii'deli forests to the ground. Having approached the outstretched dragon, the woman hero Dildejan disemboweled him. There was nothing left of her brave youth but the finger with the gold ring that his father, the old Chökön, had put on it.

Having taken the finger with the gold ring, the woman hero with the heart of a knight returned to her people. The people rejoiced and expressed their gratitude to this woman hero and buried the finger with the ring of the brave man. Grieving for her fallen beloved, the woman hero left the area.

Snow water and rain water collects and stays in that Ajydaar Tash hole. People with warts and sores on the body coming to wash in the water recover from their illnesses. *Bübü* and *bakshy* worship it. It is still unknown what kind of holiness and grace is in water. This is what the people say. How much of it is truth and how much is lies people should determine themselves.

#### **74. Tai'lak Tash [Young Camel Stone]**

Kök Sai' village  
No guardian

Type of mazar – stone. The mazar Tai'lak Tash is situated on the western side of Chat Mountain, on the eastern side of the road, at approximately 15-20 meter height. When one approaches it, it looks like a mere group of stones, but when looking up from the lower road, it looks like a sitting camel. This mazar is located 200-250 meters further to the south-west of the mazar Ajydaar Tash.

#### **Oral history**

Jekshenaaly Abdyraimov, the guardian of the mazar Oljobai'dy Kergen Tash, provided the following information:

I remember that my grandfather Bekmanbet took me with him and told me many historical stories. As in the Kyrgyz saying "get acquainted with people while your father is alive, learn the land while you have a horse", the story I am going to tell you today is a legend that children learnt from their fathers.

I will tell you a story from long past, when the Kalmaks and Jungars invaded and oppressed the Kyrgyz. The Jungars that occupied our valley captured beautiful girls and bound up the young knights and took them away. Within these, they also captured Karaköz – the only daughter of Narynbet, who was as gorgeous as beauty itself, equal to the sun and tender like a flower. When they reached their destination, the 60-year-old khan of the Jungars could not escape falling in love with her and decided to marry Karaköz. Despite her resistance, the girl became the second wife (*tokol*) of the old man.

The days became months and months became a year. Instead of the tears, eyes “like the baby camel’s” of Karaköz were crying blood. Missing her motherland and people, whenever the girl saw her friends in the dreams and thought of her parents, her heart would ache. Day and night she dreamed of escaping from her non-Muslim, bear-like husband and foreign people: she had no peace.

The long awaited day arrived. Having collected a big army against the enemy, the khan left for another village to muster troops. At night the girl left taking the young camel that had come with her. Eventually, after various difficulties, she reached her homeland. She eagerly breathed the air of her motherland, let her hair out to be played by the wind, drank the water of her native place with delight, washed and bathed, and when she has just about to her native homestead, she heard the clatter of horses’ hoofs behind. She hastily mounted her she-camel and galloped. The pursuers came closer.

There was a small path Jaman Kyya with the Kürküröö River flowing below it. Glancing down would bring vertigo. Kürküröö River ruthlessly carries away anything that happens to get into it be it livestock or human. If one were not careful crossing it, s/he might lose her life. She had to be careful – the pursuers were right behind. Since she has reached her native land it was pointless to spare herself. If the enemy got her, she would be killed. Understanding this, the girl took the risk and spurred on the camel. Missing its homeland, her she-camel trotted at top speed to escape the menace behind. When they reached the middle of Jaman Kyya – may your eyes not see misfortune! – the she-camel slipped. With a mournful howl, the girl plunged into the water of Kürküröö River together with the she-camel, splashing the boiling foam into the air. She escaped at last only in her dream. Striking against the rocks, they disappeared from sight. The white camel calf that had been following them behind howled. It would not leave the place where it sat, but cried for its mother, making people’s hearts bleed, and waited for the girl that passed away not having her dream come true. Perhaps its grief reached God, but the young camel turned to stone.

Later, Narynbet found the remains of his daughter and the she-camel downstream and buried them. Nowadays, the place where the white camel calf drowned is a mazar. It is a site worshipped by *bübü* and *bakshy* – on top of the mountain, is the stone of the drowned young camel. The young camel stone appears to be crying bitterly, so many people come to worship it. People bring livestock and make sacrifices there. This stone possesses some magic powers. Many people come to it to tell their grief and sorrow. It helps good people and does not reveal anything to bad people.

#### **75. Kochkor Ata [Ram Father]**

Kök Sai’ village

*Shai’yk* – Almash Jumagul kyzy

Type of mazar – tree with spring, and mausoleum with anthill. The mazar Kochkor Ata is located 20 kilometers south-west of Kök Sai’ village. Between two mountains, in other words, approximately 1-2 kilometers away to the south of the mazar Kochkor Ata there is Manas Peak, and lower, in 200-300 meters distance, there is another mountain called Chat Toosunun Ayagy.

The mazar consists of the following: a big tree with a small brook flowing nearby (this stream of spring water is 100-200 meters to the north of the mazar). 10-15 meters away to the east of the big tree, there is a 2-room house with an altar (the Kök Sai' residents say it is for cooking a meal for God). Inside the house, there are sitting mats, carpets, dishes and wares, big cauldron, knives, teaware, scoops, handtowels, firewood and so on.

20-30 meters to the north of the big tree, there is an old mausoleum. 10-12 meters to the south-east of the tree, there is a stone-girt, 1-1.5 meter high stone-yard. Inside the yard, there is sea-buckthorn growing. In the center of the sea-buckthorn bush, there is a stone-girt elevated image of human skull. 7-9 meters to the north of the tree, there are two anthills situated from east to west. The distance between them is 3-5 meters.

### **Oral history**

Some pilgrims say that Kochkor Ata is buried here, but the village elders say that there are sites called Kochkor Ata in Naryn and Ysyk Köl oblasts and in Aksy, hence Kochkor Ata simply stopped there. There are suppositions that Kochkor Ata lived one century after Manas Ata. To summarize, *oluya* or some other pure, holy people must be buried at such a mazar.

One of the first builders of the Kochkor Ata mazar was the old man Kachkynbek. The floor, for instance (there is a newly-laid floor in Kochkor Ata mazar), was laid by the son of Kachkynbek Ata. He made a sacrifice here and also made a shelf for the clock and other things. Damira Imanalieva, a researcher of Aigine, asked people and found the house of Kachkynbek Ata. Lying in bed ill and suffering from weak hearing, the old man nevertheless managed to give an interview. He said that the facilities for pilgrims at Kochkor Ata mazar were built in 1941. He told the following:

At the very beginning, there had already been a foundation of something there, probably of a house. My father told that it was turning into mosque land, if it were higher up it would be reckoned as a good deed, and that it should be constructed. Then, my father and I renewed the site and tried to rebuild it. The site must have been in place since the old times, since the time of *bai* and *manap* (*q.v.*). We said that if more people settled down in that place, it would be reckoned a good deed. My father took me there and told to collect stones for the foundation and walls. At that time, there were no tractors or cars. We collected those stones using donkey-carts and a horse.

While erecting the walls, those who came on pilgrimage there on Mondays – men and women alike – helped. The mudbrick was prepared by our own feet and by horses. It was not just my father and me alone who built it – those people helped us. We made the roof in the Kyrgyz style – by laying piles of thick rush upon it. Then it rained and the walls were about to break down. We were putting rush thatch upon over and over again, but it would break down again. Then, we put another layer of mud stucco on the walls and covered the roof with flat mud stucco – after that, it stopped breaking down.

The other day, my son and I conducted *tülöö* there and laid down new floor. But now we need to finish things that are still lacking and plug up the holes. I cannot go there now. I told them to nail the board; - I do not know if they have done it. I guess I shall go there taking one or two young men.

In 1954, I went up to *jai'loo*. There was a swamp on the other side of the mazar Kochkor Ata. At that time, the shepherds were praying there when they passed by. Now, when someone performs a *zikir chaluu*, grey fog comes about. At the entrance of Kochkor Ata, there is a big stone which is one of the objects of pilgrimage visits. Further on, there is a stone yard inside the mazar. There is the spirit of *oluya* inside the stone yard. He has a cap on and call for prayer (*azan*) in the yard.

At some point, Kochkor Ata was a strong mazar, but nowadays its *oluya* have left the place, as if offended by the flooding of the K rk r  River. The reason why this mazar lost its power is in that some people go there unclean, the Russians go there to pick herbs, and people went there to drink alcohol and stayed there overnight; also, they drive livestock through near the road because people have stopped valuing it very much. In the village, Syyaly Ake [*Ake* means Brother] said that two people who had gone to Kochkor Ata to cut down a tree both died. One of them fell dead right there, while the second man went mad (with mental illness, did not communicate with people) and eventually died.

Near the mazar Kochkor Ata, 70-100 meters to the north-east, is Kyz Mazar (a range of small hills). On the north-eastern side along the very same road, 60-80 meters away there is Mergen Ata mazar (a big stone). Near that site, there is a yet another mazar – people say that sometimes it looks like an old man dressed in white, while at other times like a beautiful old lady.

**76. D i'sh n Ata [D i'sh n Father] (also known as Jeti Bulak [Seven Springs])**

Amanbaevo village

No guardian

Type of mazar – spring. The mazar D i'sh n Ata is located on the north-western side of the village. It consists of 7 springs near the road leading to the main street. One has to move from the big automobile road 360 meters to the north-east. In other words, it is located at the end of the Birinchi Mai' and Kalinin streets. There is one big and three small springs. The springs are located one after one on the eastern side of the road. However, at the moment, probably because they were not cleaned, they are covered by soil. In order to make it into level land, one resident of the village filled it with earth. Nevertheless, the water still comes out of the spring. On the eastern side of the spring, there is a marsh and 5-10 meters further there is a yard considered to be the yard of a man called Anarbek. Trees are planted there. And to the west, 20-30 meters further there are people's land allotments, houses and barns.

**77. Chong D b  (Big Hill)**

Amanbaevo village

No guardian

Type of mazar – cemetery. The mazar Chong D b  is located, to the north-west of Amanbaevo village at its border. The mazar consists of only the graves.

To the south of the mazar, there is a road; to the west – a swamp, with a small lake nearby; to the east – road and river; and to the north – an eminence and cliff. There is a spring within the mazar, but it is prohibited to step on the graves so one should not enter. However, sometimes *b b * perform *sham jaguu* (*q.v.*) there.

**78. Kai'nar Bulak [Bubbling Spring]**

Kai'nar village

No guardian

Type of mazar – hill and spring. The mazar Kai'nar Bulak is located in the center of Kai'nar village. In other words, it is situated at the end of the automobile road. On the right side, 5-10 meters behind the bus-stop, to the north of the road, there is a swampy area. On the western side of the spring, there is a private kitchen-garden and yard. To the south, there are small hills. Recently (less than half a year), the spring was surrounded with cement in a

quadrangular form, with a 50-80 cm opening on the eastern side. The height of cement is 0.5 meters.

**79. Talduu Bulak [Spring Surrounded by Trees]**

Kai'nar village

No guardian

Type of mazar – tree and spring. The mazar Talduu Bulak is located in the village, to the north-west, at the border. The mazar, as its name says, consists of large tree, 4-5 men's arm spans in girth, and a spring coming out at its base. To the north-west of the mazar, there is a swampy area that is 15 meters long. To the west is the village; to the north – the road to the plains. To the south-east, there are houses and barns of the villagers.

**80. Chymolo [A person's name]**

Kai'nar village

No guardian

Type of mazar – cemetery and spring. The mazar is located 50-70 meters away to the south-west of the village. The mazar consists of graves. In other words, it is a big cemetery. To the south of the mazar, there is a flat plain; to the east, north, and west, there is swampy land. 20 meters to the north-east of the mazar, there is a spring.

**81. Kosh Döbö [Couple of Hills]**

Kai'nar village

No guardian

Type of mazar – hill. The mazar is located from 2.5 kilometers away to the west of Kök Sai' village, and 1.5 kilometers away to the east of Kai'nar village, 50 meters to the north of the high road. There are two similar hills 3-4 meters high. The hills are surrounded by plain to north, east and west; and to the south, there is a 20-meter deep, 1.5 kilometers long, and 20-60 meters wide canyon. Water runs at the base of the canyon. Many accidents have happened there.

**82. Archaluu [A Place with Many Junipers Around]**

Archagül village

No guardian

Type of mazar – juniper and hill. The mazar Archaluu is located 4-5 kilometers away to the north-east of Archagül village. In the northern part of the mazar, there is a canal and road that run from east to west. Behind them, there is a sown land. To the east, there is the barn of a shepherd. To the west, there is a small rise and then a plain. There is a high hill, willow tree, and juniper at the mazar. Once there must have been a spring here – there is a trail of a spring. The height of the hill is about 8-10 meters. There are many snakes there. All the hills there are graves so it is not allowed to walk there.

**Oral history**

Pilgrim Begimkul Eje, a resident of Cholponbai' village, provided the following information about the mazar:

I do not know the history of the mazar Archaluu. However, when we go there, there is one juniper. It is forked and an adult person may sit in between the two trunks – it really looks

as if it was meant for someone to sit there. I know that an old man named Asan sits at the mazar Archaluu. Holyness of the mazar is great. When we go there, the spirits give permission to recite Quran. Asan break off one or two twigs and give them to us, but not more. We take them only from the places, which are permitted– the power of the twigs is strong.

**83. Bashat Bulak [Source Spring]**

Archagül village

No guardian

Type of mazar – spring. The mazar is located on the northern side of the village. The mazar consists of an old tree, bushes and the spring. To the south and west of the mazar, there runs a two-lane road. To the south-west of the mazar, 50-70 meters away, is the village school. A special feature of this spring is in that, unlike other springs, it does not come out clean from the land, but comes out from under sea-buckthorn growing near the road.

**84. Selkinchek (Apalardyn Bulagy) [Swing (Spring of Mothers)]**

Cholponbai' village

No guardian

Type of mazar – spring. The mazar is located at the entrance to the village. Nearby, there are graves. These graves are located on the right side of the road that runs from west to east. To the right of the graves, there is a spring. The spring is located at the base of the hill, at the bank of Kara Suu River that flows near Cholponbai' village. Kara Suu flows from east to west. At the edge, there are two similar trees planted by 57-year-old pilgrim Barpygöl Eje. The spring has another special feature – its water flows from north to south. The sides are strengthened by stone, while there is also a tube installed to take water from the spring. Some time ago, there used to be a special bench near the spring – one can see its former place there.

**Oral history**

According to Barpygöl, Salamat Apa repaired the spring in 1993-94. Salamat Apa and local people look after it. In general, 80 years have passed since the spring appeared and 60 years have passed since it became a mazar, because people began to make pilgrimages to it after the war of 1945.

**85. Kai'nar Bulak [Boiling Spring]**

Bei'sheke village

No guardian

Type of mazar – spring and tree. The holy Kai'nar Bulak mazar is located 3 kilometers away to the south of Bei'sheke village, between two mountains. There is a big tree near the spring. Visiting people have tied various ribbons to its branches. The spring is fully covered by sea-buckthorn. It is situated near the stream coming from the mountain glacier. The base of the tree is only stone and sand. The branches covered by ribbons are on the ground. The tree must be very old – it is about to wither and rot. Near the spring, there is a house of local people. The house is surrounded by the trees. The spring is located at the base of the hill.

**86. Ak Terek [White Poplar]**

Bei'sheke village

No guardian

Type of mazar – tree. The mazar Ak Terek is located on the right side when moving from the holy Kai'nar Bulak from north towards the south around 500 meters, on the mountainside. There are four large trees. The girth of each tree is about four arm spans. They are tall trees upper part is high, peak of the mountain. Their roots are very big. Deep black in color, they lie open on the ground. The trunk of one of the trees is quite white and the other trees are black. On the left side there is a cliff. The trees are 5 meters tall. They grow very close to one another. The mazar is surrounded by mountains on all sides. Nearby, there are various plants and stones.

**87. Naristeler Bulagy [Spring of Infants]**

Kyzyl Adyr village

No guardian

Type of mazar – spring. The mazar Naristeler Bulagy is situated at the entrance to Kyzyl Adyr village, along the road running from east to west. There is a big canal on the right side. In front of the canal, there is a river. The third spring is located 1 kilometer away to the north of the river. There are 2 springs in front of it.

Kyzyl Adyr River flows from north to south. Nearby, with the will of The Most High God, there is a small bridge.

The bridge is not made of wood or iron – it is made of mudbrick. That small bridge divides the spring and Kyzyl Adyr River. The spring has a volume of a big cauldron, but is somewhat oblong. The spring water flows under that small bridge and falls into Kyzyl Adyr River.

There are two holes inside the spring. The water mostly comes out of those two holes, however if not they are not carefully looked for, one may not notice them immediately. Nearby, there is a small bush of sea-buckthorn.

**88. Aksakaldar Bulagy [Spring of the Old Men]**

Kyzyl Adyr village

No guardian

Type of mazar – spring. Aksakaldar Bulagy is located 300 meters away to the south of Naristeler Bulagy. Since it is surrounded by swampy area, there are no noticeable trees and bushes. The spring comes out of the earth. The water is transparent – there are very small stones inside. The surrounding area is swampy and soggy. The volume of Aksakaldar Bulagy is larger than that of Naristeler Bulagy.

**89. Bübü Apanyn Bulagy [Spring of Bübü Mother]**

Kara Suu village

No guardian

Type of mazar – spring. It is located along the Kara Suu village street that goes from west to east, 100 meters away from the bus-stop situated at the entrance to the village. Over the spring site, there was once a flowing river. After a mudflow diverted the river, the empty riverbed appeared. The spring is located at the base of that riverbed. The local people cemented the surrounding of the spring, because most local people take water from that spring. The spring has a quadrangular form. The remaining water flows as a small ditch from north to south. Inside the spring, there are stones and some vegetation. Around the spring, there are small trees and bushes.

## Oral history

The pilgrim Sheker Apa, at present a teacher on pension, told the following:

Once upon a time, here lived a woman called Toktobübü Ai'ylchy kyzy who did not have children. During that time, there was no spring here – a big ditch flowed instead. Then, one year a mudflow hit our village and carried away that stream. Instead of that stream, there appeared a road and new big riverbed. Then, Toktobübü Apa fell sick – when she was diagnosed, she turned out to possess *kyrgyzchylyk*. First she went to the mazar Kanykei' Apanyn Bulagy in Talas and then having returned from that mazar, she later had obtained permission to do *kyrgyzchylyk* (*köz achtyruu*). After having got permission to practice *kyrgyzchylyk*, she cleaned up the village stream, began to worship it, and gave birth. Then, believing in the sacred qualities of that site, people began to pilgrimage to it as well. This mazar has passed its 30<sup>th</sup> year. Bübü Apa is no longer with us. 20 years have passed since her death.

There is a house near the spring. It is the house of Toktobübü Apa's son.

### 90. Dubana Ata [*Dubana* (q.v.) Father]

Kara Suu village (Jangy Jer, Kara Suu and Balykchy villages united into the village called Bei'sheke. Therefore, this village is also called Bei'sheke).

No guardian

Type of mazar – house, mosque and spring. Location: on the left side of the road to Balykchy village, right after the entry to the village, there is a shop called Balykchy Ata; to the right side from the village, there is a village bus-stop. Moving from there towards the west, after approximately 150 meters, on the right side of Balykchy Street, there is the spring of Dubana Ata. A tube was installed in that spring – the water runs through that tube. In the same area, 10 meters to the north there is the village mosque. On the northern side of the mosque, there is a yurt-like grave of Dubana Ata made of mudbrick. It is covered by roofing slate. Near the mausoleum, 5 meters away from it, there is the place, which Dubana Ata left for preservation. The three buildings together make up and are considered to be the mazar of Dubana Ata. However, people mostly make their pilgrimages to the Dubana Ata Spring.

One's visit to the mazar during Ramadan will not be accepted by God, therefore at present less numbers of people come to the mazar.

## Oral history

According to the words of Gükü Eje, wife of local tailor Rai'yembek Ata:

In general, Rai'yembek Ata had holy people in his ancestry. The first one was Dubana Ata, then Myrzash, Kurmankul, Bei'shenaaly, and Rai'yembek Ata. On his deathbed, Dubana Ata said: "If I die, bury me at the mazar Ydyrys Ata". When he died, he was buried in this village near the mosque. And later, when people were going to fulfill his last will and take him to the mazar of Ydyrys Ata, they disinterred his grave. His body was in the same state, only the moustache and beard had grown. Then, they shaved his moustache and beard, washed the body and re-buried him at the mazar Ydyrys Ata. Dubana Ata died at the age of 100 years, and now the mazar is over 200 years old. After the body of Dubana Ata was taken away for re-burial, sea-buckthorn grew up on his grave and covered it entirely – no one had planted it there. Nearby, there is also a spring. The volume of sea-buckthorn is like that of a house. Also, near the mazar, there is a special yurt-like building made of mudbrick and covered by roofing slate.

Now the spring water is a remedy to hydrophobia. It helps to people with distorted mouth or nose, paralysis, epilepsy, and tendon cramps. Both his ancestry and the mazar

possess very strong sacred powers. Because when the father of Rai'ymbek Ata – my father-in-law, was repairing the mosque, one old man came up drunk, said bad words near the mosque, scolded my father-in-law, and assaulted him. My father-in-law did not say anything. Then, all the people said: “the sacred powers must have left this man – nothing has happened to the man who assaulted him”. However, in a while, when that old man was passing by the mosque, he dropped on the spot. Then, one side of that man’s body got paralyzed – he is still alive, that old man. All people believe that my ancestors-in-law were holy people and that they are buried on the forever mazar. They have the ill people that are suffering badly lick clay.

**91. Chybyr [Hill]**  
Bakyyan village  
No guardian

Type of mazar – spring. It is located on the southern side of Third Street in Tamchy Bulak village, at the beginning of the street. Since this street does not have a name, people gave it a number. There are five streets in this village. All residents of the Third Street are Kurds. At the beginning of the street, there is a hill called Chybyr – the mazar is located on its side. The local people installed a tube there to allow them to get water – the water flows through the tube. Nearby, are the eyes (bubbling centers) of four more springs. The water from the five springs join in the stream that flows from south to north.

**92. Oi'sul Ata (Ak Tai'lak) jana Kydyr Ata [Oi'sul Father (White Camel Calf) and Kydyr Father]**  
Bakyyan village  
Guardian – Dariha Jamanbaeva

Type of mazar – spring. Location: Bakyyan village, Street named after Sarymsak Usupbek uulu, house No. 59 – this is the address of Dariha Eje. The springs are located in front of her house. Two springs are located very close to each other. The distance between them is 3 meters. Compared to the *Kydyr Ata (q.v.)* spring, the eye (bubbling center) of *Oi'sul Ata (q.v.)* is bigger – it is approximately 1 meter long and 1 meter wide. In order to protect *Oi'sul Ata* Spring from things falling down from above, Dariha Eje covered it with a wire net and left only a small space through which to get water. The eye of *Kydyr Ata* Spring is very small. Dariha Eje surrounded and strengthened it with stones. And above the spring she put an iron frame 20x20 cm. The top of the iron frame is open – it does not close down the eye of the spring. Most people take water from *Kydyr Ata* Spring.

With the purpose of assisting these springs, Aigine first had both springs cleaned up, surrounded by net, and in order to protect them from precipitation covered them with roofing slate.

**93. Tamchy Bulak [Dripping Spring]**  
Tamchy Bulak village  
Guardian – Güljamal Alymbekova

Type of mazar – spring and hill. At the end of Tamchy Bulak village, about 100 meters away from the house of Alymbekova Güljamal, there is a hill called Chyvyr. The mazar is located on the hill. There is a rock hollow on the hill. Water is dripping from every little stone in that hollow and the drops join in a spring. Since the spring is oozing out from the hollow, the top of the hollow has fallen down. Nearby, there are no old trees: only young trees grow there.

**94. Chat [Mountain]**  
Molotov village  
No guardian

Type of mazar – mountain. The Chat mazar is located 3 kilometers away to the south of Molotov village. 2 kilometers along the road from it, on the right side, there is a robbers' cave. 1 kilometer further away, there is a mine. Near the mine is a lake of Molotov village. Kara Buura and Shilbili Rivers flow on two sides of the entrance to the mazar. The color of Kara Buura River is black, while the color of Shilbili River is brown. When both rivers join, one side of the stream is black, while the other is brown.

The mazar is located on the top of the hill, while at its base of the hill there used to be a cemetery in the past – now, it is a flat area. It is not allowed to step on that land, walk or stroll on it. The mazar is fenced in a triangular form with wood. Near Shilbili River and cemetery, there is a hut made of sea-buckthorn. That hut was not made by humans – it is a miracle of nature. The hut has three rooms. The distance from the first room to the third room is 100 cm. When it rains, the water does not get inside. People go there to have tea and to stay overnight. To the south of the mazar, there is a mountain. In the middle of the mountain, there is a special flat area. That area is called Dubanalardyn Kelgen Jeri. When it is warm, people keep vigils there.

**95. Chargyn Ata Bulagy [Spring of Chargyn Father]**  
Sheker village  
Guardian – Kerimbai' Ibraimov

Type of mazar – spring. It is located 150 meters away to the south-west of the mazar Ak Ui', at the river.

**96. Mai'mak Ata [Mai'mak Father]**  
Sulu Mai'mak village  
Guardian – Bai'myrza Saparbaev

Type of mazar – spring. The mazar is located 2-3 kilometers away to the north of Sulumai'mak village, while the station Mai'mak is 6 kilometers away to the south-east of the village. To the north of the mazar, there is a house of man called Zanyl and land plots of the villagers. To the west, 30-50 meters away there is an automobile road. To the south, there is a plain with 5-6 households on it. To the east, there is also a plain. About 10 meters to the north-west of the mazar Mai'mak Ata is a spring that comes out of big stones.

### **Oral history**

According to 49-year-old railroadman Kasymaaly, the word "Mai'mak" is Kazakh and means 'bristling', 'crooked'. There are springs at Mai'mak Ata. Mai'mak Ata is considered to be the source of this water. The spring appeared here primarily through the will of God and secondarily through the sacred power of nature.

In the words of pilgrims, the spring was named "Mai'mak" after a man with such a name that was an important healer. People with various illnesses were coming to him for cure, and even after his death people going to the spring would say: "We are going to Maimak Ata", so that the spring retained this name. The healer was buried on that site. The mazar dates back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Once a herder, zootechnician and journalist, Atakan Chotkaraev made a pilgrimage to Mai'mak Ata. At that time he was working as a journalist and he wrote a big article in the

republican newspaper about the mazar Mai'mak Ata. He recounted the following: Mai'mak Ata was a great, big mazar and the area was once covered by forests and inhabited by wild birds and animals. He wrote that in 1906, a son of Ajybek Datka and his friends went there to hunt with their eagle and when he entered the forest, a wild boar killed him. The hunter Otor Mergen who killed the boar got the land at Mai'mak Ata as a reward from the *datka* (*q.v.*). In 1928-1929, when the *bai's* were suppressed for having much wealth, Mai'mak Ata and its surroundings became property of the Soviet state.

**97. Tamchy Bulak [Dripping Spring]**

Joon Töbö village

No guardian

Type of mazar – spring. It is located on the western side of Joon Töbö village. 2-3 kilometers south is Sulumai'mak village. To the north, there is a cliff at the edge of the village. To the east are the land allotments and homesteads of Joon Töbö villagers. To the west, there is a plain. A spring comes out at about 2-meter height from the cliff.

**98. Saparhan Atanyn Kai'nar Bulagy [Bubbling Spring of Father Saparhan]**

Joon Töbö village

*Shai'yk*– Oogan Bai'zbekov, guardian- Elmira Bai'zbekova

Type of mazar – hill and spring. It is located on the western side of Joon Töbö village. To the north, there is a hilly riverbed, and further north are houses around 150 meters distant. To the east, 30-40 meters further is the highway Talas-Bishkek. To the west, there is a plain. The mazar consists of the hill and spring. In the middle of the hill, there is an iron image of ram painted white. From far away, it can be mistaken for a real ram.

**Oral history**

Another name of Kai'nar Bulak is Saparhan *Eshendin* (*q.v.*) Bulagy. The *shai'yk* of this mazar Oogan Bai'zbekov and the guardian, who is Oogan's sister-in-law Elmira Bai'zbekova, provided the following information:

An *eshen* called Saparhan is buried at the mazar. He was an *oluya*. He died and was buried, but next morning he was gone from his grave – there was a hole in it, and he got out, since he had become a *kai'yp* (*q.v.*). Saparhan Eshen is from the Choodan tribe, Cholponbai' village – his grandchildren make sacrifices annually.

There are 22 graves of invalids above Kai'nar Bulak. Twenty meters to the north-west of Saparhan Eshendin Bulagy, there is mazar Aalihan. (Allegedly, a young man called Aalihan became a *kai'yp* while he was an unmarried boy. Therefore, it is called Aalihan Bulak Mazary [Aalihan Spring Mazar]).

Saparhan Eshan was the grandfather (from the mother's side) of Elmira Bai'zbekova – the present guardians of the mazar. According to Elmira's words: "My grandfather was an *oluya* named Saparhan. The area where he was buried turned into a mazar. Once, grandfather Saparhan told his 50-year-old friend: "I will go away as *kai'yp* – meet me in 6 months at Kai'nar Bulak". Indeed, 6 months later, there appeared a 6 month old boy with a stick and white ram. Then, after his friend had slaughtered a white mare and sheep and organized *kudai'y tamak* (*q.v.*), my grandfather obtained his initial image. Now, the damage brought about by the white ram was significant: the road did not improve, 3 daughters and 1 son of my grandfather all died, and we, who were once 2 boys and 4 girls, are now only 1 boy and 2 girls. The only son of that man was going around like a dervish and passed away while he was still unmarried – my grandfather did not leave any male descendants. The sacred power of my

grandfather was also given to my grandmother – my mother was an important *bübü*, but she died at the age of 59. Her name was Jamila (1914-1973).

According to Oogan: when the son of Saparhan *Eshen* Ata was alive, he used to come here – I asked for his permission to enclose this site, and he agreed. Since then, the site has been enclosed and looked after.

**99. Chargyn Ata [Chargyn Father]**  
Kök Sai' village  
No guardian

Type of mazar – spring, stone, yard. A camp of an *oluya* called Chargyn. It includes a yard, mountain, spring, and stone. Chargyn Ata lived in the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries CE. Therefore, the mazar was called Chargyn Ata. At the moment, a man called Manggenbai' lives and keeps his livestock there (at the camp).

The Chargyn Ata mazar includes the following 3 mazars:

**a) Tash Byshat [Ripe Stone]**

The mazar Tash Byshat is located 8 kilometers to east of Kök Sai' village. The mazar consists of the stone attached to the mountain at its base. A spring comes out from the base of the mazar – its water flows about 15 meters and then sinks into the earth. To the east of the mazar, there is a mountain; to the west – a mountain and motor road; to the north – a mountain; and to the south – a road and 200 meters away the house of man called Manggenbai'.

**b) Chargyn Ata Tash Korgonu [Stone Yard of Chargyn Father]**

Chargyn Ata Tash Korgonu is located to the south of Chargyn Ata Bulagy. The stone yard covers the area of 200 m<sup>2</sup>. But 50 meters to the south of the house of Manggenbai', at a height of 3-4 meters up the mountainside, there is a specially designated area where 10-15 people may sit down. Prayers from the Quran are recited there.

**c) Chargyn Ata Bulagy [Spring of Chargyn Ata]**

Chargyn Ata Bulagy is located 20 meters to the south of the house of Manggenbai'. Since the spring is located near the road, passers-by recite the Quran and taste the spring water.

**100. Umai' Ene [Mother Umai']**  
Kök Sai' village  
No guardian

Type of mazar – stone. The mazar Umai' Ene is located 8 kilometers to the east of Kök Sai' village. The 1.2 meter high engraved image on the top of the mountain is the mazar. About 20 meters to the north-east of the mazar there is a motor road. To the south-west, there is a mountain. It is located 50 meters away to the west of the mazar from the camp of an *oluya* named Chargyn.

**Oral history**

The 68-year-old pilgrim, Müzülüm Chargyn kyzy told about the burial of *bübü* Burmakan, a woman from the Charyk tribe: “All who say I am *bübü* know this site well. In

particular, when *bübüs* heal children here it goes well. In other words, they see how to heal a child – they are given visions.”

#### 101. Ak Üi' [White House]

Sheker village

Guardian – Kerimbai' Ibraimov

Type of mazar – house-like construction. Ak Üi' is located 500-700 meters away from Sheker village on the high hill. On the left mountainside of Ak Üi', there is a big mosque constructed by people. The left side of the mosque, there is a small 2-room house of the guardian. In front of the house, 10-15 meters away from it there is a toilet, and further away is the sports ground named after *Kök Börü* sportsman Sei'itbek. Chargyn Ata Spring is located on the western side at the foot of the hill. A little above it, there is a big tree called Chargyn Tal. Chargyn Ata was a big *moldo* from the Charyk tribe – he was buried there. To the east of Ak Üi', there are low mountains.

Ak Üi' covers the area of 3-4 m<sup>2</sup>. It is made of bricks and the inside and outside walls are plastered with cement. The roof has a peak form that ends with an iron crescent on the top. It was built in the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries CE by Eshen Ata and others.

On behalf of Aigine, the mazar's *shypaakana* and *zyyaratkana* (*q.v*) were fully overhauled: repaired, plastered and limed; linoleum was laid on the floor; the ceiling was faced with wood; things were put in order.

#### Oral history

According to information of the guardian of the mazar Kerimbai' Ibraimov:

The mazar is said to be built in the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries CE. There was a man named Eshen. Eshen Ata made this area plain and was cultivating land. He was going to plow and plant, but when he took a handful of earth and smelled it, he fell down. The passers-by that saw Eshen Ata lying on the ground ran to him, lifted him up and asked what happened. Eshen Ata answered: “Had you waited a little more and not got me up, I would have seen to the end. The Most High Allah has shown me something. It is necessary to tell people that this is a sacred, holy site. This mazar will be a remedy to many things.”

Eshen Ata went to Jambyl Ata, who lived in Oluya Ata at that time. The latter gathered people and collected money from them (people donated according to their

#### *Ak Üi' Mazar*

possibilities), and constructed a small mosque as a symbol. (At present, there is a big mosque that was constructed by the local people near the small mosque). After talking with the people who had gathered, he had 2 cows slaughtered – people from Tashkent and Jambyl came. The meat of the two cows was sufficient despite the many people. Prayers were recited twice.

The Most High Allah revealed that at Jer Ui', which is located 300-700 meters from Ak Ui', people would find extremely strong bricks. However, most people did not believe this. Nevertheless, when they tried excavating at Jer Ui' they found truly strong bricks. The people were astonished. Moving those bricks from hand to hand along a human chain, they brought enough bricks for constructing the mosque. Each brick has a footprint of different people and dogs. Then, Eshen Ata said: “you could have taken one more brick”. Just as he had said, when the construction of the mosque was finished, exactly one brick was missing on the top. So, they put one simple brick and finished off the construction, but that brick did not

last long and destroyed.

Then, the *oluya* told: “There will be a world war, but peace will reign in Talas, Tashkent, and Jambyl. Here, all your dreams will come true”. It happened as he said. Later, when people made excavations at Jer Ui’ in search of materials to produce bricks, they could not find any bricks. Those people who excavated Jer Ui’ lost their eye sights but later they recovered with the will of God. Then, during the Soviet time, the bricks of the small mosque were used to build a shed for livestock, but all the livestock in that barn died and the people also left.

### **102. Jer Ui’ [Earth House]**

Sheker village

No guardian

Type of mazar – cave. Jer Ui’ is located 300- 700 meters away to the north-west of Ak Ui’, on the northern side of Sheker village, at the side of the road running to K k Sai’ village, near the grave at the border of the cemetery. To the east, there is a river.

To the north of Jer Ui’, there are 7 springs. Jer Ui’ is a cave that is 5-7 meters long and 3-4 meters wide with a big entrance. Allegedly, there were three narrow caves inside. These three caves would lead to three underground passages, in other words the first one leads to Chatkal, the second to Taraz, and the third to Bakai’yr. This was in the past. Nowadays, these holes are closed up.

The owner (*ee*) of Jer Ui’ is *Kumai’yk* (*q.v.*) and Ak Shumkar.

### **103. Ak Tai’lak [White Camel Calf]**

Bakai’yr village

*Shai’yk* – Samankul Asyrankulov

Type of mazar – stone. It is located 2 kilometers to the south of the village. The mazar Ak Tai’lak is surrounded by poles. The worshipped stone is in the middle. It is covered by the white cloth. Nearby, there is a tree. Further away is a hawthorn bush located on a riverbank. However, there is no water in the riverbed. Not reaching it, there are willow trees. Not far away, there is a house at the mazar for the visitors and those who make sacrifices to stay overnight. There is also a flat stone called Umai’ Enenin Suparasy. In addition, there is a stone that resembles a yurt. In front of the stone, there is a tree, and in front of the tree, there is a spring. If one looks up, one sees a silhouette of a two-humped camel calf that is also a stone.

#### *Ak Tai’lak Mazar*

#### **Oral history**

According to Samankul Ata, the *shai’yk* of the mazar, Manas Ata made a pilgrimage to this mazar. This mazar is considered to be one of the more popular and powerful mazars of Kyrgyzstan. The *ee* of this mazar is Ak Tai’lak because once upon a time all the mountains around were full of camel calves, but then they disappeared, and Ak Tai’lak stayed here with its mother. Ak Tai’lak lost its mother and sat down here. Nobody knew that Ak Tai’lak sat down here, because it turned into a stone, while nightingales were chanting in the surrounding trees.

This mazar is considered to be a mazar for children. In the lower part, there is a stone of *Umai' Ene*. Its owner is Ak Tai'lak. A sycamore tree used to grow nearby and when it was being cut down, it bled – real blood was flowing to the river. Once upon a time, seven *moldo* sat near this mazar. So, that sycamore tree was planted by one of those *moldo*. During that time, Narboto became a *bii'*. Therefore, this site was a camp of *bii'* Narboto. Now, its owner was Usta Döböt. At the entrance to this mazar, there grows an apricot tree. This tree blossoms and bears fruits all year round. People make jam out of the fruits. The fruits are very big.

People reinforce the holy power of the mazar with different stories. For example, the Russians carried out excavations here, having said they would find gold in the graves of this area. All those Russians died. Similarly, those who drove by in cars and raised dust became invalids. Those who said bad words in the vicinity of the mazar or spoke badly of it acquired speech defects. And those who made sacrifices at the mazar recovered their health. One local man was heavily indebted to the state. At that time, the mazar was flooded because its surrounding walls were deteriorating. After that man had strengthened the walls and cleaned up the mazar surroundings, he managed to pay his debts.

Another interesting example that people tell is that once upon a time, there was famine in this village. When the local people were dying from hunger, they saw a camel with its young and decided to slaughter the camel and eat it. When they approached the camel, the animal felt their intentions and escaped by jumping over a nearby river. However, its calf stayed there and when people approached it, it turned to stone. That camel calf was white. But nothing is known about the camel because it disappeared. Afterwards the first man that came here lost consciousness and fell down because of the strong influence of this site. Since then, people began to worship at this site. This mazar is one of the most important mazars in Talas valley.

The wife of Samankul Ata, who is the *shai'yk* of the mazar, is Burul Apa. She may also be called a *shai'yk* of the mazar. She told how she had once seen Ak Tai'lak: "I was young at that time, my twins were small. We had sheep in the barn and herded them. My husband had left for the village – we live close to the mazar. We were sitting inside our yurt when we heard the noise produced by a big camel near the yurt. I was afraid it would destroy the yurt. Then, my husband returned and I told him that a big camel had come up to our yurt. Since there were no big camels in our *sovhoz* (*q.v.*), I thought it might have been a camel that got lost. He replied no, it was Ak Tai'lak that had come to you. Then I was very happy that I had not gone out.

There were many cases when those who spoke wrongly about or behaved badly towards the mazar got their mouths or noses distorted.

#### **104. Baka Terek [Poplar Tree]**

Chong Kara Buura village

No guardian

Type of mazar – poplar tree and spring. The mazar is located somewhat apart from the village. Not far from the poplar tree there is a spring. The spring is in a cemented well. The well is round. Inside, there are big and small stones and a 1-meter long iron ladder.

#### **105. Mazar Bulak [Mazar Spring]**

Tamchy Bulak village

Guardian – Güljamal Alymbekova

Type of mazar – spring. At the end of Tamchy Bulak village, on Mirlan Dardanov Street, about 100 meters away from the house of Güljamal Alymbekova, there is a hill called Chyvyr.

The mazar Tamchy Bulak is located on that hill (Güljamal Eje keeps guardianship of that mazar). There are 11 eyes on the hill that ooze water and these combine into a spring. In order to make the spring water flow to their house, Güljamal Eje and her family dug a ditch all the way from the hill.

**106. Sai'dagy Bulak [Spring at the River]**

Bakyyi'an village

No guardian

Type of mazar – spring. It is located on the hill at the beginning of Sarymsak Usupbai' uulu Street in Bakyyi'an village to the south. A pipe was installed into the hillside – the spring water flows out from it. Another special feature is that the spring water is very salty. Most villagers drink water from that spring. The spring water falls into a ditch and flows from west to east. The villagers make *kudai'y tamak* here twice a year. Some people saw a white snake in the spring, therefore the owner of the spring is known as Ak Jytaan.

**107. Shamchyarak or Tegirmen [Torch or Mill]**

Tamchy Bulak village

No guardian

Type of mazar – spring and mill ruins. This mazar is located on the right side of the Tamchy Bulak village street that runs from east to west. In other words, it is situated right across the house of Güljamal Alymbekova, the guardian of the mazar Tamchy Bulak, about 800 meters away. The Echkilüü Mountains are to the north of it. Nearby, there is an old mill site. There are ruined walls of the mill and stones there.

**Oral history**

Long ago, this entire site was covered by houses. After the Kirovka Reservoir flooded this area, all the houses and mill were destroyed. The water of Shamchyarak spring falls into the Talas River that flows from east to west nearby. The spring water flows from south to north.

In the past, there was a mill near this mazar. Some people saw a flaming torch at the mill. That torch was only visible to holy people. Therefore, this mazar was called Shamchyarak.

**108. Asanbai' [A person's name]**

Ak Jar village

No guardian, the village muezzin looks after it

Type of mazar – grave. The mazar is located on the north-eastern side of Ak Jar village. It is a village grave. There is an old mosque near it.

**109. Tegirmen Tash [Millstone]**

Üch Bulak village

No guardian

Type of mazar – spring. This Tegirmen Tash spring is located at the border between the Kyrgyz and Kurdish neighborhoods in Üch Bulak village. The Kurdish neighborhood is situated to the north of the kitchen-garden of the last Kyrgyz household. The Kurds have nothing to do with the mazar.

At the mazar Tegirmen Tash, there are two stones and a spring. The distance between the stones is 7 steps, while the spring is located 3-4 steps beyond the second stone. The stones look very much alike, because both of them have a hole in the middle, and are of the same size, position and round form. The surfaces of both stones are flat. The site is surrounded by black willows and poplars. There are two trees between the two stones.

- 110. Kara Moldo [Black Mullah]**  
Chong Kara Buura village  
No guardian

Type of mazar – stone. The mazar is located on the southern side of the village, on top of a mountain. Stones are collected there and there is a stick stuck in the ground among them. People say that the Chinese left their signs there.

- 111. Ak Mazar [White Mazar]**  
Chong Kara Buura village  
No guardian

Type of mazar – juniper. The mazar is located 1 kilometer away from the village spring Kara Moldo. It is situated near the river, not on the top of the mountain. It is the only juniper that resembles a snake. There are no other trees and bushes around it.

### *Mazars of Bakai' Ata Region*

- 112. Kara Koyun Üngkür [Kara Koyun Cave]**  
Ürmaral village  
No guardian

Type of mazar – cave. Very large yellow stones and black stones with holes on the top are 10-15 meters above the road. At the entrance of the cave, there is a stone that is 3 meters long, 1 meter high and 1.5 meters wide. Starting from three meters the height of the cave gradually decreases towards the back. It is said that the entrance to the cave is in Besh Tash village and the exit is in Kök Tash village.

The cave is 15-20 meters above the road. Above the cave there are mountains. Inside, there are three spots from which water is dripping – the water is salty. It is dark inside the cave. In 1950, during the earthquake, big stones fell down and nowadays they lie around the cave in huge piles.



*Kara Koyun Üngkür*

**113. Kyzyl Nuura [Red Nuura]**

Booterek village

No guardian

Type of mazar – construction on the top of the hill. It covers an area of 1.5-2 hectares to the south of Booterek village. There is a high hill in the middle of sown land. On the top of the hill, there is a construction made of bricks. It is said to appear together with the mazar Booterek.

**114. Booterek [A person's name]**

Booterek village

*Shai'yk* – Sagynbek Eshaliev

Type of mazar – tree and spring. The mazar is located 100-150 meters above Booterek village close to its end. Very large trees grow along the road. It is located on the right side of the road to the west. There is a mausoleum of Janybek Baatyr and lots of sea-buckthorn around. Water comes out at the base of the large trees. At the base of one tree, there are triplet springs. The site covers an area of about a hectare.



*Booterek Mazar*

**Oral history**

The mazar is located close to Kluchevka (Ak Döbö) village. The architecture of the present Booterek is interesting. Its architectural composition resembles that of Manas Mausoleum very much, says scientist Bakyt E. Amanbaeva.

According to the *shai'yk* of the mazar, Sagynbek Eshaliev, Booterek was an *oluya* who lived in this area. He is said to have been 5 meters tall, 1.5 meters wide, and weigh approximately two tons. The elders of the Booterek mazar, Adamiya Ata, Kalpa Ata, Boztektir Ata, Bostun Bulak Ata, Baba Ata and Bacha Ata are located in Chatkal. Booterek Ata died here and was buried here. People began to worship a tree that grew not far away from the grave of Booterek Ata and eventually this area became a mazar. During the Soviet

period, a Russian man cut the tree down and he died.

One of the pilgrims said that the person who had ordered it cut down went mad and his two children died. Later, one Turk was herding sheep nearby. When he cut a branch of the tree, it bled a lot. Becoming afraid, the man returned to the village and made *kudai'y tamak*. From that day onwards, many people began to visit the mazar.

The *bübü* Burul Kojobekova says: “Booterek Ata has a spring called Nariste [Child]. Inside the spring, there are 124 prophet fathers and 328 babies. Then, at the base of the tree with the water of life, there is Chyi'yrdy, mother of Manas – she always sits there. When you go there, be hopeful and drop the dripping water onto your aching arms or legs – you will quickly recover”.

#### **115. Kyrk Kyzdyn Üngkürü [Cave of Forty Girls]**

Madaniyat village

No guardian

Type of mazar – ditch. The mazar is located on the mountainside. Although the mountain is made of hard stone and cement-like rock, people dug the ditch in it by hand (without any machines) along the mountainside. In order to ensure the water would not erode it, the sides of the ditch were thoroughly reinforced by stones. The length of the ditch is 15 kilometers, and its depth is 0.5 meters. On the right side of the road there is a valley where Ürmäral River flows. Around the river are thick bushes and trees. On the other side of the river there is a high mountain.

#### **116. Kelin Tash [Bride Stone]**

Madaniyat village

No guardian

Type of mazar – stone. The mazar is situated on the right side of the road near the village. It is located near the river. Close to it is a high mountain and trees and bushes. There, there is a stone that resembles a young woman in a white turban (*ileeki*).

#### **117. Archaluu [A Place with Many Junipers]**

Madaniyat village

Karakoyon gorge

No guardian

Type of mazar – juniper. The height of the mazar is 28 meters. It is located on a peak. There, there is a 7-8 meter long single juniper. It is not a regular juniper, but juniper that grows in a trailing fashion, so it is called creeping juniper (*japalak archa*). It has been there since long ago. Below, at the foot of the peak, there are 15 small junipers that grow out from the underground root of the big juniper. The roots of the juniper at the base have come out on the surface – they are very thick and prominent.

#### **118. Chat [Mountain]**

Namatbek village

No guardian

Type of mazar – tree. It is located above the village to the south. A river flows nearby but, unfortunately, at present there is no tree on the mazar. This is because during Soviet times, when atheism was at its height, the tree was burnt down after a *bübü* and *bakshy* was seen

worshipping it. Now, there are only its charred remains where it once grew. It always seems like it is rumbling there. At present, not many people go there.

**119. Sei'taaly [A person's name]**

Ming Bulak village

No guardian

Type of mazar – mausoleum. The mazar is located on the western side above the village. The distance from the mazar to the village is 1.5 kilometers. The mausoleum is built upon the fenced grave of Sei'taaly Ata. It is surrounded by the graves of people from the Agynai' tribe. Sei'taaly Ata he was also from this tribe. Overall, it covers 1.5-2 hectares of land.

Since this mazar is next to the mazar of Kalpa Ata, most people recite the Quran at this mazar, worship it, and then move on to the mazar of Kalpa Ata.

**120. Tortkül [Four Flowers]**

Ming Bulak village

No guardian

Type of mazar – hill. The mazar Tortkül is located within the village. The distance from the beginning of the village to Tortkül is 1.5 kilometers. The mazar Tortkül covers the area of 2.5-3 hectares. There are no special features in the area. This is a hill-like mazar 2.5 meters high. On its right side, there is a ditch. Further on, there is village land allotted to people.

**121. Ak Döng [White Hill]**

Ak Terek village

No guardian

Type of mazar – hill and spring. It is located at the beginning of the village, on the upper side of the threshing-floor. The mazar is surrounded by the villagers' allotments of land. It is not fenced. The hill-like mazar is located on an eminence 1.5-2 meters high. 50 meters away there is an isolated tree with a spring at its base. People come to recite the Quran on top of the hill, make pilgrimages, come to drink the spring water, and perform *sham jaguu*. Ak Döng covers 50-40 ares of land.

**122. Altyn Bulak [Gold Spring]**

Ak Döbö village

No guardian

Type of mazar – spring. It is located in the forest situated between Ak Döbö and Kyzyl Sai' villages. 200 meters into the forest there is a spring. Someone has encircled it with wires and on a piece of paper is written "Mazar". The Ürmäräl River flows 30-40 meters away from the mazar.

**123. Üch Terek [Three Poplar Trees]**

Ak Döbö village

No guardian

Type of mazar – tree. The mazar Üch Terek is situated in the Echkilüü Mountains. The distance from Üch Terek to the village is 3-3.5 kilometers. At present, it is no longer three

trees, because many young trees have grown around, totaling thirteen in number. There is no water around it. The girth of the old trees is 5 arm spans. The surroundings are very clean.

**124. Kyrk Bulak [Forty Springs]**

Ak Döbö village

No guardian

Type of mazar – spring. This mazar is located at the very beginning of the village, near the hydroelectric power station (*GES*). The surroundings include 2 barns to the north-west. The number of springs is less than 40. In fact, there are 18 springs; some of them are located near one another, while others are not.

**125. Kerege Tash [Threshold Stone]**

Kök Tash village

No guardian

Type of mazar – stone and spring. The mazar is located on the southern side of Kök Tash village, in the mountains. There are high stones with pigeon nests. Not far from there, there is a spring that looks like a bowl full of water. The water is salty and warm.

**126. Jalgyz Terek [Single Poplar]**

Madaniyat village

No guardian

Type of mazar – tree and spring. It is located to the south-west of the end of Madaniyat village. On its right side flows the Ürmäral river. Both sides are surrounded by the mountains. There is tree with a spring at its base. It flows into a big river. Passers-by do not easily notice that it is a mazar.

**127. Boztektir Ata [Boztektir Father]**

Namatbek village

No guardian

Type of mazar – stone. It is located in the Kümüshtak Mountains, 15 kilometers away from the village. The area covered by the mazar is 1.5 hectares. There is a stone with the weight of about 15 tons and height of 3.5 meters. The stone looks like it has Boztektir Ata hiding behind it. As an eagle was the *koldoochu* (*q.v.*) of Boztektir Ata, when the stone is looked at from behind, it appears that an eagle is protecting something. Nearby, there is a spring, fast stream, and forest. Also nearby there is another sea-buckthorn bush with ribbons and thread tied to the branches. On the right side, there is another big stone, also said to possess sacred qualities, and the following plants: juniper, absinthe, spurge-flax, sea-buckthorn, cherry, shadberry, ephedra, and dog-rose – almost all of these have strong healing qualities.

On the right side of the spring, there is a house made of stone and next to it a newly built small, one-room house. The stone house was built in 1989 by Būsada Eje together with other pilgrims. Later, in 2002, Chatkal, a 35-year-old businessman and resident of Namatbek village had a one-room house constructed for good deeds (*soopchuluk*). Inside the house, there is a stove, lamp, felt carpet and similar furnishings for sitting. In addition there is a cauldron and everything needed for preparing food: knives, kitchen-board, rolling pin, tablecloth and so on. On the shelves for the kitchenware is an unforgettable line of hand-writing: “Do not take away the facilities of this mazar – those who do will not see happiness in life”.

Before these two houses were constructed, pilgrims and *bübü* and *bakshy* had performed all their rituals (covering the head, starting a fire, keeping vigils, and staying overnight) at the rock situated to the left side of the spring.

### Oral history

According to information from *bübü* Būsada Mombekova:

Once upon a time, infidel (*kaapyr*) and Muslims battled and fought over religion. Many people were victims of this ruthless war. As a war leader, Boztekir Ata covered the fallen warriors with stones and thus left a trail. When the infidels pursued him and were about to kill he hid behind a big stone. Somehow, the stone filled up with a sacred power, softened and let Boztekir hide inside. As the eagle was *koldoochu* of Boztekir Ata, when the stone is looked at from behind, it resembles eagle protecting something. Nobody carved this stone – it is natural. The piles of stones on that onetime battlefield are considered to be the graves of fallen warriors, and this entire area is considered to be sacred.

#### 128. **Kumuru Baba** [*Kumuru Baba* (q.v.)]

Namatbek village  
Kümüshtak mountain  
No guardian

Type of mazar – anthill. It is located on the left side of the road that goes from the village to Kümüshtak Mountain. It is mud anthill about half a meter tall. To the left of the anthill, there is a willow tree, poplar tree and the rapidly flowing Kümüshtak River. To the right, there is a road and high mountains. The trees around the anthill look as if they were shielding it.

#### 129. **Chumgent Baba** [**Chumgent Father**]

Namatbek village  
Kümüshtak mountain  
No guardian

Type of mazar – valley. There is no specially marked site, however one area is called sacred there. The top of the mountain is in triangular form that's why it is called Chumgent Baba mazar. To the right, there is a mountain; to the left – forest, river, and high mountains. This site is one of the most beautiful and blessed places.

#### 130. **Arzymat Ata** [**Arzymat Father**]

Bakai' Ata village  
No guardian

Type of mazar – mausoleum. It is located on the top of the hill above the village, near the cemetery. According to Būsada Mombekova, the mausoleum was built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is made of bricks fired in the fat of 7000 goats. The foundation and walls are made of juniper and its height is about 6 meters.

### Oral history

According to information from *bübü* Būsada Mombekova:

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century CE, there was an extremely rich man, who possessed countless livestock and helped his people through trade. He never traveled just from south to north and

back, but he traveled and made money in many different places. When people who envied of him decided to ambush him when he was coming over the pass, the sacred power of Arzymat Ata turned his lonely silhouette into the silhouettes of a thousand men and confused his enemies. Hence, his *koldoochu* was strong. The mausoleum was built while he was alive.

**131. Sasyk Bulak [Stinking Spring]**

Bakai' Ata village

No guardian

Type of mazar – spring. It is situated at the base of the mountain. The spring starts out as a marsh and then comes in a stream that people lengthened with a pipe so that it is easy to take water from it. It is located in the middle of thick sea-buckthorn. Its water tastes of soda and salt.

**132. Ak Terek Ata [White Poplar Father]**

Ming Bulak village

No guardian

Type of mazar – tree and spring. The mazar is located in the middle of a valley in Echkilüü Mountains. There are about 30 poplar trees there – old trees at the top and only young trees at the bottom. The spring is located somewhat higher up. It flows meandering among the trees. The current of the water is very slow. The surrounding of Ak Terek is about stones and sandy reddish clay. A little further up, there is a stone yard, with a stone hearth. In the mountain range nearby, there is a cave in the rock.

**133. Osek Ata [Osek Father]**

Özgorüşh village

No guardian

Type of mazar – mausoleum. The mazar Osek Ata is located in front of the Özgorüşh brickworks, and the brickworks are located at the beginning of Özgorüşh village on the left side. Osek Ata had this mazar built of mudbrick when he was still alive. The mausoleum has a quadrangular form. Its entrance looks north. The roof has a triangular shape.

Because it has been there for a long time, the right side has begun to collapse. There is no protection around it, not even trees and bushes. About 100 years must have passed since the mausoleum was constructed on the top of the hill.

**Oral history**

According to Anarkül Kulusheva, the guardian of the Kur Tash Mazar, Osek Ata is said to have been *oluya*. He did not have children so a day before his death he had a grave dug, laid juniper down, called his sisters-in-law to weep, and said: “When I die, bury me here”. He said: “The deceased slaves of God around me will all be burnt by men, and I will be looking at you unburnt”. Just as he said, brickworks were established there. The human remains there were disinterred and cremated. For unknown reasons, only the mazar of Osek Ata remained untouched.

One boy went there to play and became a cripple. Long ago, the mazar Osek Ata was studied, even in Moscow, and after having realized its sacred powers, it was left untouched. Then, when the brickworks were operating, the boy that drove a car into the mausoleum died.

In the past, the brickworks operated nearby. Because of the curse of Osek Ata they no longer operate nowadays. The remains of many people, including young girls, were excavated there. This site had previously been a village cemetery. The excavations were made in search of clay.

#### **134. Dölön Atanyn Mazary [Mazar of Dölön Father]**

Özgörüşh village

Guardian – Anarkül Kulusheva

Type of mazar – grave. This mazar is not surrounded by anything, it is just the grave. Dölön Ata was buried here, but after the burial he left his grave. This mazar is close to the mazar Kur Tash, the distance between them is 80 meters. First mazar is Dölön Atanyn Mazary and then Kur Tash mazar. The grave is the size of a basin. There are no trees and bushes growing nearby, only some petty grass. In the past, the hole was very big, but year after year it has been shrinking.

#### **Oral history**

According to Anarkül Kulusheva, the guardian of the Kur Tash mazar, *oluya* Dölön was here. That *oluya* is said to have taken the path of Allah, and sincerely submitted himself to Allah. Thinking that if he married, he would love his wife and children and Allah might reject him, he did not marry, did not have children, and would travel around as a *dubana* and chant.

Oogan *moldo*, a resident of Özgörüşh village, told the following:

Dölön Ata was born in 1903. His relatives in Kengaral were from the Shaa tribe. There is a *moldo* there called Rai'yimkul – they are related to him. In the village, there was a strong man, *Kurman Baatyr*. On his way to Tüi'to village, he met Dölön Dubana. Dölön was *oluya* and the *oluya* are clairvoyant. Passing by, he told Kurman: “Hey, Kurman Baatyr, you have *koldoochu*”. Kurman Baatyr did not show people any respect. He ignored them and left without listening. When he reached Tuito and entered the house, he was unable to sit calmly, and raged instead. His right ear and jaw suddenly swelled up. Impatiently he hurried to leave saying that he really had to. After returning home, he kept repeating: “Please, invite that Dölön Dubana, call Dölön Dubana”. He was no longer a hero – he behaved like a scared child.

Two of his horsemen went out to look for Dölön Dubana. Along the way, they asked some people if they had seen Dölön Dubana. They replied that he had just passed. They came to Ak Döbö village and asked people there, who gave a similar answer. In this way, they found Dubana in Ak Döbö. They told him “Dölön Ata, please return – Kurman Baatyr is feeling bad”. When they arrived to the destination on horse, the jaw of Kurman Baatyr had swollen up and become red. Dubana came up to him saying “Oh, hero!” and gently slapped him on the jaw. The hero fell down. Dubana had him covered with warm clothes and blankets. The men slaughtered a kid and cooked it in the big cauldron. When the meat was ready, Dölön Dubana said to Kurman: “Now, hero, join us for the meal!” and the hero joined them.

After that, the hero began to show respect to regular folk and greet people. Before his death, Dölön Dubana told his relatives in Keng Aral: “I am one person, but dig me three graves, even though I will lie down in only one of them. I am telling you three, because after digging 1.5 meters down, you will find 3 kinds of 3 different goods in each of the three graves – each item will have different qualities. If three people take them, put it in their chests, and keep them locked there, for 7 generations their kin will not lack livestock nor experience theft or illness”. After the death of Dubana, when they dug the first grave, they found a red granite stone, well-shaped, with a hole for the necklace and an edge for sharpening knives. Among

those who dug the grave were Dubana's relative, and the other people told him to take the stone as he was related to Dubana. One *bai'* learnt about the qualities of that stone and, having taken a sheep, came to that man's house. He told the owner of the stone "Give me the stone and take a sheep in exchange. Please, take the sheep – I am begging you – and give me the stone". Because he was simple-minded, the man exchanged the stone for the sheep. And the *bai'* took away the stone.

It is unknown what has happened to that stone since that time, because when the *bai'*s were persecuted during Soviet times, it got lost. However, the progeny of that *bai'* has never been without livestock. The old men that were digging the grave said: "Well, Dubana told us to dig three holes, but Dubana says high and low - why shall we trouble ourselves? What good is this stone? We will not dig three holes". They dug only one and buried Dubana's body there. And Dölön Dubana had told his relatives: "After having buried me, spend 3 days and 3 nights near my grave. If you do this, my spirit will stay here and protect this Bakai' Ata land, Özgörüş, and brickworks until the last day. I shall leave, but my spirit will stay and it will not allow anyone else to stay."

For instance, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century CE, the first 10 Russian households moved down here and settled on the lower part of Keng Aral. And Dölön Dubana had said he would not let others stay, that his spirit would not allow that. During that time, this land was governed by an elected *bolush* representing the Kokand Khanate. That *bolush* said "the Russians are bad, their religion is different, let them not stay in Keng Aral. Our land must be pure; we shall not let non-Muslims stay!" He went to the Russians and said "I give you 3 days time to leave this land. If in 3 days you are still here, I will bring Kyrgyz cavalymen, attack you and drive you out". Frightened, the Russians ran away. So, Dölön Dubana kept his promise.

Later on, the brickworks were set up here. The workers reported that they heard crackling until dawn because the iron structures were breaking down. The welded iron frame was breaking, and the steam-boilers were exploding. Finally, having broken into uselessness, the brickworks stopped operations. This shows the strength of Dölön Dubana.

### **135. Kur Tash [Belt Stone]**

Özgörüş village

Guardian – Anarkül Kulusheva

Type of mazar – a small cave with a spring and a tree. It is situated on the eastern side of Özgörüş village to the right. It is located under the hill to the left from the old, non-working brickworks. On top of the hill are long, flat stones. In front of the stones, there is a place where people can have tea and stay overnight. Visiting pilgrims drink tea there and stay overnight. In that place, there is a special place for the big cauldron with cauldron-holders, a broom for sweeping up, and a mat for sitting. Those stones start as brown and end as deep black. Ill livestock were also brought there to stay and they got well.

The most interesting feature is that on top of the stones grows the grass called *kii'ik ot.* This herb is good for stomach problems, headaches, and depression. People pick that herb, dry it and drink a decoction made from it.

Nearby, a big tree is growing. Its height is approximately 6-7 meters. There is a spring in front of the stones. In order to protect it from dirt, it was covered by an iron construction.

In order to facilitate the flow of the spring water, a tube was installed there and the water flows from the tube. Since the mazar is situated under the hill near the river, it is surrounded by plenty of elms, sea-buckthorn, and other trees and bushes.

### **Oral history**

Information provided by Anarkül Kulusheva:

The stones here resemble a long belt – this must be the reason for the name. Nobody knows its complete history. I personally called the spring *Altyn Bulak* [Gold Spring], because this spring has been a remedy to numerous people. For example, if I come here when I feel sick, I get well. I wanted to bring and lay a carpet here – if God wills, I will bring it. Our ancestors also made pilgrimages to this site, brought ill sheep there, and spent time here themselves. In the past, the branches of the tree were full of tied ribbons. Then, I took them all off one by one and burnt them while praying that the pilgrims' wishes come true.

**136. Aty Jok [Nameless] (called simply The Spring)**

Kyrgyzstan village

No guardian

Type of mazar – spring. It is located at the border of the kitchen-garden of Ryskulbek Ashyrmatov, a resident of Kyrgyzstan village. The spring is not protected – it is surrounded by petty grass. Two-three meters away from the spring, there are trees and bushes. Further away from the kitchen-garden is ravine-like, lowering down. The spring is located there.

According to Sabira Ashyrmatova, a daughter of Ryskulbek, at the bottom of the spring, some time ago there was a big willow tree. That tree covered the spring and when it began to suppress it, the tree was cut down by local residents of the village. Sometimes, 2 white snakes appear in the spring (not always, just sometimes). There are many snakes around the spring. Residents of the village living close to the spring come to it and cook some sacrifice food. Sometimes, pilgrims come in groups of 2-3 people.

Sabira Eje says: “I possess *kyrgyzchylyk*. According to my feelings, I have to visit mazars. The spring at home is also expecting something from me. If I get enough money, I have to recite the Quran there, because I often see this spring in my dreams”.

*Mazars of the Nyldy Ata Complex*

**Nyldy Ata [Nyldy Father]**

Özgörüsh village

*Shai'yk* – Jengish Kudakeev

Nyldy Ata is situated in the rocky valley in the Echkilüü mountain range. One can say that the entire valley is related to this mazar. At the beginning of the valley, on the western side, on the top of a big, flat stone is a cone-shaped hollow (diameter ~1 m) and the water wells out of it. The water flows down along the valley in a stream. The water flowing from this waterfall goes east till the end of the valley. Below the waterfall (~ 40 m), on the northern side of the valley, there is a hole in the mountainside. We call it a big cave or ordo. Inside the hole, water is slowly dripping from the wall. There are three hearths suitable for big cauldrons, along with cookwares, and sitting mats. This is the mazar Ordo – the center of the mazar Nyldy Ata.

The Nyldy Ata complex encompasses 22 mazars. They are all located in the Echkilüü Mountains at the foothills of Chong Tuyuk and Kichi Tuyuk.

Below are the names and GPS-specified (Global Positioning System) numbers of mazars in the Nyldy Ata complex:

1. Köz Bulak [Eye spring]
2. Sharkyratma [Waterfall]
3. Ajydaar Tal [Dragon Tree]
4. Chong Üngkür, or Ordo [Big Cave, or Court]

5. Ajydaar Üngkür [Dragon Cave]
6. Kalpa Ata [Kalpa Father]
7. Jarylgan Jürök [Broken Heart]
8. Küzgü Tash [Mirror Stone]
9. Tamchy Bulark [Dripping Spring]
10. Jalgyz Terek [Single Poplar]
11. Beshik Bulak [Cradle Spring]
12. Nyldy Atanyn Jai'ky Konushu [Summer Shelter of Nyldy Ata]
13. Darbaza [Gates]
14. Ochok [Hearth]
15. Bala Mazary or Bala Bei'it [Child Mazar, or Child's Grave]
16. Akkulanyyn Mamysy [Akkula's Tethering Pillar]
17. Bel Ooruga Shypaa [Remedy to Backache]
18. Nyldy Atanyn Kyshky Konushu [Winter Shelter of Nyldy Ata]
19. Nyldy Atanyn Tashy [Nyldy Ata's Stone]
20. Kyz Bulak [Girl Spring]
21. Semetei' Atanyn Turgan Jai'y [Site Where Semetei' Ata Once Stopped]
22. Küi'gön Archa [Burnt Juniper]

### Oral history

About Nyldy Ata: According to Jengish Kudakeev, this person had lived and passed away before Prophet Noah (*Nuh*). During his lifetime, he never married. Being a healer, he cured people of various diseases. In his young ages, Nyldy Ata treated about 30 children as his own, and loved and raised them to adulthood. When he turned 60 years old, his peers said: “You are old now, why do not you marry? – You should leave a *tuyak* (*q.v.*) behind,” and suggested that he should marry the 15-year-old daughter of one of them. But Nyldy Ata answered: “Why bother marrying? I am not going to marry. Your names will be remembered for a century at most, while mine will be preserved through the centuries.” Nyldy Ata's saying: “A mountain I knew has become a river now, while the river has become a mountain,” is evidence that he lived across many centuries.

Oogan *moldo*, a resident of the village Özgörüş, says, “Nyldy Ata had lived and passed away long before Manas Ata. If Manas Ata is 1000 years old, Nyldy Ata 2000 is years old. According to what people tell, there were three people then that spoke three languages, but they are invisible to people. The first one speaks Kyrgyz, the second one speaks Arabic, and the third one speaks Hindi.

At present, there is a brook at the mazar. Shepherds herd cows along that brook and the cows defile that place. Nowadays, some funding has been allocated to this mazar – I do not know the source though. Using this funding, a resident of our village, clairvoyant Jengish takes care of the mazar and protects it from livestock. I also visited that site – I had problems with my liver. When I came, one man was cultivating a piece of land there. He invited me for a cup of tea at his house. I was drinking tea without any sugar. There was a kettle, about three liters in volume. I do not know how, but I drank it up, while at home I could not drink up even a liter of tea. That water was the water from the mazar, and motivated by its sacred potential, I drank up three liters. Both my liver-ache and fatigue faded away. I realized that the site was sacred because of that. I did not get ill a lot after that”.

### 137. Köz Bulak [Eye Spring]

Özgörüsh village  
*Shai'yk* – Jengish Kudakeev

Type of mazar – spring. It is located 7 kilometers away to the north-east of Özgörüsh village. It is surrounded by the mountains. Some people refer to Kóz Bulak as Kazan [Cauldron] Mazar. The depth of Kóz Bulak is 1 meter. The water of Kóz Bulak flows 6 meters till the cliff edge and then flows down to the ravine. A big stone has been eroded and the spring comes out from its base. When looked at from above, Kóz Bulak resembles a human eye. It also resembles a big cauldron. Its bed is smooth – small algae grow there. This mazar is located in the center of Chong Tuyuk. The distance from Kóz Bulak to the waterfall is 95 meters. Having walked 60 meters one needs to go 3.5-meter down the cliff in order to reach Sharkyratma.

In 1988, Jengish *moldo*, a resident of Özgörüsh village, cleaned the spring. According to his words, it had been cleaned until the 1930s. Thereafter, it was uncared for.

Kóz Bulak was cleaned and encircled with stones by Aigine members. At the entrance of the mazar, there is a sign with the name of the *shai'yk* and the name of the supporting organization.

**138. Sharkyratma [Waterfall]** *River, Kóz Bulak after the construction*  
Özgörüsh village  
*Shai'yk* – Jengish Kudakeev

Type of mazar – waterfall. The water falls down from a height of 6 meters. From the side, the mazar resembles half of a yurt. The surrounding area is a ravine. In the cave behind the waterfall, there are small algae. A little further away, stones are put up as a path across the river to allow the people to cross it. This mazar is called Bosogo [Threshold], because people coming to Kóz Bulak should walk under the waterfall. People who have walked under it are believed to be purified.

*Sharkyratma*

**139. Ajydaar Tal [Dragon Tree]**  
Özgörüsh village  
*Shai'yk* – Jengish Kudakeev

Type of mazar – tree. This mazar located 20 meters further away from the mazar Sharkyratma at the river running 3 meters below. The girth of the tree is about three men's arm spans. The tree has ten big branches. On the left side of the tree, there is a small spring coming out of the side of the ravine.

**140. Chong Üngkür [Big Cave], or Ordo [Court]**  
Özgörüsh village  
*Shai'yk* – Jengish Kudakeev

Type of mazar – cave. The total length of Ordo is 30 meters. It is a very comfortable place for the coming people to cook in a cauldron, boil water in kettles, sit and eat, and have a rest. A spring runs down the hill from the height of 120 cm. The cave is formed in the base of the cliff. The visitors sit there. There is a big stone on the eastern side of Ordo from which Muslims are called for prayer (*azan*). The distance between Ajydaar Tal and Ordo is 100 meters. There are always three fireplaces, plates and dishes, one cauldron and 3 kettles there. Pilgrims use them.

The territory of the mazar was cleaned and fenced with stone walls by Aigine members.

**141. Ajydaar Ungkur [Dragon Cave]**

Özgörüşh village

*Shai`yk* – Jengish Kudakeev

Type of mazar – cave. It is situated on the right side of the path, 160 meters from the mazar Ordo, in the middle of the cliff, 40-50 meters high. Stones had fallen and shut down the entrance. Nobody seems to know its history well. There is only a story that once upon a time there was a dragon that lived in that cave.

**142. Jarylgan Jürök [Broken Heart]**

Özgörüşh village

*Shai`yk* – Jengish Kudakeev

Type of mazar – stone. The stone resembles a heart broken in two parts. It is situated on the left side of the road. The distance from the mazar Ordo is 900 meters. There is a cliff to the left. The mazar is 2 meters above the cliff. The height of the stones is 5 meters; the overall area is 12 meters. The heart looks broken in two parts. A small stone in the middle connects these two parts.

**143. Küzgü Tash [Mirror Stone]**

Özgörüşh village

*Shai`yk* – Jengish Kudakeev

Type of mazar – stone. Women and girls with facial eczema and acne come here, repent, and worship contacting their faces with the stone. The reason why Küzgü Tash was called like that is because the stone is smooth like the mirror. This stone is located on the left side of Jarylgan Jürök, 10 meters away from it. Incontinent people that pilgrimage to this site recover from their ailment.

*Jarylgan Jürök*

*Küzgü Tash*

**144. Tamchy Bulak [Dripping Spring]**

Özgörüsh village  
*Shai'yk* – Jengish Kudakeev

Type of mazar – spring. It is located at 7-8 meters up the side of the mountain. Since the water drips from the mountain, it was named accordingly. Its inside is ravine-like. The water is dripping from two places.

If good, benevolent people come, the water drips. Otherwise, it does not. This site relieves negative influences on people. The spring is located on the left side of Jarylğan Jürök, 300 meters away from it, up the mountainside.

With the help of Aigine, the mazar was fenced with wire-mesh fencing. At the entrance of the mazar, there is a sign with the name of the *shai'yk* and the name of the supporting organization. There are stone seats that people may sit on.

**145. Jalgyz Terek [Single Poplar]**

Özgörüsh village  
*Shai'yk* – Jengish Kudakeev

Type of mazar – tree. The mazar is located 3-meters up a tight crevice. The height of the tree is 12-13 meters.

**146. Beshik Bulak [Cradle Spring]**

Özgörüsh village  
*Shai'yk* – Jengish Kudakeev

Type of mazar – spring. This mazar is visited mostly by infertile women who come to stay here overnight. The spring is 230 meters away from the Tamchy Bulak. Ten meters away to the north-west of the spring, there is a big stone. At the base of the stone, there is a hearth. Visiting women stay here overnight; sometimes they sacrifice their livestock and recite the Quran.

*Beshik Bulak*

**147. Nyldy Atanyn Jai'ky Konushu [Summer Shelter of Nyldy Ata]**

Özgörüsh village  
*Shai'yk* – Jengish Kudakeev

Type of mazar – mountainside and willow-tree. There are three big willow-trees here. The water of Tash Bulak flows through here and then into the river. In the upper part of the river, there is a settlement of over twenty people. There is a hearth here. In general, people coming to the Tash Mazar sacrifice livestock and eat it here.

*Nyldy Atanyn Jai'ky Konushu*

**148. Darbaza [Gates]**

Özgörüsh village

*Shai'yk* – Jengish Kudakeev

Type of mazar – stone. Such mazars are called entry gates. Here, there are 10 hollows on a large boulder.

According to *shai'yk* Jengish *moldo*, a person who enters must pick up 7 stones and throw them into the hollows. If even one stone gets in, the visitor's wish will come true, says the *shai'yk*. If not, it will not bring any harm, but it might be that none of the wishes of the visitor will come true in full, Jengish *moldo* explains. Such a person had better plan on another visit to Nyldy Ata. If the thrown stone does not go in the hollow, but goes up and stays on the top of the stone, it means that the thrower will rise in status.

The mazar is located at the beginning of the river. Gradually stone-throwing at this mazar is becoming a tradition. Historically it is said that this was Manas Ata's *toguz korgool* (*q.v.*).

**149. Ochok [Hearth]**

Özgörüsh village

*Shai'yk* – Jengish Kudakeev

Quarreling young married people come to the mazar seeking a remedy to strengthen their family hearth.

*Ochok Mazar*

**150. Bala Bei'it [Child Grave]**

Özgörüsh village

*Shai'yk* – Jengish Kudakeev

Type of mazar – grave. This mazar is considered to be one of the mazars inside Tuyuk. The distance to the fence of this mazar is 430 meters. It is located on the left side of the road, 1.5

*Bala Bei'it*

meters from it. On the northern side of the mazar, there is a ruined stone yard. On the other side of the stone yard, there is a 6-meter high rock. Two sides of the mazar, i.e. northern and southern sides, are covered with small hills. There is no shade around the mazar. The grave is

protected with small stones that go around it at half a meter height. It is said that a 5-year-old boy and a 3-year-old girl were buried here.

**Oral history:**

According to the *shai'yk* Jengish, 130-155 years ago one shepherd stayed here on the winter pasture with his livestock. His 5-year-old son and 3-year-old daughter both contracted rubella and died in one day. The boy died in the evening while the girl died later around dawn. Due to the huge amount of snow, the shepherd could not manage to take them to the village cemetery and bury them there, so he dug a common grave in front of the house and buried both of them there.

**151. Akkulanyn Mamysy [Tether of Akkula (*q.v.*)]**

Özgörüş village

*Shai'yk* – Jengish Kudakeev

Type of mazar – stone. To the north of Nyldy Ata *kyshtoo* (*q.v.*), at a distance of 95 meters, on top of a 10-meter high mountain, the Tether of Akkula is located. The height of the stone tether is approximately 15 meters and its length is 8 meters. On the top of the stone, there is a stick stuck into the stone. The length of the stick is about 1.5 meters. It is said that the shepherd that had stuck this stick in got his arm and leg paralyzed when he descended from the top of the stone tether.

**Oral history:**

Manas Ata tethered his horse Akkula here. This is according to people's words.

When Manas Ata was riding Akkula and driving out the Chinese and Kalmaks and reached this place, he tethered his horse to this pillar and put grass into a trough. After that, this site was deemed sacred.

*Akkulanyn Mamysy*

**152. Nyldy Atanyn Kyshky Konushu [Winter Shelter of Nyldy Ata]**

Özgörüş village

*Shai'yk* – Jengish Kudakeev

Type of mazar – mountainside. 800 meters away from Bala Bei'it, the Winter Shelter of Nyldy Ata is located. This mazar is considered to be the beginning of the mazars situated in big and small Tuyuk.

Pilgrims that do not reach the main mazars worship only at this site. In the past, this site was considered to be a court. It is a ravine-like natural barrier with the height of 8 meters and length of 20 meters, dating to 33 centuries BCE. This mazar was where Nyldy Ata spent wintertime, it was heavily populated. The entrance of the ravine is looking east.

**153. Nyldy Atanyn Tashy [Stone of Nyldy Ata]**

Özgörüşh village

*Shai'yk* – Jengish Kudakeev

Type of mazar- stone. Pilgrims come to the mazar called the Stone of Nyldy Ata to get there knee-aches cured.

**154. Kyz Bulak [Girl Spring]**

Özgörüşh village

*Shai'yk* – Jengish Kudakeev

Type of mazar – tree and spring. To the south of the mazar, there is spring under a big tree. The spring starts at the base of the tree and flows through its roots. 15-20 meters away to the south of the spring, there are boulders. The location of this mazar is called Kichi Tuyuk. The spring is surrounded by small protecting iron shields. A special feature is that many pigeons live in the mountain-like stones. The northern and southern parts of the spring are surrounded with small hills.

**155. Bel Ooruga Shypaa Mazary [Remedy for Backache]**

Özgörüşh village

*Shai'yk* – Jengish Kudakeev

Type of mazar- stone. Pilgrims with backaches come to lean against the stone. This mazar is very good for those with sensitive or painful nerves and vessels in the pelvic area.

**156. Semetei' Ata Turgan Jeri [Place Where Semetei' Ata Once Stopped]**

Özgörüşh village

*Bel Ooruga Shypaa Mazar*

*Shai'yk* – Jengish Kudakeev

Type of mazar - tree. It is believed that once upon a time, Semetei' and his forty *chiltens* (*q.v.*) stopped at this tree.

**157. Küi'gön Archa (Besh Jashar Kyzdyn Jai'y) [Burnt Juniper (Bed of the five-year-old girl)]**

Özgörüşh village

*Shai'yk* – Jengish Kudakeev

Type of mazar – juniper and grave. The mazar is set up on the top of the mountain at a 10 meter height. There is a legend that a five-year-old girl was buried there in the roots of the burnt juniper. Along the perimeter, the burial place is fenced with wood. The juniper is on the eastern side 1 meter away from the grave. A big stone is placed on the top. There is a barn on the south-eastern side of the mazar. In 1928-1930, there was a Russian operated pig farm there. On the eastern side of the mazar, there is a small stream that flows south.

## Chapter Two

# THE MAIN REGULATIONS ON VISITING A MAZAR AND WHY PEOPLE GO

### Foreword

There are different understandings and reasons behind why Kyrgyz people visit a *mazar* (q.v.). Everyone with whom we talked in the Talas region—regardless of their village—had some opinion to offer with regard to mazars.

Most of those we interviewed were mazar practitioners who see praying at a mazar as an essential part of their lives. They come to the mazar with different reasons and in different ways. Some of these reasons are presented below.

To summarize the motives, we turn to a famous Kyrgyz proverb: “The first wealth is health, the second is happiness, and the third is prosperity”. This proverb continues to define and prioritize the values important to the Kyrgyz people. Health, family welfare, achievements in the society, peace of people and land—these are important things that every person always needs. As our research in Talas shows, in the consciousness of people visiting a mazar, there is a close association with the attainment of these values. For those who believe in their power, mazars are holy places used to connect people with super forces and help believers achieve their goals and realize their plans.

Aigine has been conducting participatory research on the main rules and requirements of mazar visit and worship since 2004. As with other mazar related issues, there is no existing document that completely defines the regulations and expectations associated with mazar worship.

With this in mind, members of Aigine made visits to mazars to gain an experience on the route of pilgrims and to conduct ethnographic observations. They met several times with pilgrims, who made visits for many years to different mazars, and had the issue about the documents of the regulation for the discussion.

Although the rules and requirements for visiting a mazar are not written, those making the trips are aware of the regulations. Aigine understood that people were aware of regulations by seeing it in mazars and discussions. The issue about the rules and regulations was discussed with different people who often held the same opinions about the requirements.

The rules and requirements that pilgrims keep in visiting a mazar have been learned orally from each other. As most of people, who make mazar visits along their whole lives; say that there was no difficulty in remembering and carrying out the rules. The most important requirement is that the person visiting the mazar does so with his or her best hopes. In addition, the person should make ablution and it is advised that s/he come with some food. After coming to the mazar, the Quran will be recited and a blessing will be given. It is prohibited to damage the nature surrounding a mazar; to drink alcohol, to smoke, to have

sexual intercourse, to pollute the environment at holy places; and to remove or destroy things that belong to mazars. Moreover, one elderly woman noted that women should not go to mazars during menstruation.

If mazar visitors have been keeping for centuries the core of necessary rules and requirements a question is likely to arise what this discussion is for. Aigine would answer as following: Kyrgyzstan is now an open country for different inner and outer influences and thoughts. Mazars are also likely to be open for tourism. Not only people who need and interested in *kyrgyzchylyk* (*q.v.*) but also people, who do not know about Kyrgyz world may go there.

We think it is important for the Kyrgyz people in the time of such an openness to learn the rules and requirements of the mazar trip and to introduce it as much as possible to the society and to “others”. There is hope that these regulations will help keep the sacredness and special powers of holy places.

### “WHY DO YOU VISIT MAZARS?”

**T.K.:** I came because I am sick.

**K.S.:** I came with the wish that my children grow well and were good.

**A.B.:** I have gone to the mazars for 10 years. I got seriously sick. When I went to *bübü* (*q.v.*), I was told to go to the mazar. Other healers said the same. At the hospital, my diagnosis was unclear. So I began visiting mazar.

**R.R.:** Much happened. My mother is *közü achyk* (*q.v.*) and cures people. She would bring us together to purify our souls from evil. So then I also became a *közü achyk* and started coming here.

**R.R.:** I was sick. My cousin came with me. His mother was also seriously sick, and village *bübü* told them to go to mazar. We came along with them as well and went to mazar.

**K.N.:** I have known about the power of mazar since I was a child. I was born here. Our great grandfathers used to come. I was sick with *kyrgyzchylyk* and unable to get better at the hospital. I diagnosed myself and now I come to mazar. Now life is good.

**K.D.:** I am sick without any diagnosis; I do not know which part of my body is sick. Sometimes I feel like someone is stifling me.

**C.T.:** I was so sick that I was about to go mad. I just became a looser. I got better after visiting mazar. Those who would say that I was crazy, now come to me themselves to get cured.

**J.B.:** The reason for visiting mazar is that I believe in sacredness of mazars. Moreover, I have goiter, some pain in my feet, and of course I come to worship for peace, health and the longevity of my family. I started worshipping after I got sick, twelve years ago.

**I.B.:** The reason for attending mazar is my wish that everything was fine with my children. I accepted *kyrgyzchylyk* and that’s why I visit mazar.

**O.A.:** Our shoulders and necks feel heavy usually, yet when we go to mazar, we feel released. So we go there because of health. Mazar is a cure for us.

**D.K.:** I annoy my children by getting angry and scolding them. When I visit mazar my mood changes to good. I have visited mazars for 10 years.

**N.N.:** My sister-in-law had her body covered with sores and spent some time at the hospital. She did not get well and this water from spring is now helping her.

**M.M.:** The main reason we come here is for health. We stay at home when everything is fine; health problems take a person everywhere. These sacred places are really good for diseases, especially psychological and internal diseases. If God wills, we get well from the springs. It is good to come often, but due to economic conditions I came after 2 years. I was very sick and now I am much better.

**D.A.:** As people say that Kochkor Ata [*Ata* means Father] is a sacred place, I came to worship. I have two children and I come to wish them to be healthy and happy.

**R.D.:** When I go to mazar, I feel really easy as if I got rid of a heavy burden. My mood changes and I become relaxed. In addition to that, when we return from mazar our problems get solved somehow.

**V.A.:** I have seen cemeteries in my dreams for 2-3 years. In my dreams I can see and feel the good and bad among my relatives and myself. I cannot get on the bus and have often headaches. When I turned to *bübü* they said to go to mazar.

**M.B.:** Since my early years I have had seizures and I would fall. My brother Chargyn (a powerful mullah who can ride a man as a donkey and make the water change its direction) would take me to Ak Ui' mazar. If he would not do this, I would lie sick.

**B.T.:** I think nowadays many people go to mazars, because people loose their dignity and get affected by many diseases. As a way out, they go to mazars and return getting cured. This is a sign sent by Allah. I used to drink alcohol and smoke. Then my life got worse, my children had some problems with their heath and my wife got seriously sick. It was a sign. Then I saw a prophetic dream (*ayan*) to go to mazar. I did not want to go, but had to because I could loose my family.

**A.R.:** When I go to mazar I get much energy. Mazars have special power.

**T.B.:** I was not used to go to mazar. Later in 1992 I got seriously sick. I went to hospital but no result. Then I went to Kalybek Ake [*Ake* means Brother] who said he would heal me. On the first day he did *dem saluu* (*q.v.*) I just laughed. Kalybek Ake somehow felt uncomfortable. He said to come the next day. The same thing was repeated. On the third day I fell shivering. After that, he said to visit mazar.

**U.K.:** According to our rules, we must go to mazar and return purified. For example, we visit many places, sometimes good places, sometimes we meet bad people, and sometimes we visit indecent places. That's why we come to these pure places to get purified. The air is especially pure, we come to breathe it, and we read Quran and then go back.

**U.U.:** First we come to pray to Allah for the spirits of the dead and read the Quran for them. I first came to Allah after being sick. I used to have my pelvis being dislocated when I would walk somewhere. Then I would stand and go when someone would come and rub it.

**B.B.:** I really suffered from being sick, that's why I started going to mazar. When I come to mazar, I really feel easy.

**T.Y.:** I went when I was in the ninth and tenth grades. I had various visions, I cried because of fear and I went to mazar. I came back sick. I was seriously sick that I had problems with my nose and tongue. Then I had myself healed and became able to take part in *jar saluu* (*q.v.*) ritual.

**T.R.:** The reason was that I had stroke for 4 years and went to many places. I also went to the private hospitals in Bishkek but no change. So I come here because of my health.

**T.R.:** I had a stroke. I used to work at hospital. During the operation I was making, I had a stroke and fell down. Since that time, I have come to mazar to worship. Before that, when I was frightened I would read *Surahs* (*q.v.*). My sickness would become more intense when I took medicine.

**O.O.:** I suffered from being sick. One lady once said to visit mazar; it did not help me. Again I had a miscarriage. Then once she said to change the place. I did it, so now I have 3 children. But again I lost my next child, because my husband drinks a lot. So I started getting better after treating people. I treat both children and adults.

**U.A.:** I spent 7 years at psychiatry hospital. On the way to Talas hospital I turned to Booterek mazar. Then some changes happened. My family did not accept that and brought me to the hospital by force. I got poisoned with medicine there and was close to having an attack. I would visit the mazar, which I name Ata Bei'it, in my own village. Thus I still visit mazars.

**N.U.:** The reason why I came here was that I got very sick. There was one lady in this village, she said to visit mazar, and then I visited one. I went at midnight to mazar; I cried, prayed and worshipped there until the morning. The next day I returned and was told by the spirits to start *namaz* (*q.v.*), and I gradually learnt *namaz*. So now I visit mazars.

**Z.S.:** Our ancestors used to visit mazars. Mazar visits are a duty [an obligation inherited from our ancestors]; that's why we come here.

**A.E.:** One should not come to mazar just when something significant occurs. I come to mazar to ask for peace and welfare for children.

**A.M.:** I come to refresh myself, to get purified and to pray.

**D.S.:** I have gone to mazar for 7 years. Mazar is a good thing. You get purified and feel easy when you visit. But the main reason I go there is because of my sickness.

**S.K.:** We go to ask and pray for peace and welfare of the people. We hold *tülöö* (*q.v.*). And we pray for those who do not have children, we go to ask children for them.

**T.B.:** We go to ask for health, a child, peace and welfare for the people. We go when it does not rain, when there is a drought; to clean the place around the mazar and protect it. Those who come here had a vision in their dreams to visit the mazar. People go to pray to get rid of sins: «God please, forgive me if I did something bad or good». So I go to mazars to worship.

Everything tends to change for the better. We go to keep our families strong. Those who have *kyrgyzchylyk* accompany those coming to the mazar and show them around. The master shows the way of *kyrgyzchylyk* at the mazar. It is possible also to go and spend overnight at mazar with sick livestock so that they are cured. These are advantages we can say of the mazar. Some go to get rid of bad habits, to get purified. Others go to strengthen their energy to get more strength. We go to read the Quran for the spirits. Some people who visit have meditation with spirits and a séance. We go to use the water or plants of that place because in some places the water is good for treatment; in some places the sand is good; and in other places there are herbs for treatment. We also go to see the place and perform *jar saluu*.

**D.M.:** People who accepted *kyrgyzchylyk*, who ask for health and who experienced accidents, go to mazar.

**C.A.:** I generally would not come. But I came hoping that my visit will help my daughter to get better. The hospital was not helpful. They said her illness would disappear later. But it is getting worse. I gave her spring water to drink and wash. My daughter is scared of eating *bököchö* [a certain type of insect, which has curative properties] that had showed Kubatbek. That is good for vitiligo (*ala oorusu*). I have come since the weather got warmer.

**F.D.:** Everyone is different. One goes to ask for something he or she did not achieve or find. Another goes to ask for a child, for happiness, or for health.

**M.B.:** When I go to mazar I feel so good and the energy I get there I use to treat people. If the person feels well I am happy. I personally go to the mazar to ask for health, to ease myself, and to read Quran for the spirits of that place so they obey the God. We come to get energy and to be healthy. Some people passing by with their livestock have visions.

It is mainly good for people with siezures. I have seen people get cured here. The forms of mountains tops are also, I think, a mystery. That's what I know.

People, who experience difficulties in their business, trade or have bad luck come here and read Quran.

**M.J.:** I started going to mazar when I was 30 years old. My parents lived close to a mazar and they worked as shepherds. Once I had a prophetic dream; I saw *koldoochu* (*q.v.*). Since then, I accepted *kyrgyzchylyk* and see that place as a sign.

**G.A.:** I saw in my dream for 2-3 days earlier the time I will go to mazar. I go to the mazar, which I saw in my dream. If I do not go at that time, I feel bad and get sick. And I dream the same thing again and again. I saw in my dream the location of the mazar. And somehow get the name of it and will be told how to go there.

**Y.K.:** The reason why I came to mazar was that one of my legs was sick and I could not move it. I went to the hospital but that did not help. Then I visited *Manas* (*q.v.*) Mausoleum and after that I immediately started to walk. I then went to Arashan Ata. There my eyes were cured.

**A.J.:** The illness of my wife was the reason I began visiting mazars. When my wife became ill we visited Manas Mausoleum. Since then we started to visit other mazars. She is my third wife, we live separately from our children, and we are security guard at a hospital. We visit mazars because of God's will, which is deeply rooted in us.

**S.B.:** We go to get energy for ourselves.

**S.T.:** I see some kind of prophetic dream when I see a mazar that I visit and then I go there. Most of the times it is good to go to a mazar in the spring or in fall because during those seasons the air is clean. Moreover, one should go to a mazar in the morning because angels spend their night at mazars and it is good to get their blessings.

**K. G.:** Mainly sick people and barren women come to mazar.

**A.S.:** First I refer to God and second to *oluya (q.v.)* with my wishes. I ask for health. In 1965 I had a serious problem with my heart. I was in the hospital for three days vomiting blood. It appeared that I had a cyst. In 1977-1978 I was told about Tarsylai' *ai'tymchy (q.v.)* and visited him. He told me that I have *kyrgyzschylyk*.

**R.M.:** Saying the truth, the Shariah forbids mullahs to go to mazars, because God said I will forgive everything but I'll not forgive going to mazars. A human being should worship only God. Therefore we are not allowed to go to mazars. But people from different places come and ask me to read Quran in certain mazars and that is why I sometimes go there and I read Quran.

**K.Y.:** When I sleep I have dreams in which a light comes and shows which mazar to visit. But because of a shortage of money, I do not visit some mazars. I go to mazars that are close, read Quran and purify myself. This year, in my dream I was told to go to Manas Mausoleum. I could not go there because of a lot of snow in winter. Hopefully, I'll go there in the summer. I have conversations with spirits like I'm conversing with you now. After that, I feel relieved.

**G.K.:** The reason I go to mazar is that there is a cemetery nearby. We read Quran in cemeteries and come to pray asking God for peace, health and welfare.

**N.Y.:** The reason I came to this mazar is because my grandparents had *kyrgyzchylyk*. I have ancestors like Oluya Ata, Kalpa Ata, Eshen Ata. My mother possessed *kyrgyzchylyk* and now it has come to me. There is no choice; I have to fulfil this obligation.

**L.T.:** When I was a little girl my body was captured and I could not walk. A doctor Karakoi'chu admitted that he could not cure the seizure. He said "You can give her any food, but anyways she will die". My ancestors are persons who made pilgrimage to Mecca. Then *dubana (q.v.)* Ümötäaly took me to the Shamshykal mazar where I was cured.

**B.T.:** People do not go to mazar without any reason. They go there with hope and belief. Mostly women who cannot give birth, or sick people and those who have difficulties in their lives. If they go there without any hope, there will not be any effect. They will be cured if they go there with hope and belief. I go there with people who come to me. I take them to the mazar, and sometimes I go there by myself as well.

**B.K.:** People go to mazars to ask for a baby, and to ask for good health. For instance, I had a heart disease and was cured at mazar.

**C.R.:** For instance, when you drive to Zulpukor behind the bridge, there are sea-backthorns. Doctors make medicine from them. If you go closer, the power of mazar is greater. That's why people have been cured there. All vegetables that are around the mazar are herbs.

**T.T.:** I get wild rose in one mazar, pears in another one and juniper in another. While taking them, one should ask permission from the owner of the mazar. And only needed quantity should be taken. One should not take a lot. There will be an effect if one names the name of the spirit, reads Quran and uses herbs dedicating to the spirit. There is everything in the power of mazar.

***Bektur Iskakov:***

***“Mazar Tayu is the Highest Type of Worshipping of Your Motherland”***

Distinctiveness of Kyrgyz people can be identified by its worldview. That worldview includes two main components. The first component is knowing his/her father or, in other words, his/her ethnic identity. Thus, the word *tayu* is more frequently used by the Kyrgyz than worshipping spirits. Mazar *tayu* is considered to be the second component. The worldview of the Kyrgyz is based on these two components.

The first component—knowing his father, father’s spirit (*arbak*), it can be called *kai’yp* (*q.v.*), it has reversed to *kai’yp*. The world philosophy is also connected to the notion of venerating father’s spirit. For instance, venerating ancestor’s spirit is not like in other religions. The Kyrgyz do it in another way. Thus this practice leads to the notion of knowing (learning, studying) your people. Thus it is important to know all your ancestors and to observe and practice the traditions and customs that were left. The word *arbak* does not carry any mysterious meaning. It means the people. It should have the notion of the nation that brought up and cared after you. It also substitutes for patriotism. It is worshipping the spirits. That’s why for spirits, people slaughter animals and invite guests. Among these things there is genealogy (*sanjyra*). *Sanjyra* includes such functions as saving and preserving ethnic identity in order to be aware of one’s own ancestors. The names of famous ancestors will be memorable. The rest will not stay in memory. Every man, even though he is bad he will stay in his father’s place. This is about being conscious of one’s origin.

The second one is mazar *tayu*. Mazar *tayu* is the highest type of worshipping at any sacred place. Mazar *tayu* has been practiced since ancient times. People worship Arashan that Aigine is researching. Actually, Zulkupor is the name of the place. But sometimes Zulpukor is considered as a sword of Manas. In addition to these places, there are hundreds of other wonderful places in Kyrgyzstan. Especially, there are caves. There are waters and Arashan cured many people. The idea about mazar is not that it is a remnant of the past. Mazar worshipping is equal to worshipping the nation. Thus worshipping the place can constitute to the notion of Fatherland.

When one worships mazars s/he worships not sacred sites but at the same time s/he worships the place where s/he was born. Besides that, there was such thing as worshipping the places where the dead is buried, the cemeteries, and mausoleums. People even would make *tumar* (*q.v.*) with land inside of it. They would put land into their mouth. When one makes his grandchild to put land into his mouth two things are happening at that moment. The first one is the ancestor’s spirit and the second one is mazar *tayu*. These two notions combine and the notion of Fatherland comes out from it, as a result. Mazar *tayu*, thus, indicated the birthplace and the father’s spirit meant his people. Slaughtering animals, worshipping, tying ribbons to branches of trees in a mazar; cleaning the surroundings of the mazar; getting release, rest and purification by sitting over there, all these things will come together and will double the pride in his Fatherland. A child would receive this information from the very beginning. When people tasted land from their childhood they receive such a message as “I’m protected by

invisible forces, thus by my ancestors. My land is protecting me”. That’s why they would not be afraid of different things.

When these two things combine, they lead to the notion of *Tengir* (*q.v.*). The Kyrgyz have had this notion at least for 2000-3000 years or even for 4000-5000 years. The father is the sky; the earth is mother. The Kyrgyz have had this belief from the ancient times. To limit our history to only 2200 years is not right. According to ancient history, this place was called northern China. Our ancestors were influenced by *Tengir*. They have adopted and integrated those two components. Shintoism in Japan has influenced several spheres of life. The reason for contemporary China’s development and strength is in its maintaining these two components. Many factors are misleading us.

You are asking me if I worship at mazars. I, as a person who told you all these things, worship at mazars because my father’s heritage is the heritage of your father’s heritage as well. Some time ago we, had negative attitude to it considering it as a feudal remnant, a patriarchal remnant. That is not a negative thing. It is something higher than Christianity, Islam and many other Western things. After that, we again lost it. Why do I go to mazar? When I go there I get released from daily burdens. Earlier we visited the spring. Now you will drink tea from that spring, Kanykei’ Bulak. This is the spring with black water that was mentioned in the “Manas” epic.

#### **RULES FOR VISITING AND WORSHIPPING MAZARS ACCORDING TO THE PARTICIPANTS OF SEMINARS CONDUCTED BY AIGINE:**

- A person who visits sacred sites must know the Quran;
- One must visit having bathed and purified oneself;
- One should thank God and bring *jeti tokoch* (*q.v.*) and other food depending on her/his economic well- being;
- One must not come to a sacred place to rest or drink alcohol, smoke, have sexual intercourse, etc.;
- One must visit mazar with a pureness of belief and intentions;
- One must take care of sacred places; clean the surrounding of it for good deed (*soopchuluk*);
- One must not visit mazar with the head uncovered;
- One must conduct rituals, pray, asking good things, and read the Quran;
- One must visit a sacred place believing in its sacredness and must be grateful to it;
- When one visits a mazar, if there is charity box a visitor should leave money depending on his/her financial situation for good deed;

#### ***According to the Participants of Seminars Following Things are Forbidden:***

- Polluting the surrounding of a mazar, especially cracking sunflower seeds because after that people throw leftovers;
- Doing bad and dirty things like drinking alcohol, smoking, having sexual intercourse, saying bad words;
- Taking away things belonging to a mazar;
- It is forbidden for women to visit sacred sites during menstruating cycle;
- Using firearms, which means the sound of firearms must not be heard;

- Coming with uncovered head, and for women wearing pants or jeans, and showing body parts except hands and face;
- Damaging the mazar's environment and changing the surrounding nature;
- Remove or break that which belongs to the mazars;
- Tying ribbons to branches of trees in mazars. When we asked why it is forbidden to tie ribbons to the branches, the participants of the seminar explained that the spiritual patron of the mazar chokes;

### **FROM PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCES OF VISITING AND WORSHIPPING SACRED SITES**

Damira Imanalieva's—a student of Talas State University—experience of partaking in worshipping Kochkor Ata mazar:

“We went to the spring with Elmira Eje [*Eje* means Sister] and her two daughters. After 20 to 30 meters of not reaching the Kai'nar Bulak mazar, we stopped by the Aalihan mazar and read Quran, washed our faces, tasted the water and then we went to Kai'nar Bulak. When we entered the yard of the sacred site, Elmira Eje started crying and it continued 10 minutes. I said “Do not lose your courage” to console her, but she answered “I am seeing my ancestors”. Once I had been told by my elders, that one must worship God crying and with all his/her heart, maybe this indicates Elmira Eje's devotion to God. And then Elmira Eje read the Quran. I read after her, then we tasted water from the spring and one of her daughters washed her head with spring water (she had a constant headache). We sat there for a while, prayed and recited Quran once again and went back home.

We stayed at the sacred site for about 40 minutes. The most amazing thing I witnessed were white spots on the spring. These white spots were of different shapes, sometimes appearing as a man's head, and sometimes as an embryo. And the spring boils sometimes seven times and sometimes nine. Women were cooking outside. A young woman and a man came with us. We entered the house and put everything we brought on the tablecloth and Almash Eje (*shai'yk* of Kochkor Ata sacred site) read Quran. Rahat Eje who came with me brought *jeti tokoch*, half a kilo of waffle cookies, and candy. I brought two loaves of bread, half a kilo of candy and spice cake. After 20 minutes, when it was half past five in the evening, women laid the table and served a meal (roasted macaroni with meat). We all drank tea and ate, and then the women cleaned the table (visitors took some meal with themselves and left some for the guardian of sacred site). We also cleaned the place where they cooked. Then they went to a hill on the east of Kochkor Ata sacred site and took juniper branch for their homes, and read the Quran one more time before heading for home”.

**S.Z.:** When I go to mazar, first of all I pray, and then read the Quran (First, a healer who takes you there reads Quran and then you read it). After that, we cook a meal and eat and then again read the Quran. For a good deed, we clean the house near the sacred site and the place where we ate, and then we pray before going home.

**K.G.:** I come with prayers and belief. I immediately read the Quran, and I pray while hugging trees. We cook a meal if it is not ready or set the table if everything is ready, read Quran and eat. Then we clean everything, read the Quran once again before leaving and we ask “May our visit be accepted”, and then go.

**T.B.:** When I visit a sacred site I drink spring water and wash my face and hands. One may leave without washing anything, but I wash with a wish that the spring's sacred quality comes to me. There are some people who come with stomachaches, illnesses in their lungs and liver,

or with dysentery or fever. Exactly those who have fever get better by splashing water to their face. This ritual is done by healers, we also do it but ours is just for *dem saluu*.

**A.D.:** A day before going to a sacred site, we wash and clean ourselves. We cook *jeti oi'mo* (*q.v.*). We bathe before kneading and frying dough, because it is not accepted by the spirits without bathing. We do not make a hole in the middle of *jeti oi'mo*. If we have money, we take seven different meals, calling it paradise's meal. Most of the times I take white food like milk, sour milk, curd, sour cream, etc. Firstly, we read Quran before all the meals, which we take to the sacred site, and then we pray to God for a good journey. We wear white clothing and leave. We go directly to the sacred site and come back without turning anywhere.

**K.S.:** We take *jeti oi'mo*, read the Quran and *namaz*. We drink water from every spring. Visiting and worshipping is like this: we sit there and see whatever sign God sends us. If there is no sign, we leave. Everyone greets and obeys. Then *oluya* obey us too when we bow them.

**S.E.:** When we were going to Sharkyratma mazar, I was told of two sacred sites. When we were going Ai'man Eje said she will show us a spring, and on our way we worshipped at two springs and washed our hands. The top made of stone looked like a jug's spout. Warm water came from one side and cold water from the other. There are old coins and silver buttons on one side of tap. I do not know why people throw them but I have never done that. I just leave money in a charity box at gravestone.

### **BRINGING FOOD TO MAZAR**

**S.G.:** Usually, it is important to cook *jeti oi'mo* at home and then bring it to the mazar. If you bring food that you bought, it will not be accepted. There will be no effect from food that is not homemade. Moreover, one should not step out from one mazar to another. S/he should immediately go home after visiting the mazar that s/he came to visit. However, we worship all of the mazars equally.

**B.P.:** One brings *jeti (7) oi'mo* God, *toguz (9) oi'mo* to *Baabedin (q.v.) Ata* and *besht (5) oi'mo* to *Dööt Pai'gambar (q.v.)*.

**M.G.:** I bring anything that I have. If you bring *oi'mo* do not make a hole in the center of it because if it falls into a river it might stick to somewhere, while bread without hole will not. In addition, there will not be any effect from *oi'mo* with hole.

**K.M.:** It is desirable to bring food that Muslim people eat. It will be even more useful to bring food of the heaven like fruits and vegetables.

### **TYING RIBBONS TO THE BRANCHES OF TREES IN MAZARS**

**I.R.:** In the beginning, I was doing a wrong thing because I would tie ribbons to the branches of trees in mazars. I came to understand that it was wrong, because I received a message that I should only do *zyyarat (q.v.)* and read the Quran to water. I would tie ribbons to the branches because my teacher (*ustat*) told me to do this. We would tie ribbons to the branches together with the hope that our wishes and aspirations would come true. But those branches on which we tied ribbons are dying. Thus, it means that our wishes will not come true. If Allah accepted those wishes, the branches would not die. That is why I'm against that practice.

**I.E.:** One should not tie ribbons to branches in any way. And when an announcement (or declaration) is made, a person will be able to see it. Some people situate sick persons in the middle and then beat them. This is a completely wrong thing because to make *jar saluu* means to call the spirits and angels. To tie ribbons to branches means to tie yourself. People who come to Tamchy Bulak mazar tie ribbons to branches a lot. If you follow the path of God you should behave properly.

**S.S.:** I'm very much against tying ribbons to branches. That thing refers to evil, to wear everything like that is a remnant of shamanism. I would forbid that practice. That would be good if our guardian fines those who tie fabric 100-150 soms.

**K.M.:** I myself do not tie ribbons to branches. Those who tie ribbons to branches do not know what the true purpose of it is.

**S.G.:** Tying ribbons to branches is not a right thing anymore. It was practiced before. A long time before, when I was a child I would see how old women tied red ribbons. Later, when I became a student of the first grade, I started to study Islam and in the Quran it was written that tying ribbons should not be practiced. For instance, times ago Ak Tai'lak was also covered by white ribbons and we would launder it when it became dirty. Later, we found out that tying ribbons to branches is not accepted by the spirits and that's why we took away all ribbons. Also, according to the Quran, one should not spend overnight near the mazar. That is why I built a house away from mazar so that people could sleep over there. I'm told to accept *kyrgyzchylyk* and guard the mazar but I do not have intends to practice *kyrgyzchylyk* have that kind of thoughts. I want to get blessings for people and poor and sick people come here because I built the house for their use to sleep in.

**U.S.:** To tie ribbons to the branches is a wrong thing, it is said in Shariah. Generally, ribbons make mazars to look unpleasant. If I see a ribbon tied to a branch I take it and burn it. I do not tie ribbons.

**I.A.:** One should read the Quran rather than to tie ribbons. Why do people tie ribbons to the branches of trees in mazars? I do not do such rituals; I come, read Quran and then I leave.

**I.R.:** To tie ribbons to branches—to think that I left there all the evil things—is to cheat oneself. In my opinion it is not right. Allah does not save if one ties ribbons or wears *tumar*. Generally, if one says or refers to Allah wherever s/he goes, her/his business will be successful.

**A.T.:** Everyone practices different rituals. Some people wish their diseases to leave in this place, while others just do it imitating other people.

**B.S.:** According to the understanding of earlier generations (our ancestors), tying ribbons to branches would be done in order to find way back home. We have turned that into a custom. To tie ribbons to the branches is wrong.

*The chapter was translated by Alina Jangazieva and Damira Umetbaeva*

## Chapter Three

# MESSAGES FROM THE MAZAR GUARDIANS AND SHAI'YKS

### Foreword

This chapter is devoted to *shai'yks* (q.v.) and guardians of *mazars* (q.v.) in Talas province.

When Aigine started its activities in Talas in 2004, the main approach was to involve local community members in the research and protection of the mazars in that region. It was soon learned that there are people who not only worship at the mazars but at the same time look after, protect and maintain sacred sites. Within a year, Aigine identified 23 such people and has involved them in the research activities. At the same time, participatory observation was conducted on their life experience.

Based on this participatory observation and collaborative activity, Aigine has categorized people who serve for mazars into two following types: *shai'yks* and guardians. *Shai'yks* are people who carry out such duties such as looking after a mazar, guiding pilgrims (*zyyaratchy*) and leading the ritual performances. As a rule, *shai'yks* know the history, the special features of a mazar, and other related information and narrate them to the visitors and pilgrims. The distinctive aspect of *shai'yks* is an ability to practice traditional healing at the mazars that s/he looks after.

The guardians are the people who look after the mazars in terms of protecting and cleaning them. These people may not know the history or specific stories of the mazars and they usually do not possess an ability to heal.

*Shai'yks* and guardians have come to accomplish such a spiritual mission in different times and ways. Readers will find their life stories in the following chapter. We want to emphasize is that at certain times all of the *shai'yks* were seriously ill, suffering or “lost” and this illness, suffering or self-loss forced them to start visiting and worshiping mazars. Over time, they were able to define their duties at the mazars and to heal not only themselves but also to heal others.

When we started working in Talas most of these people almost did not possess any information about each other. Aigine made a decision to unify the people who conduct the same activities in one area. In March of 2006 Aigine took the initiative to bring these people together. It was then that a Union of *Shai'yks* and Guardians in Talas province was founded. Certainly, this particular union has definite aims that concern the mazars and Kyrgyz heritage in general. Although, in Aigine's opinion, one of the main responsibilities of this union was already accomplished: *shai'yks* and guardians had unified and gained a feeling of being a unified social group with a strong sense of identity as well as getting some public attention.

There are nine women among the 23 guardians and *shai'yks*. It should be noted that none of the existing social authorities brought *shai'yks* and guardians to care for the mazars. Rather they organized based on their own inner needs. It is a sign that confirms that in Kyrgyz society, women and men can take the initiative on the same level. Moreover, women as well as men can manage similar work on the same level.

*Shai'yks* and guardians are similar to other human beings. Some of them would be known among people as aimless people who were addicted to alcoholic drinks. Aigine does

not deny or hide this fact. Perhaps these are exactly the reasons that such people start worshipping at mazars and became *shai'yks* or guardians of mazars.

American scientist Christina Groff after conducting research with people who were addicted to alcohol and drugs came to the following opinion: “if people who are very sensitive and who are in the process of special spiritual search, because of certain external reasons were not able to realize those needs and feelings, they usually become addicted to alcohol and drugs.” As most of us are aware, during Soviet time it was not possible to become a *shai'yk* of a mazar or to practice healing activities at mazars. In general it was not possible to “walk on the path” which is called *kyrgyzchylyk* (*q.v.*). We also have heard such opinions as: is it possible to believe to people who used to drink alcohol and just today became a *shai'yk*? Aigine would answer this question in the following way: This question is up to the individual (reader).

Our goal is to bring the message from the people who were able to get over hard drinking and find out their place in the world and in the society.

Mainly the students of the Talas State University conducted interviews with and collected information from *shai'yks* and guardians. The teachers on behalf of Aigine conducted a series of workshops to train the student in field research methods and techniques.

It is possible to present the information that was received and found out in various ways. We chose to present the interviews conducted by the students with *shai'yks* and guardians in their entirety with few changes. Thus, a reader will see the product of primary professional work and experience of the Talas students.

It is also important for Aigine to see students teaming up with *shai'yks* and guardians as the way of cooperation between the two generations.

It is anticipated that communication and exchange of views between the younger generation which just started its search to everyday and spiritual needs with older people about things that are important in our culture would help the young and as well as elder generation to liberalize and widen their world views.

Aigine is proud to make this contribution to a lasting connection between two generations

#### **LIST OF MAZAR GUARDIANS AND SHAI'YKS OF TALAS OBLAST**

1. Jekshenaaly Abdyraimov, Oljobai'dy Kergen Tash mazary, Kök Sai' village, Kara Buura region;
2. Güljamal Alymbekova, Tamchy Bulak Mazar, Tamchy Bulak village, Kara Buura region;
3. Samankul Asyrankulov, Ak Tai'lak Mazar, Bakai'yr village, Kara Buura region;
4. Burul Asyrankulova, Ak Tai'lak Mazar, Bakai'yr village, Kara Buura region;
5. Oogan Bai'yzbekov, Kai'nar Bulak (Saparhan Atanyn Kai'nar Bulagy) Mazar, Joon Döbö village, Kara Buura region;
6. Elmira Bai'yzbekova, Kai'nar Bulak (Saparhan Atanyn Kai'nar Bulagy) Mazar, Joon Döbö village, Kara Buura region;
7. Bai'ysh Beknazarov, Arashan Mazar, Besh Tash Mountain, Talas region;
8. Dariha Jamanbaeva, Ak Tai'lak Mazar, Bakyyan village, Kara Buura region;

9. Almash Jumagul kyzy, Kochkor Ata Mazar, Kök Sai' village, Kara Buura region;
10. Bekkul Jumanazarov, Kanykei' Bulak Mazar and Ai'chürök Mazar, Ak Jar village, Talas region;
11. Kerimbai' Ibraimov, Ak Üi' Mazar, Sheker village, Kara Buura region;
12. Altyn Ibraimova, Zulpukor Mazar, Aral village, Talas region;
13. Anarkül Kulusheva, Kur Tash Mazar and Dölön Ata Mazary, Özgörüsh village, Bakai' Ata region;
14. Jengish Kudakeev, Nyldy Ata Complex of Mazars, Özgörüsh village, Bakai' Ata region;
15. Kylychbek Kurmanbaev, Chynar Terek Mazar, Kök Tokoi' village, Talas region;
16. Jumadil Mamekov, Chypynyn Mazary, Ak Jar village, Talas region;
17. Rai'ymkul Myrzabekov, Myrzabek Bulak Mazar, Aral village, Manas region;
18. Taryhchy Müzürbekov, Nogoi' Baatyr Mazar, Kyzyl Octyabr village, Bakai' Ata region;
19. Bai'myrza Saparbaev, Mai'mak Ata Mazar, Sulu Mai'mak village, Kara Buura region;
20. Gülnahar Toktogulova, Mazar Bulak, Tamchy Bulak village, Kara Buura region;
20. Batyraaly Turumtaev, Kalpa Ata Mazar, Ming Bulak village, Bakai' Ata region;
21. Samarbek Ütürov, Manas Mausoleum and Manastyn Chakmak Tashy, Tash Aryk village, Talas region;
22. Chachykei' Chongmurunova, Chynar Terek Mazar, Kök Tokoi' village, Talas region;
23. Sagynbek Eshaliev, Booterek Mazar, Booterek village, Bakai' Ata region;

## **LIFE STORIES OF MAZAR GUARDIANS AND SHAI'YKS**

***Kashymbek Abdraimov 1934- 2005, was the Guardian of Chypynyn Mazary, Kong Kol Valley, Talas Region***

*Why has the Chypynyn mazary become a mazar?*

There was a knowledgeable man named Chypy. When he was 80 years old, he died in the *jai'loo* (q.v.) called Bel Konush of Keng Kol valley. It is said that when he was dying he requested to be buried in the Mausoleum of *Manas* (q.v.). Then while traveling, he died on the *jai'loo* of Kara Shoro. Then, after having performed the traditional burial procedures, people buried his body on the place it had fallen. Before death, he said: "I heal sheep's disease *typyratma* (q.v.). May my body be buried at the mazar". Since then the place of Chypy's grave has been treated as mazar.

*Do you know when this man was born?*

He is supposed to be born in 1782. He was from the Kushchu tribe. Now it is Kara Suu village.

*Do bübü (q.v.) and bakshy (q.v.) visit that place?*

They come seeking that place. Now it has become lost. Earlier I would put bricks around it so that it could be known as a mazar. But then, again and again, the bricks were eroded by rains and the bricks finally disappeared. Earlier people would bring here their sheep to have them healed from *typyratma* disease, but now they do not know where this place is located and do not visit it.

*Has anything changed after you have repaired the mazar? Does the mazar have sacred quality (kasiet)?*

Yes, sure, the mazar has now even more great qualities. Five times a week the spirits are seen to me from that place. They seem to show their gratitude to me. And now, our domestic animals are growing in number and our lives have been much improved.

*What other sacred quality of Chypy have you had a chance to hear about?*

He is said to have been raised in the family of my grandfather Kyzyl Bash Kudai'bergen. They say that it would rain right as soon as he, being a little boy, would mention anything about it. He could make a river running down to run up.

*What do you understand by the term mazar?*

Mazar is a home for people to pray, to worship. First – worshipping God, then – the spirits of dead.

*Have you witnessed any mystery in this mazar?*

One day, early in the morning, I came to the mazar and began to clean its surroundings taking off the weed. A short time later, I saw a man with a white beard. At first I was frightened. Then I have realized that it was Chypy *oluya* (q.v.).

*Is your job paid?*

No payment at all of course. It was just me and my children who would go there and guard. I had been shown a sign to do this job. That is why I started doing this job. I requested the director of Manas Ordo Jengish Chynaev: "Please do help this mazar, it would be so much appreciated". That *myrza* [correlated to English "Sir" or "Mr"] would only say "Yes, yes". If you try to do this (clean and guard) it would be so good of you.

*Do you worship mazars?*

Certainly, I do, darling. Such worshipping seems to have been absorbed into our blood. Kyrgyz people have been worshipping mazars since ancient times.

### **Abdyraimova Begimkan, a wife of Kashymbek Ata**

*Do you assist Kashymbek Ata? [Ata means Father]*

Yes, darling, who could ever assist him but me? While he was putting bricks I would be preparing a clay mixture. It was me who would awake him in the sunrise.

*Did the mazar influence your life in a positive or negative way?*

Certainly. Earlier we were poor people, but now thanks to God everything has changed. Goods and food are not only sufficient for us but we have even more than needed.

*What rituals do you perform there?*

We would cook *jeti chabaty* (q.v.) and, if possible, sacrifice sheep, pray and perform *tülöö* (q.v.).

*What is the attitude of your children and family towards the mazar?*

The attitude of my children towards mazars is positive. Every day we explain to them the mazars' sacred qualities.

*What could you say of the origin of mazars?*

I think that mazar appeared in the following way: In ancient times we lived in the epoch of shamanism. From that time on when we worshipped mountains and stones, worshipping mazars have been continued. As for graves they are actually considered to be sacred places.

*Based on the interview of Bübüzina Mamekova, a student of the Talas State University,  
Department of History*

***Jekshenaly Abdyraimov, 49 Years Old, Guardian of Oljobai'dy Kergen Tash  
Mazar, Kök Sai' Village, Kara Buura Region***

*How did you become the guardian of the mazar?*

I worked for 15 years as a director of the Sary Üngkür Sanatorium located at that place. Those who came to the sanatorium would ask me to tell a story of that place since it has a rich history. I would listen to the history be told to me by my grandparents since my early childhood. My grandmother would tell me a lot of that place. So, I decided to give a rebirth of those stories. People are always passing here, as young men, are walking along these places not knowing anything of their history. I have brought here a great stone and established it as a monument with writing on its one side stating: "A Stone Where Oljobai' Was Stretched", and on the other side I wrote an explanation of it in the form of a verse:

Kuduke, his uncle, having caught him,  
Put a stone on his body and killed him on thorn.  
They say he made this place for fording oxen,  
To separate Oljobai' from Kishimjan.

I wrote *Jekshen* in the bottom. Then I brought two black willows and planted them in both sides. When going to work I would always water them or ask a guardian to water them. In one year, thanks to God, our willows have grown up with the tops of them joined.

*What year did you bring the stone to this place?*

In 1995, I brought the stone and planted two willows.

*Was Oljobai' stretched by that stone?*

No, I brought a rock stone, while the stone under which Oljobai' had been stretched is just standing near it. As for me I brought that rock stone to the head of that place. I dream of planting as many trees as possible and planting a garden here.

*When did a story about Oljobai' and Kishimjan take place?*

It happened in the 17th century CE. Actually a story of lovers has been a little bit exaggerated in the epical song<sup>12</sup>, but it really took place. Many people come here to worship; many pray and say that God is hearing their prayers. When I worked there I saw men who came here from even Ysyk Köl to pray.

*As a guardian of this mazar what kind of work do you perform?*

While working in the sanatorium I was a guide and told stories of that place. Then becoming older and older a person is more and more inclined to pay attention to these mazars. Observing people visiting them and praying I decided to dedicate my heart to these sites and worship too. I decided to guard this site because I saw that people came here to pray and God heard their prayers and made their dreams to come true. I am dreaming now of planting trees there, make it green everywhere and build a building under which, when it rains, people could sacrifice sheep and perform ritual of *tülöö*. Because I am also engaged in leading tours I always have 2 bottles of water with me. When I pass there by, I water the trees. While passing by I read the Quran and pray. I am now guarding it in the hope that in the future this will be a mazar that brings good things to people.

*What kind of diseases does this mazar heal?*

Near the Oljobai'dy Kergen Tash mazar there is the Kürküöö River, from which they take water to the sanatorium. Those who are sick with asthma sit near the water of Kürküöö. It is said to help people who suffer from such illnesses. It is very useful for neurotic illnesses as well. From one side it is water of Kürküöö, from the other it is a sacred power of the mazar that stop neurotic diseases.

*How far is Kürküöö from the mazar?*

The mazar is located on the hill and the water is at the bottom of the hill. The distance between them is less than 100 meters.

*How many people visit Oljobai'dy Kergen Tash mazar?*

Each Thursday *bübü* and *bakshy* come here. *Tülöö, kudai'y tamak (q.v.)* is conducted here. Near this place is the mazar of Ajydaar Tash. It is said to have sacred qualities too. As far as how many people visit it I wrote on the stone with paint "Ajydaar Tash". I am intending to also plant trees here.

*Do you also guard Ajydaar Tash mazar?*

Yes. This mazar is mostly useful for skin diseases. This mazar is a big stone, which has a hole right in the middle of it. After rain or snow this hole is filled and those who have skin diseases wash their bodies with this water and become healed.

*How many people visit this Ajydaar Tash mazar?*

The distance between Ajydaar Tash mazar and Oljobai'dy Kergen Tash mazar is about 200 meters. That is those who come to visit the first mazar visit also the second one. Those who perform ritual of *tülöö*, they come near to water and arrange these rituals.

*Is the hole of Ajydaar Tash mazar always filled with water?*

In general this stone is like a dragon facing the West. Water always fills the hole. In summer time water is usually drunk by domestic animals. Once representatives of some TV came to make a 10 minute film. Then Bakyt Asyrankulovich who was the governor of Talas town also

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<sup>12</sup> "Oljobai' menen Kishimjan" (Version of Alymkul Üsönbaev). El adabiyaty seriyasy.- Volume 9, Bishkek, Sham 1997

came here and was very much astonished by purity of water and the absence of insects in spite of the fact that it was a hot summer day.

*Along with this job of being a guardian to the mazar where else do you work?*

Now I am a chairman of the court of elders in Kök Sai' village, at the same time I am a head of the organization "Long Way Tourism". I have been engaged for many years in tourism maintenance.

*What do you do in "Long Way Tourism"?*

Here I have a tour of 3 days. We leave a village then I lead a group to the Peak of Manas Ata, which is located on the height of 4485 meters above sea level. I tell the tourists about this Peak and show mazars around it. Then I show the Kirov water reservoir – the Manas Ordo. After this we see the tourists off.

*What was the reason you started to look after the mazars?*

When I was working in Sary Üngkür Sanatorium people who came there would ask me of its history. I had a grandmother named Dildejan. When I was a child she would take me to the mazars and tell me many interesting stories. I still remember them. That is why I lead people to show them these places. I wrote on big stones so that visitors could know about the mazar and to prevent children of playing there and polluting it. I became very interested as more and more people come to worship at the mazar. I did my best to help visitors know that it is a mazar.

*How many children do you have?*

I have nine, 6 daughters and 3 sons. One daughter has died recently.

*What is your family's attitude towards your job?*

Very nice. My children are very concerned about what I am doing in respect to mazars. They really support me. My little sons, Chubak and Chyngyz, and my younger brother Nurbek helped me dig the earth and doing different jobs while I was moving the stone here. Their attitude towards such activities is very positive. My children have their own interests in doing those sorts of things. I attracted Chubak and Chyngyz to tourism activities, when they also pass by, they water the trees with the bottles of water they always carry with them. They do this because they want to see the results of their work of making the mazar surroundings green.

*Have you had any relatives in the past generations of yours being close to mazars?*

Among my forefathers, my grandfather was great *tükürükchü* (q.v.), and his father that is our great grandfather was *kuuchu* (q.v.). He is said to see those who were taking with them the soul of dying people. My *tükürükchü* grandfather is said to heal different skin disease with his saliva. On the whole, among our relatives, there is such quality. Perhaps that is why God is pushing me in this way. Otherwise, there were many people who lived before me. Once when I was telling a story of this mazar, an old man of 70, he is now dead, may God bless him, told me: "I have never seen people come to this mazar before and you made it as a mazar". Actually during the Soviet time many things were not known. And now after having given them a rebirth, people passing by believe them to be mazars and change their views.

*Based on the interview of Nazira Jusupova, a student of the Talas State University,  
Department of History*

***Güljamal Alymbekova, 43 Years Old, Guardian of Tamchy Bulak Mazar,  
Tamchy Bulak Village, Kara Buura Region***

*How long have you been working as a guardian?*

Since we settled in this village. Nobody asked us to be guardians, merely the spring is ours. In this village every family has its own spring. As far as the spring is ours we are looking after it. It is our duty to arrange good conditions. But, I am not able to arrange good conditions here. There are no opportunities. I was intending to write a proposal about it and get a grant. I was planning to clean the water of the spring, cement the surroundings and provide conditions for visitors. If we have water here, apple and other trees would have been grown. For all this we need financial support. I have 5 children. It is difficult to save money for other things.

*How many years have you been taking care of the mazar, cleaning and guarding?*

We clean it once a year. Because there is a lot of rushes and in spring and there are no snakes around. If all the rushes is taken off and the surrounding ground is be cemented, snakes would not come here. If cemented, it would have been easy to come here. If we would like to build a house here, we would take clay from here. But we need cement for a foundation and surroundings. Sand is right here on the place. My children have grown up and they would have cut the rushes.

*Could you tell please a story of this spring?*

There are a lot of springs in this area. But among them, *bübü* consider only these two as sacred and worship them. As far as we are not interested in *bübüchülük* (q.v.), we do not know about them so much.

*Do you visit mazars for praying?*

No, unfortunately we do not appreciate the value of the spring. Thanks to God, our children are not sick. A lot of ill people come here. There were cases of people coming here with curved necks who have recovered.

*Have you witnessed any mysteries from the mazar?*

I have not seen anything mysterious.

*The mazar is located just near your house. Has it had any impact upon your life?*

We do not have any cases when there is a lack of food or anything like that. I believe this is an impact of the mazar. Because, even in the cases when there happens to be nothing to eat or else something comes out of something and is added to each other. We have planted 40 apple trees nearby and they are now growing up. More than 10 apricot trees are growing. There are willows and other trees. They drink spring's water and grow but we are not able to direct its water in one way or another. We simply dig a hole but much of the water sinks into the sand. It would be nice if we have cemented path for the water to run.

*How many years have passed you came here?*

7 years have passed since we arrived here. We have been living here since then. *Bübüs* come here and some of them do not know the way to the spring. I have a little daughter and she shows them a way. Because she is a child, we send her to go with them for we are afraid to commit any mistakes. As for us elderly persons, we are afraid to be somehow mistaken. That is why we do not go there much.

*How many children do you have?*

2 daughters, 3 sons, 2 daughters-in-law. My daughters-in-law are now pregnant, soon we will have grandchildren.

*Do you have kyrgyzchylyk?*

I do not know. I do not feel anything. However *bübü* who come here say that I have. They would say: “You should agree and accept these abilities, your supporting spirit is strong”, but I have not accepted *kyrgyzchylyk* yet.

*Why?*

You know we are now marrying our children. As Kyrgyz people say, it is only a start of opening of our sacks. We are arranging new relatives. And during these family holidays it is usually necessary to take alcohol drinks. And we are afraid that if we go there, to the mazar, we lose its sacredness.

*Where do you take water from?*

We have brought it from the spring from the ditch. That water comes up near our house, but while reaching us it becomes a little bit dirty, being mixed with sand and dirt. If there would be a special tube or cemented ditch the water would be clean and transparent.

*What disease does this spring's water heal mostly?*

It is mostly good for those who have a curved neck or those that become unable to speak. If those who have seizures come here to pray and make some sacrifice by slaughtering sheep, they will recover. They would come back after while and say: “Our child has recovered, my speech has become better, my walk has become stronger”. And we are thinking that this is a sacred spring, are afraid and do not go up the hills, to the location of the spring. To a further way we have children to go. We tell them: “Say first *bismillah* (*q.v.*) and start cleaning and then return back”. I do not have money for building a room here for praying. I have it in mind but not in hand.

*Are there any people living here who being heavily ill, have recovered because of the water from the spring?*

It happened so that a son of Mira Eje [*Eje* means Sister] became very ill and he has recovered from this mazar. Since then Mira Eje has accepted *kyrgyzchylyk*, before she had worked as a nurse, ate everything and drank alcoholic drinks as everyone else. After her son recovered she accepted *kyrgyzchylyk* and took a responsibility to follow it. She brings here visitors and always says that her son has recovered thanks to this mazar. More and more people would hear this story and started to come to this place. Then one *bübü* from Klyuchevka village is always coming here with her daughter. Actually I do not know her name. They come here saying that about this mazar they heard from Mira Eje. From Kara Suu, two elderly women are always coming. From Jangy Jer 4 women always come.

*What are they suffering from?*

They say that their child is ill, or that there are quarrels in the family, that they are intending to pray for peaceful life. But when they come, they never visit our home to have tea, but go directly back. The other year, I planned to sell our house. My neighbors told: “Oh, do not sell your house, you know, into the tube of your roof there flows a *kut* (*q.v.*). What is needed is that you must not take alcoholic drinks”. You know, a lot of guests habitually visit our home, drinks are taken.

*Has not the mazar impacted you in a negative way?*

I do not know of that. I have not heard about it. But I heard that those who had intended to visit this mazar but did not come became ill. Some of them come with food for 2-3 days and would say: "I had a dream of the mazar, I intended to visit it but could not then I became seriously ill".

*How many visitors come to this mazar? What is a number of visitors per a day?*

In spring beginning with April up to July a lot of people come here. Each Friday they come, read Quran, sacrifice sheep, pray and return back. The place where they pray is not good enough. That is why I think why not to dig a big hole at the bottom to lead the water of the spring there and build one or two roomed building. Visitors would have performed their prayers there and slept at nights. Some of them ask me to call for prayer (*azan*) in my home. But I tell that it is impossible to do this in my home for we do not follow all the rules of *kyrgyzchylyk*, we sometimes drink alcoholic drinks. They say that they are willing to spend a night at the head of the spring for it is necessary to do this for them.

*Do they call for prayers (azan) there?*

Yes, they do. We hear their voices.

*So how many people come here a day?*

In spring time 10-12 people visit the mazar. Sometimes their number reaches 15. They bring food, sacrifice sheep. On the 5<sup>th</sup> of April each year they celebrate an anniversary of the mazar. This year it has been its 7<sup>th</sup> year. Since our arriving here, *bübüs* have been gathering each year and celebrated its anniversaries. Mira Eje made a tent, its ceiling covered, edges open and only two sides being covered. When it is rainy or hot they would sit under it. That is why I was thinking to build one small house instead of it, but I do not have means for it. If they built a house I would have given the visitors dishes and other necessary things.

*Do they perform any traditional rituals?*

I do not know whether they perform here any rituals. Visitors in most of cases collect *chii'* (*q.v.*) When that *chii'* is dried they do candles out of them. Out of this *chii'* they make a row of candles roping cotton on their top. Right on the edges of the rock there grow 2 bushes of *chii'*. When it is ready my youngest daughter gives them to visitors. *Bübüs*, those who come here, take them with themselves.

*Do your children worship the mazar?*

My children do not. I tell them not to go to the mazar aimlessly because they drink alcohol and they obey. My youngest daughter, as I have told earlier, leads those who do not know the way to the mazar. She explains to them: "Here is the place for sitting, here – for praying".

*Do the visitors come from far places?*

From Bishkek a girl named Nurisa comes here. She has been visiting for 3 years. She says that she has a nose disease and *kyrgyzchylyk*. While sleeping she sees this mazar in her dream. She asks if there are scorpions here and we tell them that they are among dry grasses in deserted places. She says that this is a mazar at last, instead of going on to take what our God gives us we should give to this place. She appeared to have sick arms and feet.

*Has she arrived here just after her dream without having heard from anybody?*

Yes, she told that in her dream this place had been shown, that in the place higher than your home there was a spring. When she made a visit for the first time she came with a

representative of the Ministry, since that time she has been attending the mazar for 2 years. Last year she came alone, this year she came with a boy. Only yesterday she left.

*If all in all she has been visiting for 3 years are there any results?*

When I ask her about it she says that while visiting the mazar she is feeling much better. If I walk along the mazar that I saw in my dream, actually I am not ill during 6-7 months or 1 year, says she. Especially she feels quite well after visiting the mazar she saw in her dream and prays there.

*Do other residents of your village visit the mazar and pray?*

Majority of residents are Kurds, they know nothing of mazars. Then mostly young people live here. They also do not realize what mazars are.

*Do not Kurds visit the mazar?*

No, they do not. Not having any idea of mazars they pasture sheep at these places. We would always tell them angrily to take off their cattle, not to let them pollute the mazar's environment. So many people come here and pray, we say, besides, these lands are related to us.

*Cattle and sheep are said to be sacrificed here. Are meat and other food distributed among people?*

They give their food only to two families. But it is considered right to distribute food and meat among 7 families belonging to poor people. Visitors themselves reach the number of 15 and I think practically nothing is left after them. They always give us part of their food. They come to us asking for dishes. And I think as a result of this that if a special house was built I would have put dish in it so that they would not have to ask them. We would have taken care of it. Nobody would have robbed it for being a mazar. If the house was built I would plant flowers around and made it green and nice.

*If you or your children happen to get sick do you pray in mazar?*

No, we do not. If my children get sick we bring water from the spring. When it becomes warmer we wash ourselves with it and we begin feeling much better. When guests come to us and get sick we offer them the water of the spring and they also become much better they say.

*Were there any men before you to have taken care of the mazar?*

No, there was nobody. Even the water did not reach us. It used to sink into the sand where it came from. Then we arrived, we put slate. Then we would take off slate one by one so that the surrounding soil could be watered. Only after that the water reached us. Before that the water had not come to this place. That is why nobody would build houses here.

*How many years has this place been functioning as a mazar?*

They have known this as a mazar for 7 years. When we arrived here, *bübiüs* started to visit this place.

*If pictures are taken, will it be harmful to the mazar?*

No, no harm it will come to it. It should be kept in memory that up to this time no attention has been paid to the mazar and so, to take pictures of it and show that a building has been built and that now its condition is like this. We have planted apple and apricot trees. We planted trees with fruit for visitors to eat and to sit under and be thankful. We haven't done anything more except making the way for water to run from the spring to our place of living.

*Where do people of the village take water to drink?*

Here they have all their own springs. However among all these springs only Tamchy Bulak is seen to the *bübüs*. Only on this side there are 7 springs.

*Do they worship these mazars as well?*

No, they do not go there.

*Do those who visit the mazar also visit your home?*

No, they do not. They pass nearby. Since there are many flowers growing near the house they ask permission to take them. They say that while visiting mazars it is not allowed to visit someone's home and simply taste bread and leave.

*Have you had anybody among your ancestors who possessed kyrgyzchylyk?*

We might have had. This time nobody of us would obey *kyrgyzchylyk* because we were not seriously ill. Unless a man is not suffering from some illnesses he does not feel anything.

*Based on the interview of Nazira Jusupova, a student of the Talas State University,  
Department of History*

***Samankul Asyrankulov, 70 Years Old, Shai'yk of Ak Tai'lak Mazar, Bakayyr  
Village, Kara Buura Region***

I was born in 1936. My father and grandfather were born here, have spent all their lives here. In 1960 a chairman of the village whose name was Joldosh was planning to make a resort here and organized the planting of trees. There were more than 1000 trees planted. I was also born and grew up here. I went to school until 1945. My grandfathers built a water mill here. They made it function and my father worked here as a miller. When he got sick and old and when he died our relatives also did mill work. Then there was a landslide and it completely smashed the mill. Then I came here in 1990, repaired the ruined mill carrying stones myself. I managed it for 3-4 years. Then smaller mills started to be built in the village, crushers appeared. If my mill would prepare one sack of sour in one hour, the crushers would do it in a minute. That is why people would not come to me. So I stopped in 1994. Before that I had been working as a shepherd, as a miller and at last when I was a cowherd, old women started to come to the place not far from my home and would be praying there. Especially when I saw very sick elderly women I would be so sorry for them and wanted to build a special place for praying. At that time, a brick production enterprise was opened in our village. I bought bricks from that enterprise, organized *ashar (q.v.)* and built a small one room house. So here come elderly sick women to pray. As for the mazar, *Ak Tai'lak (q.v.)* my father, fathers and grandfathers of my father are said to have worshiped at this mazar. My father would have been 100 years old now.

There are 2 stones like white camel kids at that place. My father would say that near these stones there were 2 willows. That time all the sheep became ill with smallpox. No veterinary doctors were in the village that time. Then 100 sheep were brought to the mazar, located in the shadow of one willow during one night. They say that sheep the next day had recovered and did not die. Then, also if those who were crying and sick, who became mad, spent the night in the mazar, they would completely recover. For instance, there is a water mill named Döböt Baba [*Baba* means Father]. I managed to witness for myself that those whose tongue became motionless and who could not speak, came there and recovered. Mostly

those women who suffered from an inability to give birth to children or from infertility would be cured and afterwards have children. Among them I saw 2 young women who visited the mazar in 1995-1996. One lives now in the village, the other – in Budenyi'. The other woman did not come to the mazar saying that she would better visit a doctor. But when she gave birth to a child her child died and she barely survived. Perhaps, had she visited the mazar, as did those 2 young women, she would have given birth to children safely.

*Have you witnessed any mysteries of the Ak Tai'lak mazar?*

Yes. I have seen Ak Tai'lak Ata. That time I was lying on my bed and the sun had not yet risen. Probably it was half past five. Right at that moment, I saw two Ak Tai'lak Ata, earlier I had thought that there was only one. Because there was only one stone, but it appeared that there was also one small stone just behind it. That stone was gradually growing, and now it became 4 meters high. Earlier the stone was covered with white fabric, and then clairvoyant people came here and told me to take off the white cover from the stone. Then those 2 big male camels would join a whole group of 10 to 15 female camels. If you join one male camel he would actually ride after others. Ak Tai'lak Ata was also riding after the camels, both standing at two ends and leaning their heads to the ground. I have a garden. They were coming in the direction of it. I was thinking that they were coming to the stones. Near the garden there was a river, they were coming along it. Then when I had a look at the mill, there a big black camel was chewing something. Right at that moment my wife awoke me. She appeared to awake me for the morning prayer. I was so upset and said: "You ought not to have awakened me; I was watching such a dream! I would like to have it up to the end". As a buffoon I closed my eyes in hope my dream would be continuing but nothing happened. After that mysterious dream I do believe that here there is Ak Tai'lak Ata. As for others, though, they do not see anything. They say that he has left or that he even was not here. Others pretending to be clairvoyants would say that he stands over there. And when the clairvoyants visit these places they quarrel with each other. But I would say them: "Why are you quarrelling, you came here only to be with God".

*Will it harm the mazar if I take pictures of it or make a film of?*

Because the mazar is of great sacred power it is advisable not to take pictures of it. It may do harm. Especially it is not advisable to take pictures of those who call azan. Because there was an accident in our village once. There was a man named Jyrgalbek, who worked as a teacher and then as a director of the school. He was an atheist, he drove a Volga car. That time the views of *bübü* and *bakshy* and doctors were quite opposite to each other. Some day he decided to simply observe *bübüs'* rituals and came to that place. When he arrived his car was broken and he had to spend a night there. The next day he became sick, at last he was paralyzed. Afterwards that man started to believe God and read namaz. It was he who helped me in building the house there. After that accident, he began to worship God.

*Did your ancestors have kyrgyzchylyk?*

They might have had it. Many years ago there appeared a creature called *azytky* (q.v.). One of our grandfathers named Narboto is said to have caught that *azytky*. It was a small creature like a bird. Earlier people lived in their yurts. Having *chii'* board leaned to the wall of yurt they put milk inside it, or behind that *chii'* board. They would pour milk into big dish to have more sour cream. It happened so that our grandfathers' sour cream would be always eaten. It appeared to be eaten by *albarsty* (q.v.). Because there was no fireplace they would have fire remnants in the centre of the yurt. Grandfather Narboto was lying with closed eyes and pretending to sleep. That very time birds were told to be sitting on the *tündük* (q.v.) and repeating: "he has not fallen asleep, has not fallen asleep". When the grand father after having

suddenly fallen asleep opened his eyes he saw that birds put stockings throughout the fire and were heating themselves near it. When they left for eating the sour cream from the surface of the milk the grandfather took the stockings and hid it. When the birds returned and saw that the stockings were out they began to run and repeat: "As we had our meal the stockings disappeared, as we had our meal the stockings disappeared". Then the grandfather thought to catch them when they return for the stockings. In the morning he fell asleep and did not notice how they had taken the stockings. But the next morning the grandfather did not sleep and caught the bird when it was warming himself at the fire. Once having caught the bird a man, by all means, should have to make it pronounce its *duba* (*q.v.*). If not, it would be then transformed into different things. For instance, if it is a bird and being caught by its legs, it may become a cup or another thing. But grandfather Narboto would not let it out and beat it until it pronounced its *duba*. That time it is necessary not to release hands, for example, if it is turned into the cup, one should not let it out thinking that there is nothing to do with it, otherwise it would turn again into the bird and fly away. However our grandfather did not let it out until it said its *duba*. Since that time no *azytky* would ever attend any generations of our families. But among many people there were cases of being fooled by them. They are seen by dogs. For example, if one man walks along the road another one would ask him what way he is on. The first answers that he is following his cow to make him back, but the second would say that there is no cow in front of him and really no cow appears to be ahead of him. They say that in these cases it is a dog that can help escape from such a fooling.

My father was an orphan as a little baby. Then one young woman came to the village from the Lenin collective farm and gave birth to a child with whom she fed with her milk also my father. Then our relative Üsök *moldo* (*q.v.*) asks my father to cut a wooden stick in the yard and bring it to him. My father brought 5 sticks. He was ordered to cut them into equal lengths, join them together with a rope so that one could tie a horse with them. That time my father was 5 or 6 years old. So he tied up the sticks as he was ordered. *Moldo* ordered him to sit facing back. Then when *moldo* said "Get on" my father turned and saw five similar brown horses that were whirling around with all their equipment. "Get on, get on any horse you like", he said. Then also he ordered my father to bring eggs of the hen, having put them in the big cup with water he had eggs turned into fish. He would push them and make them move. That person might have had a strong *duba* or a natural hypnotic power. Those times many men would be for some reasons accused of and imprisoned. That Üsök *moldo* was three times accused of and imprisoned. Three times he was freed as soon as they came near the door of the prison. He had really a powerful *duba*. When the head of the prison became angry and started to aggressively interrogate him at that very time the wife of the head of the prison became mad. People from his home came and said: "Your wife is breaking all of the dishes at home". Then the head of the prison stopped beating Üsök *moldo* and said: "You have really strong, sacred powers. Please let us go to my home. My wife has become mad". It appeared that when he was being beaten he sent his *koldochu* (*q.v.*) to the home of the prison head.

*Are not your family members against your being as a shai 'yk?*

No, they are not. Because my wife recovered herself from the powers of the mazar. She had strong headaches, could not recover from medicines, but from the mazar. Before taking my wife to the Manas Ordo I had a dream. I had not seen that mazar before. They called Karool Choku or Karool Döbö. At the western side of the Hill three white goats were walking up, they were goats without horns. At a forehead of one goat there was blood leak like a needle. In the morning I did not pay any attention to my dream. When we came to the Manas Ordo it appeared that it was prohibited to sacrifice a sheep there. A man from the Putemnik village named Kenjegul, with whom I was familiar, told us to visit Manas Ordo and Karool Döbö.

Then when we have washed ourselves and just started to pray I noticed those 3 goats that I had seen in my dream. Then I told Kenjegul *aksakal* (q.v.) that I had seen these goats in my dream, they seemed to be them, they were three in my dream, they were walking somewhere, one of them to have leaking blood on its forehead as a needle, but these were tied with the rope. To my ears, he simply replied “lee”. Then we read namaz, cut the sheep which we brought here for sacrificing, and prayed. We spent there a night and left the next day. Then I told that some day when God allows we would be here once again. So about a month later we took a goat for sacrificing and came to Manas Ordo. And again we were told to visit Karool Döbö to sacrifice a goat there. That time one elderly woman, who was going nearby, said: “My dear, I have two goats at Karool Döbö, please take them inside a tent, otherwise a wolf may eat them”. Then when I told her that there had been three of them and asked where was one of them, she answered that one of them had been sacrificed. It has appeared that it was a goat I had seen in my dream with a blood leak as a needle on his forehead. Such mysteries became the force of my belief in mazars. Also from the Ak Tai’lak mazar mysteries were shown to me. In order to believe in mazars you should first of all purify your heart, for purifying your heart you should not do any harm to others. It is God, not Ak Tai’lak, who does all these things, gives secrets and heals sick people. As for Ak Tai’lak and alike, they are sent by God, I understand it in this way. From the mazar, my wife has recovered.

*Based on the interview of Alina Osmonalieva, a student of Talas State University, Department of History*

***Burul Asyrankulova, 68 Years Old, Shai’yk of Ak Tai’lak Mazar, Bakayyr Village, Kara Buura Region***

*Burul Eje, how did you happen to visit mazars?*

Starting in 1973, I was seriously ill. I had a lung disease, bronchitis; sometimes I even could not produce sounds. I was voiceless. Before that I had never been sick. I began to be sick without any reasons. Then I began to have some mysterious dreams. They said: “You have *kyrgyzchylyk*, you have to obey it. Otherwise you will not recover from your disease”. But that time I did not believe in *kyrgyzchylyk*, thought it to be shame. Then one day I met a *bübü* named Jypargül who told me to visit mazar, spend a night there and pray. However I did not follow her advice. I did not believe them. I had 2 surgeries but could not recover. My heart would be aching. After the surgery, I started to become fatter and fatter. My legs and arms stopped moving at all. So when I was very ill my husband took me to Putemnik saying that he was going to show me to doctors in Talas. There he left me with an elderly man named Kenjegul to take care of me until he returns the next morning. That day, special *bübüs* from Talas came to worship the mazar named Kai’nar Bulak. They saw me and said: “Your spirit supporter is strong, you have to visit mazar”. That time I could not even eat. When it was time to go to bed they asked whether I had money. As I answered: “Yes”, they decided to visit the Kai’nar Bulak mazar. So, two *bübüs*, the elder one Kenjegul and me, all four of us, went to the mazar. As it was winter, I could hardly reach the mazar having suffered so much. Having reached the mazar we saw that the Kai’nar Bulak was boiling. They told me to wash my face and hands with this water. In spite of my protest they held me taking both hands and sprayed water all over my clothes so they became all wet. And then it is a mystery for you but truth for me, the more they sprayed water at me the more I felt better and better, my eyes having become more and more open. Those *bübüs* told me: “This mazar has been waiting for you. Your mazar is this one”. Thus I began to believe in mazars and *kyrgyzchylyk*. In the morning then I was actually able to stand and walk, even started to eat. In a while my husband came to take me back. When I told him that I would not visit a doctor, that I must worship the mazar

and that I had recovered because of having visited the mazar, he was really shocked. So we left that place having in mind to return for a second time. That was the first mazar that I ever visited in my life.

After a while I, my husband, Kenjegul *aksakal* and his older daughter again visited that mazar. We told the girl not to follow us but she did not agree and followed us. On our way to the mazar, my husband and Kenjegul *aksakal* decided to have ablution and stood behind us on the road. We seemed to be at the head with that girl. There are a lot of apple trees in Putemkin. That girl brought white apples with her. She offered me them and would insist, in spite of my objections, saying that she had picked apples for both of us and that I should eat them. Then in a while I saw Kenjegul *aksakal* who was walking in front of us and thought: “Iee, perhaps this man had done his ablution quickly and overtook us”. So I was following at the back of Kenjegul *aksakal*. That girl would again offer me apples to take them if not to eat but to put them into my pocket and eat them afterwards. I agreed and having put the apples into my pocket looked back and did not see Kenjegul *aksakal* and was astonished and thought where he could disappear. In a while my husband and Kenjegul *aksakal* came up after us. Then I told them what I had seen but he told: “No, I have not overtaken you. We were coming together with Samankul behind you”. That moment I was so disappointed with the girl and said: “You should not have come here, you have interfered with me”. The girl appeared to be preventing very much, if it were not her, that man would have told me something, I thought.

Afterwards when we came here for the third time I offered to sacrifice a goat kid, with *moldo* we slaughtered and organized there sacrificing meals. I should not have had two surgeries on my neck and now I am becoming fatter and fatter. I have seen many mysteries from other mazars. I have been visiting mazars for 26 years. I do not know if I had not visited mazars I would not have recovered or I would have died. It is me who did not believe and thus wasted so much time. If I had not had any operations and visited mazars, perhaps now I would have felt perfectly. Now I am so sorry for not having believed.

*Based on the interview of Alina Osmonalieva, a student of Talas State University, Department of History*

***Oogan Bai'yzbekov, 59 Years Old, Shai'yk of Kai'nar Bulak Mazar (Kai'nar Bulak of Saparhan Ata), Joon Töbö Village, Kara Buura Region***

I was born in 1947, the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March in the village of Molotov in Chatkal. My father, in 1942, together with other Kyrgyz people, moved them to Chatkal. My parents made it as a symbolic ritual to name me as Oogan in order to return back to their native village safely. In 1952, we moved from Chatkal to the village of Cholponbai' in Talas. In 1962, after serving in the Army, we moved to Joon Töbö or by another words Asan *moldo* village as it is called now. Earlier, in the Soviet time, Joon Töbö was a state sheep raising plant. I have worked as a truck driver since we came here. Since 2005, we have turned into private business managers. I have been cultivating the land since 2005. In 1997 – 1999 I was working as *sopu moldo* (*q.v.*).

Since my childhood, beginning with the age of 12 – 13 I have been used to blow in the eyes. At that time I did not know it but the eyes in which I have blown would become better. When I was 45, I started to reading namaz. Since that time I have started to heal people by *dem saluu* (*q.v.*). In 1992 I got acquainted with Nuraaly (extrasensory individual), and traveling with him I learned how to do massages and feel and find relative points on the body. Since that time, thanks to Allah, I have been doing massage to people. Before I had healed people

but very rarely. However, when Nuraaly Bazarbaev visited us, I started to cure people more often. At present I heal children and elderly people by reading Quran and healing by *dem saluu*, blow at sick eyes, do massage, prepare herb medicines, medicinal herbs I pick among mountains and fields. Here is a herb called *gulgaaky* (q.v.). It is very good for stomach and intestinal diseases. A herb called *dobulga* (q.v.) is also very good. As for *adyrashman* [peganum harmala], it is good for influenza. If you collect and dry them in the shadows, they are ready to use. *Adyrashman* also kills all kinds of microbes that are in the home.

Tools that have been given by my Teacher Ai'dai'kan are whip (*kamchy*), rosary (*tespe*), a white *takyya* (q.v.). Our *pir* (q.v.) appeared to be Manas Ata.

*Based on the interview of Damira Imanalieva, a graduate from the Talas State University, Department of History*

### **A talk with Oogan's wife Güljan**

*How did your husband start to visit mazars?*

First in 1989-1990 he began to visit the Mausoleum of Manas Ata. Each 4 days one could not find him, he would leave for the mazar. In spite of the fact that first I was against his visits to the mazar he would continue going to Mausoleum of Manas Ata.

*You said that there are springs near Kai'nar Bulak. Where are they located and what are their names?*

They are located right at the same place. Oogan takes care of those places. In the distance of 100-200 meters above the Kai'nar Bulak to the south there is a spring. There is a place where Saparhan Ata was washed, now a shepherd named Aman is living there. They say that the old house where Aman is now living was the house of Saparhan Ata. That old house of Aman has been destroyed. After a while, all his horses were stolen. They were not found at all. Just near that spring there is another one. I say that this is mine, for I have found it thanks to my dream. Now I take care of it.

*How was the vision given to you and how was the spring mazar discovered?*

Before I would take my grandchild to the mazar. Once when I was sitting at the mazar, one big bird and another little one singing their songs and flying back and forth brought me to that spring. I have been cleaning right by that spring which had been seen by me (in a dream), and have been worshipping it since then.

*What unusual things of this mazar have you been noticing?*

If you visit the mazar yourself you may hear some sounds like the sounds of wind. The water of this spring is a useful medicine for stomach, throat, dermatological disease, ears. When we visit the mazar we even sometimes burst into tears. When we return from the mazar children whom we heal recover quicker than usual.

*Based on the interview of Damira Imanalieva, a graduate from the Talas State University, Department of History*

***Elmira Bai'yzbekova, 54 Years Old, Guardian of Kai'nar Bulak Mazar  
(Kai'nar Bulak of Saparhan Ata), Joon Töbö Village, Kara Buura Region***

*How long have you been guarding this mazar?*

For 30 years.

*How often do you visit the mazar?*

4 times a month.

*What do you do there?*

I read the Quran and pray there.

*How many people visit the mazar?*

People mostly come from outside; Kazakhstan and Ysyk Köl. Each Friday, 5-10 visitors come and then they organize charity meals sacrificing a sheep or a goat. Sometimes there comes as many as 25-30 men.

*Is there any shai'yk of the mazar?*

I have a brother-in-law whose name is Oogan, with him we take care of the mazar. We made a fence around it. My brother-in-law was thinking of building a house near it but due to the lack of money he is not being able to do this. He dug a small cave near that lower spring so that to have shelter there when it rains but this was not sufficient.

*With whom do you usually visit the mazar?*

I go there with the visitors.

*Are the visitors male or female persons?*

Mostly female visitors.

*What is the impact of the mazar upon you?*

If you spend a night here it has a good impact, gives you *ayan* (*q.v.*). You will see the spring owners. They are – a white snake, a frog with a white spot on it. Beside it there sit 3 elderly men. I may see my mother and forefathers here. On the hills there are always yurts. As for my mother she appears to walk near the yurt with a bucket.

The surface of the Kai'nar Bulak is a grave. Saparhan Ata revived just the next day after he had been buried. At the head of the spring there is a hole with the diameter of 30-40 cm, they say that his soul had left through this hole.

*You follow the rules of kyrgyzchylyk and what is your opinion on those bübüs and bakshys who also follow the rules of kyrgyzchylyk?*

My opinion is good of course. I understand them, but some of them do exaggerate their abilities. They do not wash themselves perfectly, they take money as if they are purchasing in the market. It is prohibited to do so for those who are in the way of God, in the way of *kyrgyzchylyk*. A man gifted with such divine abilities may lose them if he is involved in prohibited activities. However there are a lot of those who are pure and devoted to God.

*Did you notice the signs of your kyrgyzchylyk when you were young?*

When I was young I did not notice it enough, however when I was 7 years old I met one dark elderly man at home. When my mother died *kyrgyzchylyk* strengthened very much and I became mad and got used to alcohol. After that it seemed right to obey *kyrgyzchylyk*. At first the family members were mocking at me and then they began to believe me.

*What tools do you have?*

I have a white dress, a kerchief, whip, and rosary. In 2002 inside the spring, a ring appeared. When I gave it to my mother (not my own but the one who nursed me) it disappeared. I got rosary from the spring. Perhaps my mother thought me to be too young. Before her death, she left rosary, whip and other things to my uncle. He died when he was 75 years old. He was probably so much concerned in money, I don not know, he sold all such things of Grandfather Saparhan and those of my mother. They say that my grandfather's white sheep was sold to this Bakyyan village. I do not know. Now we are seeking and cannot find where it is.

Once two elderly women came, my grandfather fell down at the bottom of a big willow. He seemed to have sold an *asa tayak* (q.v.). So having sold those sacred things he was not happy at all. He died having had a poor and miserable life.

*To what century does the Kai'nar Bulak mazar refer?*

It refers to the 17th century CE.

*Are your children among those who have the same special abilities as yourself?*

Yes, my elder daughter has. She was born in 1986. What she says happens. But she is still young to handle *kyrgyzchylyk*. If children who come here with throat disease drink water from this spring, they recover. I come here each Thursday and pray. It gives *ayan*, I can see my mother. That rosary I took here as well. I had seen a dream with *ayan*. On it, had been sacrificed a sheep and organized *tüilöö* here and only then the mazar gave me this rosary. In 1993 I was given a ring, but I lost it again. Once I was healing one boy with spring water. Suddenly, a ring fell on a scattered tablecloth.

*Based on the interview of Damira Imanalieva, a graduate from the Talas State University, Department of History*

***Beknazarov Bai'ysh, 51 Years Old, Guardian of Arashan Mazar,  
Besh Tash Mountain, Talas Region***

*Who are those who visit the mazar and where do they come from?*

Mostly women come, *moldos* do not. With kids they come from Chui', Kemin, Ysyk Köl, mostly from Talas.

*Do you worship mazars?*

I worshipped the mazar before. After I have started to read Quran and work with *moldos*, I stopped worshipping the mazar.

*What is the opinion of your family on the mazar?*

My wife reads namaz. My children read namaz, read the Quran, but not so much worship at the mazar.

*You say that you accept the mazar as sacred one, how could you explain its sacredness?*

I understood it as believing in God. But later when it was started to be said that "Mazar is the place for *bübü* and *bakshy*, they thus worship fire, water, but true believers should worship only God", I put away from myself the belief in mazar.

*At what season do the visitors come most often?*

From spring to autumn they come more often. In winter – rarely.

*Approximately how many visitors come to the mazar Arashan Ata per a day?*

It varies. Some days there may be many visitors, some day there may be none. Sometimes in a week visitors come 3-4 days without break as if previously planned and then again on other weeks, less and less. On summer days more than 50-60 people visit the mazar. I open the entrance gate, take their fee, register them in the journal, and let them go to Besh Tash Park and mazars.

*You said that they pay fee, do they also pay to visit the mazar?*

They should pay, but in our park it is prohibited to ask fee.

*What other mazars do you know besides the mazar Arashan Ata located inside the Besh Tash gorge?*

Above the mazar Arashan Ata there is a place called Chor Kai'yngdy, this is also a big mazar. Then there is a mazar in Kara Kai'yngdy, I do not know its name. They say that there is a mazar in Besh Karakchy as well, but I do not know the names of the rest. All in all I know of four mazars.

*Have you heard or felt anything from the mazar Arashan Ata?*

During those days when I was young, I was a shepherd. I was moving sheep to another pasture and just in front of this Arashan Ata place the sheep were somehow frightened and scattered around. My horse was also frightened and I could hardly pass this place.

*Have not you heard anything mysterious from others?*

I have. They say that a real spring of Arashan Ata ran up the mountain. If you come there in the morning and have a look at it you can see traces of children's hands and feet.

*Do you know about the healing properties of this mazar?*

It is said that the mud of the mazar is useful for back diseases. If one put that mud on the back early in the morning before the sunrise, the pain stops. I have seen it myself, with my own eyes, a man who recovered from this mud.

*Based on the interview of Nazgül Asanakunova, a student of Department of the Talas State University, Department of Kyrgyz Philology*

***Dariha Jamanbaeva, 45 Years Old, Guardian of Kydyr Ata and Ak Tai'lak Mazars, Bakyyan Village, Kara Buura Region***

*How long have you been doing this job?*

For 10 years. However when I was young and when I was just married my mothers-in-law is said to take care of them. As that time, these mazars had been known for 30 years.

*Could you tell of the mysteries of Ak Tai'lak or ( Oi'sul Ata(q.v.)) if it has any?*

Once my neighbor's aunt-in-law, one year after the death of her mother-in-law, came to this spring to take water early in the morning at 4 o'clock. Suddenly she saw a baby camel that was being drowned in the water facing the south-west. When she came nearer it appeared to be so white as if just newly born. Then she uttered praying words and left the spring thinking that the spirit owner of the mazar is *Ak Tai'lak* After that she had a 5 months child to be aborted the next day. *Bübüs* and visitors coming here to pray, say that this is a camel *pir*, sometimes called the mazar as *Oi'sul Ata*.

*Is there any difference between Kydyr Ata (q.v.) and Ak Tai'lak?*

Yes. A sacred property of Kydyr Ata is different. Before there was a lamp with fire which was seen through the windows of the house. It appeared that it was an influence of the sacred quality of Kydyr Ata.

*How can one distinguish a taste of water of two springs?*

They are different. If you always use it then of course you can know the difference. Ak Tai'lak is more salty. As for the Kydyr Ata water it is the same as usual water.

*Which of them do you use more?*

Water from Ak Tai'lak we use for washing dresses and dish, as for that of Kydyr Ata's we use it for drinking and preparing meals.

*If one washes dishes here will it not be of any harm?*

We take it home first and then wash. We do not even let cattle or sheep put their heads into the water of the spring.

*Do you know the history of the mazars?*

I do not know the history of Ak Tai'lak. As for the Kydyr Ata mazar, it has been discovered just recently. From there just water would flow. Being concerned about it we have opened it and revealed that it was boiling. It appeared to be a spring.

*Why did you call it as Kydyr Ata?*

It was not we who named it so. Women who came from Bei'sheke village had a dream in which appeared to be a man. Then it was seen as Kydyr Baba. These women came here, prayed, made a sacrifice of a sheep and called it as Kydyr Ata.

*What was done by you on behalf of the mazars?*

Last year we planted trees here. We protect them from different harms and have covered its surface. I would like to cement it and leave only a small hole for taking water but they told that it was prohibited to close the opening of a spring.

*Have you noticed sacred qualities of the mazar?*

Now I notice it. Especially within the past 4 days. I feel people who are coming from far places and suffering heavily from sickness. Those people come, call for prayers, read Quran and then leave. After their leaving I feel much better.

*Are there those who recover after having visited the mazar?*

Someone's 18-year-old sick daughter visited the mazar three times, prayed, and thanks to God, has recovered.

*Before you, who took care of the mazar?*

The house was locked. Afterwards we started to take care of it.

*On the whole what is mazar according to your understanding?*

Mazar is a place that is owned by some spirit. Those who cannot give birth to children come here and later they have children. Those who follow *kyrgyzchylyk* also come here.

*Are the springs exhausted in winter?*

No, never. In winter on the contrary they become full, their water being overfilled.

*With what, you think, is it connected that visitors here may be of less or more number?*  
It is connected with mysterious sign of the *ayan*. Some people come because of diseases, some come to pray.

*Do you worship mazars?*

Yes. I practice *sham jaguu* (q.v.), cook *jeti chabaty* (q.v.) or *jeti oi'mo* (q.v.).

*Some people having been given ayan are going to visit the mazar. And you?*

Mine is not when I am given *ayan*. I want to visit the mazar and pray there when I am nervous or have some nostalgia.

*Közü achyks* (q.v.) and *biübüs* and come to the mazar. Whom do you belong?

I do not belong to any of them. I worship just on my own will. I am influenced by people who come to these springs that are near my house.

*Based on the interview of Rabiha Alybaeva, a student of the Talas State University,  
Department of History*

***Almash Jumagul kyzy, 54 Years Old, Shai'yk of Kochkor Ata Mazar, Kök Sai' Village, Kara Buura Region***

Before my birth in our tribe there were no daughters at all, that is why my father and his brother decided to take turns raising me and that is why they named me Almash [exchange]. My true name is *Almatai'*. The wife of my father's brother could not give birth to children. My father who grew up without parents was an orphan. He suffered so much. His father died and his mother left him. He would hardly survive. First, there were 10 children in the family. Then there was only seven. My mother was the only girl among 11 children in her family. Her mother, after three times of *emdöö* (q.v.), gave birth to 3 children one after the other, but all of them died. My father also had many brothers and sisters. All of them died leaving my father alone. Thus, we were born from a single boy and a single girl. Why are they single? Why are we born from single ones? I always put this question to myself.

Just recently my sister's daughter committed suicide too. This happened in the following way. In Kara Buura, that is a center of Kirovka, they have a shop named as "Arzan". They worked there. Whether it was because their goods were much cheaper or what, they had success in running the shop. My sister's daughter mostly ran the shop. Their friends would say: "You are so happy. You have everything necessary for you. But you say that you are not happy. What more do you need? You have enough clothes, enough food". She would say: "How can I be happy? Nothing I have is sufficient for me. I need communication. Always I feel alone". So, she was well but one day she got sick and afterwards began to talk about different things and would not allow anybody to come in. Once she did not even allow her mother to be with her saying that she wanted to be alone. So her mother left her room. After a while the daughter came down and became silent. They thought that she fell asleep. After a while when they came in they saw the whole floor covered with blood. It appeared that had cut a vein. She was 25.

So my niece died not finding peace in her soul. Now her husband joined Muslims and regularly participates in *daavat* (q.v.). He says that it is here where you can find the great enjoyment of life. He remembers his dead wife and says that if she had such way of believing in God perhaps she would have stayed alive. The other day he told that he was planning to visit the mazar Kochkor Ata and then the mazar in Turkistan. And now I am waiting for him.

My youngest brother was born with natural clairvoyance. His name is Kenjebek. Our father died when he was 7 months. Now he is living in Kirovka.

*Who of your children demonstrates your special qualities?*

My daughter Klara, and the youngest son. However, all my children at first had such abilities though after we moved to another place or had married they lost their abilities. As for Klara she immediately feels bad as soon as a sick person comes to us. As for the son, he is too young. He is 18. Being embarrassed around people, he reads the Quran by himself so that others do not know about it. He does not let it out. People do not know of that. His father and I teach him what we know. If he attends the feast he returns being very sick. He does not like those who drink alcohol and smoke.

My elder son also believes this way. He reads the Quran without a break. He was born in 1970. Perhaps because of his wife drinking alcohol he has now stopped reading the Quran. I do not like to have meals made with the hands of those who drink alcohol. They disgust me.

I will have to leave this place for home because of the cold. I do not want to go to the village. I see handicapped people due to their drinking of alcohol. This means that if I go to the village, then, for sure, I will meet those who drink. If it happens so that I have meals with those who drink, then a bad taste is left in my mouth for 2-3 days. If the place where I have meals is clean, it is not difficult for me, but if that is not such, is dirty and alcohol is drunk, then I feel bad. I want to throw up and I cannot swallow the meals. Sometimes I am so sorry feeling this way. But sometimes I am glad, because this is a sign of purity. Those who are sincerely this way are few. That is why we do not appreciate the value of such special qualities. If men were more believing this way, were pure with themselves and others, our nation would have already improved. I am always suffering just upon thinking about that. I do want to speak to people like you. If I have a talk with them I really feel happy and enjoy it so much.

*They say that the Kochkor Ata mazar has many mysteries, what do you see and feel?*

Yes, there are many mazars. From here (approximately in a distance of about 300 meter above the south-west part of the Kochkor Ata mazar there are two stones), I see various images. Sometimes I see a young man. This is not seen only by me but also by *bübüs* and *bakshys* who visit the mazar. One day my son Askat said that he had also heard some people talk. Here in the village, there is a man named Kalkaman. He also says that when he visits this place he hears different noises. He once heard some music and then in a while his son married. Such things often happen here. Those who come here praying for something do not come without anything. One must come here with belief. If not then nothing will happen. Before this, I came here having heard about these things from people. Later on I began to see them with my own eyes. One day here (in the Kochkor Ata mazar), when a *moldo* began to pray loudly a row of cradles were clearly seen.

*You say that there are a lot of other mazars here in the Kochkor Ata mazar. Can you list them?*

Yes, let me tell you what I know and what I have heard about.

When one gets out from Kök Sai' there is a place called Barkyrak, when you just leave it and walk a little you could see one small elderly man. It appeared there was a grave there. There is a very small old man with a belt. His collar was bright and his beard broad.

When you go further and pass the water of Ak Sai' there is a small canyon. There are two greyhounds and a hunter. If you pray there and express your strong dream, this dream will come true.

Going further you pass the place full of dry wooden sticks. There is Kyz mazar.

In the distance of 200-300 meters from the northern-eastern side of the Kochkor Ata mazar, there is a big stone. Many people come there and pray.

On the way to the Kochkor Ata mazar, there is a corner turning toward the mazar. This is a turning rock of the mountain. Many people to that place too.

If you look at this mountain, it will look like a tiger. It can be very well seen in the sunset. It is located at a distance of 300-400 meters to north-west from the Kochkor Ata mazar. Near it there is a large stone, 1 meter high and a diameter of 2 meters. Many people say that this place for observers looks like either peasants working on the land or elderly women. I also saw that this place changes its images. Our teacher also says that there is a learned elderly man with grey beard here.

It is said that in the upper side there was a war. In approximately 250-300 meters to the south from the Kochkor Ata mazar, on the side of two mountains, near the pond, people who died innocently (*Shei'it*) are seen. (2-3 men from Kök Sai' village told that long ago there might have been a war for one always hears a great noise here – D.I.).

When I was passing the place called Kürüch Köl, I heard sounds of weeping. Even for those who have not read the Quran, the sounds of crying were heard. An old man who was weeping there had been seen by bübü Boroonkül from Kök Sai' as well. The other day when I visited that place, she told that it was the mazar of Köchörbai' Ata. I saw this place in my dream 5-6 years ago. Now I have found it. Long ago, people were settled here. One learned man was buried here. As soon as these dead people were pure, one can see rays spray out of their graves. As for us, we are far from being like them. If you are inclined to talk gossip, tell lies, then your dignity (*yi'man*) is said to fly away. We have become this way. Thus, how could we reach their level? We could never reach them.

Düi'shön from Archagül says that the place where Zaresh lives is also the mazar. Zaresh Eje lives in the village of Kök Sai', at Lenin Street. There never can be good things in that home. I think, why not make a mosque there? At that place *sham* (*q.v.*) really lights, Düi'shön says.

*How can one understand what you say as sham lights or it does not light?*

A human being is closely connected with fire, they live with it. They say that Satan was born from fire. Our forefathers worshipped fire. Saint people have *sham* on their forehead and their two shoulders. Though their appearance may be not so bright, their star is burning. As well, the ray of Allah falls down upon their graves. Once we visited Kara Choku in the village Groznyi'. We heard a very loud crying. We saw an elderly woman with many children holding her dress bottom around and crying. We were told that the bones of *Umai' Ene* (*q.v.*), who was a healer of children, were hidden here. And also at the same place, 2 big coppers faced to the ground one over another. When we turned up their face it appeared to be full of light. All the people, who were standing near by witnessed this. Afterwards I told of that to my teacher Unut Apa [*Apa* means Mother].

Just recently, a little girl of 12-13 years old came here with her mother. It was night and we were performing the *zikir chaluu* (q.v.) ritual. At that time 9 stars, three times by three, fell on the girl. Now I am thinking, if there was a good teacher to that girl who could show her a way, she would have been a great speaker when grown. If she is shown a wrong way, she could become mad.

A girl from Kai'nar also lost her abilities though she started well at first. As soon as you are on this way you are to be pure in all the aspects and have untied labor. There was one man. He began to read namaz. A Satan found him one day but that man washed himself again and again and would hurry to the mosque for namaz. One day Satan said: "I am not able to win this man. I have given up".

*Is it necessary to perform jar saluu in the mazar?*

It may be performed at home as well. But if it is done in the mazar respective things are seen. Once one of our neighbors named Güljamal began to prepare to visit the mazar with us. She is our friend so I told her to make ablution, though she told of having already washed. I once again jokingly repeated my request. She did not answer me and went to the nearest river to wash. I was looking at her. Suddenly her clothes have changed. So I did not say anything. We reached the mazar Eshen Ata. As soon as we reached the mazar, from above that young woman separated a black crow which left her and went to some place a distance away. It surprised me and I stayed, thinking it over. I thought that a man can intend to anything with true desire. When we returned, Güljamal's face looked so beautiful, so pretty. I will tell also what I saw there as well. With us visited the mazar a woman whose name was Boroonkül. From her, all the bad and dirty things came out and flew away from the earth.

*What does being purified mean?*

There are such Muslim concepts as *aram* (q.v.) and *adal* (q.v.). *Aram* is when a man, after having a sleep, does not take wash *küsiil daarat* (q.v.). If a man has *küsiil daarat* then this is loved by God as well.

Today I left home at 9 o'clock in the morning and only now at 16 o'clock I have reached the mazar. The way is long. From Kök Sai' to the Kochkor Ata mazar it is about 15-20 kilometers. I was practicing *zikir chaluu* throughout the whole way. It helped me. In spite of a long way, a hot day, being of age of 54, I came here easily. If I would not practice *zikir chaluu* I would have been very tired.

*What is zikir chaluu?*

To make *zikir chaluu* is to praise Allah.

*Is it necessary to build toilets near the mazar?*

Yes, it is. Otherwise it could be dirty around the mazar.

**Damira Imanalieva:** *People mostly come to the Kochkor Ata mazar on Thursdays. Once I visited the Mazar with an intention to spend a night there with them. But when I came it appeared that only Almash Eje was there. So I decided to spend a night there with her. Before going to sleep Almash Eje told a lot what she had experienced.*

**Almash Eje:** If you cannot find anything to cover the meals at night and put a small stick at the edge of a dish with meals, even that small stick will guard your meals and keep them clean. Before my younger son would tell that he could see many things, and now – nothing.

*When bübüs visit the mazars some of them say: “After visiting the Mazar we become fresh and rested”, but some of them say that this place is not for resting. They say that one is to think only of another world, that they are stepping on the places where bones of invalid people were buried. What do you think of it?*

You know, what bübüs say is not right. It may frighten people. If only you hear such words from someone, please tell her/him not to say these words so as not to frighten people. Those who say such words are called as a tale-bearer. We are not able to say something before God says it. This is sin in front of God. When I visit the mazar I walk only on those places which are shown to me by God.

*What about us? What should we, simple people, do if no sign is shown to us?*

You needn't know that. God made women's way short. As for men, they do not care much. Be careful while walking, do not walk too much, and do not mind those places where you walk. I think that in the past there were such saint persons who could change a man into a donkey. As for our present *moldo* they do not have such special abilities. Because most of present priests have bad characters, are not kind, they sometimes use people in their own interests.

*Based on the interview of Damira Imanalieva, a graduate from the Talas State University,  
Department of History*

***A family of Jumanazarov, Guardians of Kanykei' Bulak Mazar,  
Ak Jar Village, Talas Region***

**Esengul Jumanazarov, 73 year old**

Before I worked in Manas Ordo. Because local authorities failed to take care of the mazar Kanykei' Apa Bulak, it was taken under care by the former governor of the oblast Iskender Ai'daraliev, who organized the planting different trees- apple, birch, oak. The governor ordered that this spring was to be owned by the state. Then I began to guard the trees there. I am now on pension so my son guards them. Nevertheless, I am also always there.

I do not have *kyrgyzchylyk* but *moldochuluk* (q.v.). I do not see contradiction between mazar worshipping and *moldochuluk*.

**Bekkul, a son of Esengul Ata, 26 years old, guardian of the Kanykei' Bulak mazar**

I have started this job this year. Before me, my father was the guardian. I came here after my father retired with his pension.

If you take water from different springs, their tastes are different. It is called the “The Spring of Kanykei' Apa”. As its name tells I regard this mazar as a sacred one.

What I do is that I come here early in the morning, clean ditches, plant willows and apricots. On the whole I try to make it green with plants and trees.

**Kanym, the spouse of Esengul Ata**

My husband Esengul and all our family guard this mazar. People would call us *shai'yk*. Such a man explains Shariah, explains the way to those who are visitors of the mazar. Earlier we worked for 3 years at the Manas Mausoleum. As far as there was nobody to guard this place they sent us to this place. Here we opened the eye of the spring, picked up stones, cleaned the surroundings and we water what we planted. We provide everything. Our salary is paid from the Mausoleum. Our salary is 350 soms per a month. We get 323 after paying taxes.

Until Thursday few people come here. On Thursday their number is greater. They come mostly in summer time. Practically no one comes in the winter time.

The number of visitors depends on the Kyrgyz people's acceptance of Islam.

I believe that this job of being the guardians has a good impact upon our life. Only it is difficult to walk to and from the mazar. Home is far away. If it were possible to build a small house here, it would have been convenient for those who come here to spend the night or conduct *tülöö*.

As for sacred qualities of the spring, there are 41 springs here. They were tested, checked. It was revealed then that these 41 springs can heal 41 different illnesses

***Kerimbai' Ibraimov, 68 Years Old, Guardian of Ak Üi' Mazar, Sheker Village, Kara Buura Region***

*How did you become a guardian? What was a premise for these activities?*

I had a dream 15 years ago. I was brought here by the former *moldo* of this village. This place was empty. Rahmanberdi *moldo* could not find a guardian for this place and came to me. He asked me but I did not agree. In three days, he came to me again. I told that I should negotiate with my family and that I should have a blessing of the people but I did not have opportunities for this. That man told that by the rules of Shariah, only when having opportunities can a man organize a *tülöö*. My wife did not agree at first. Only after three days she agreed and then we moved here. When we came here these places were so dirty, without any care. There remained old carpets and torn bed clothes. There were snakes and spiders there but they did not touch us. We could not adapt at all. In a week, it began to seem that there was somebody outside but looking out we could not see anybody. As soon as we went to bed again a special noise would start again. Some black worms fell down on the floor at nights and in the morning they go up to the ceiling of the old house. Even now some noise is produced and one can hear somebody talking here.

So we came here and repaired a house. The place of the old mosque was cleaned and on its place a new one was built. While we were clearing the old mosque, a whole sack of books was found. As far as we could not read them an elderly woman named Müzülümai' would come here to Ak Üi' to her father's trees and spring (Chargyn *moldo*), so we decided to give them to her. Chargyn *moldo* was a man who healed others with special incantations. Before, he had planted many trees around here but *moldos* came and had the trees cut. He had hidden two sacks of books around here and took 2 cases to the mountain. His children are said to visit that place. He had hidden one case in this mosque.

When a tractor was destroying this mosque and came up right to the eastern wall of the mosque the tractor stopped and could not move further. It appeared that there was a hidden case with books there. Elderly men of those places said that they might be the books of Chargyn *moldo*. They had become very old, decayed and burned. Among them, only 4-5 books remained in a good condition, which we put in the new mosque. These books were written in Arabic. Later as soon as nobody could read them and people would ask to take them home to read, thus no book left the mosque. As a daughter of Chargyn *moldo*

Müzülümai' Apa asked us: "One book of my father is left. Please, give it to me, for in my dream I was given *ayan*. I will take care of this book like you care for it". We gave the last book to her. Müzülüm told then that she had given that book to her younger brother who was studying Arabic and that he had taken that book to the safe place. He had taken it to one of the museums.

Chargyn *moldo*'s special qualities were said to be so strong. Among people it is said that he transformed a man into a donkey and rode it. He predicted that his grandchildren would be heartless. He had not taught his children his art sufficiently and he feared that these special qualities might be used for some bad things, for destroying. His son Syyaly also became a strong *moldo*, but he could not, like his father Chargyn *moldo*, heal some mysterious physical diseases.

Much work has been done for this new mosque. Many materials have been used: water, bricks, food etc. However it was said that we have people to help such activities. We are now finishing. When we were building the mosque they did not pay me. A new mosque has been built in 5 years (1998-2003).

I have planted willows here. Then when everything has been well perfected, a *moldo* and a *sopu* of the village began to fight for the position of guardian and replace me. Even they sent militia men who came drunk. I did not let them in and made them go away. They left very angry saying that they would imprison me. Then they got a certificate from a physician that I was sick with lung disease and applied to the court of elders. I went there praying for justice, followed only with my wife, as for my relatives they refused to tell the truth. When we came to the club where the court of elders was to be held, the club was full with people, I came there with only 3 people.

The village *moldo*, the *sopu*, the militia men talked. They told all the bad things about me to the sitting people, I was listening silently. Then it was my turn to talk. My wife told in defense of me. She told of all my labor there. When we were building a mosque she was working as an accountant.

*Sopu* Kenjegul had been working together with the *moldo* for 18 years. They only came to this mazar three times during this 18 years and now when everything is ready they force me leave this place. During 18 years the *sopu* has not planted even a tree. Then the speech was forwarded to lawyers.

They were three lawyers and two of them said that I was right. The third one said that at the bottom side of the mazar it was he who had planted willows. That man also grew trees at places where there was no water at all, carrying them in his hands.

Then a conclusion speech was forwarded to the chair of the court of elders and he said these words: "You are a coward *moldo*. Who gave you a right to force him to leave his job?"

Jumabai' (a militia man) tried to protect *moldo* who was his relative but he was told the following words: "Why are you not just towards people. You were to tell truth because of your old age but you followed those who were speaking first". Thus the judge gave a just decision. One should always remember God. In 3 days, *molδος* from the region capital came and fired the *moldo* and *sopu* from their jobs. God exists. If you are not pure in front of God, then you may be taken away from your job without any reason.

Just before we came to this place, one of our relatives lived in the south-east part of Ak Üi' – in a horse shed. In winter it was cold, and he destroyed Ak Üi'. He built a place for horses from its wooden sticks and gave its grass to his cattle. As soon as he did that his sheep and cattle became deadly maddened. Another man who took wood from that place disappeared with all his family and relatives.

And then one guard had been appointed to this place and his 2 children died, his mouth curved and afterwards, he left this places.

In the 1990's a woman, whose name was Ongolbü, said that she had wondered over the fact that although she would lock the door, the next morning it would be unlocked. She would clean that place for the sake of God. Earlier no man could stay here. It allows only those who are pure and whom it likes to get in.

Eshen Ata, from these places, told that there would be peaceful days in sacred Talas. He told that there would be no harm in the places where Manas had walked. They sometimes say that the sacredness of Ak Üi' is the same as that of Mecca and Medina.

Just recently a bübü Toktobübü brought with her a woman. The latter said that during 8 years she had been followed and frightened by a snake. She told that only coming here she was freed from fear and that she was planning to stay here to live. I agreed because of her disease. When I heard it for the first time I did not believe it at all. One day a snake really entered the mosque, fought the woman and whistled. I was so astonished. I made the snake go out of the mosque. Suddenly it appeared in front of my wife. She was pregnant. I was so frightened. At last we killed that snake. Then, that woman left us.

*Based on the interview of Damira Imanalieva, a graduate of the Talas State University,  
Department of History*

***Altyn Ibraimova, 71 Years Old, Guardian of Zulpukor Mazar,  
Aral Village, Talas Region***

*How long have you been living here?*

For 8 years.

*How did you manage to come here, to this place just close to the grave?*

A lot of people come here. They bring their bed clothes. One *moldo* told me to visit this place only on Thursdays. He told me to wash dishes here and pay attention to the surroundings. I also wanted to visit the mazar. All my thoughts were on it. One day when I was passing by and going up, I could not move my legs at all. Only when I turned from the bridge my legs started to run quickly. When I came here it appeared to be a two room house. Two elderly women were reading the Quran. One of them gave me a key but I did not take it.

I asked what if I stayed here. When I was cleaning one bed cloth, one *moldo* rode up to me on his horse and ordered: "Prepare tea, *bübü* is coming". I prepared two teapots. I feared so much that could not pronounce any word. He asked: "Hey, poor woman do you have tea?" While sitting over the tea, he told: "You are good. You stand well. Why have you cried? Allah made you come here. You flew here". We spent that night there.

My daughters cried when asking me why I was going there. I said: “Now I start learning to read namaz”. My daughters did not agree with that. Then I took my son’s son with me. My grandchild was a student of the third grade at school. “It is impossible for an elderly woman to be sitting there”, they said. But I insisted saying: “Zulpukor will protect me”. I asked my children not to come and say nothing to anybody. And then I married my grandson married.

When I could not find peace in my soul I was brought here by Allah. I did not fear.

*How do you spend your time here?*

I get up at 5-6 o’clock in the morning. Until the afternoon I am milking cows and go to our land and help pick up grass. For those who come to worship at the mazar, I bring bedclothes and water to them. I boil tea for them. Some of them spend the night here.

*What is the attitude of people?*

Some of them do not come with true desires. Some come to test how I am staying with my son. “What are you doing here?” they ask me. What does God gives me that I use. If you want to criticize me, do. Even when you do not come here I read Quran and the spirits are grateful. If you bring bread, yes, I eat it, but this is for the sake of spirits. I feel when they go out of the doors. They say: “Are they talking having known or not?” Then when they come I tell about that. We go to 4 doors and read Quran. I can feel those who have not come with true desires by my dream or some signs.

*Do many visitors come here? What is the reason of their coming?*

Yes, many come. From far places people come on Thursdays and spend the night here. Each day up to 6 people come. They perform religious rituals. They read the Quran and pray.

Those who come on Thursdays talk of their weaknesses while performing *jar saluu*. *Bibüs* talk of diseases and the hearty desires of people who they brought to the mazar. They wish happiness and faith to the people and leave. People read namaz, and read Quran and sometimes they animal sacrifice sheep. They request health, faith, life for their children. Those who come here have high blood pressure, eye diseases or are not able to give birth to children.

There are also those who do not meet with me. And I am sorry for those who have not called me. I have responsibilities here. As far they come in the name of God and spirits are watching them when I give tea, giving tea to the visitors is serving God and spirits. As far as I am always with the spirits and God, of course, I am responsible.

*Have any of them influenced you?*

Toktosh Apa told me many clever things. When I came here having no idea of them she influenced me a great deal. It was she who told me to be clean and advised me to go the right way.

*Based on the interview of Nazgül Asanakunova, a student of the Talas State University,  
Department of Kyrgyz Philology*

***Jengish Kudakeev, 60 Years Old, Shai’yk of Nyldy Ata Mazar,  
Özgörüsh Village, Bakai’ Ata Region***

**Information of Aida Kudakeeva, a daughter of Jengish Kudakeev**

My father, Kudakeev Jengish, was born in 1946, on the 16<sup>th</sup> of March. When he was a little boy (14-15 years old) he would often see Nyldy Ata with a white beard in his dream. Then in 1964-1965 he was given *ayan*. He discovered Kóz Bulak in Nyldy Ata mazar by cleaning the spring's eye. In 1972 he married my mother Kojokeeva Rapiya. They had 7 children: 4 daughters and 3 sons. Afterwards, starting in 1988, he read namaz and visited the mazar and prayed without stopping. My father's mother Temir Apa had also followed *kyrgyzchylyk* and had been a *bübü* since her youth. Our grandmother Temir, in spite of the fact that during the Soviet time she had been prosecuted a great deal, did not stop healing children and people. We saw how she mostly dressed in a white dress was crying after having visited the Nyldy Ata mazar, having prayed for our peoples' happiness, peace and life. Our grandmother became invalid from the insult in 1987-1988. In 1997 she died. In 1993 my mother Rapiya had a surgery, but she could not recover and died. So my father stayed looking after an old, sick woman and 6 children.

My grandmother's mother whose name was Jarkyn had been also a *bübü* following *kyrgyzchylyk*. She was a *kuuchu*. She was also a person to help women give birth to children. We now call them a gynecologist. She was also a healer of children who used special sacred words. As some people would say, she could help women to give birth children naturally even though they had been told to be operated on for the childbirth. People called her a Bagymgül [a one who subjugates something] because she cured diseases and made them and other things to obey her. Her father-in-law, named Darke, had been also a great *bakshy*.

### **A talk with Jengish Ata**

*How long have you been engaged in this job?*

Since 1988.

*How do people call your profession?*

Some people call us guardians, some – *shai'yk*, some – as *chyrakchy* (q.v.)

*How do you call your profession?*

I do not consider myself as a guardian, I am a simple mazar visitor, worshipping and praying there. I simply go to the mazar, look after it, read the Quran to those who visit the mazar, and perform *zikir chaluu*.

*How did you manage to start this job?*

When I was 18 and looking after the sheep I met an elderly man in white dress who gave me a book of the Quran, but I did not take it. Since then I began to see *ayan*. In 1988 I saw this Echkilüü Mountain in my dream. Next morning when I was walking through these mountains I saw grass to grow on the surface of the stone. When the next morning I brought a shovel and cleaned that grass, a spring flew from that place. Since then I have been reading the Quran and telling of this to visitors and I began to visit it more often.

*Could you please describe your working day?*

I get up in the morning at 8 o'clock, at 9 I go to the mazar. I read the Quran to those who visit the mazar, perform *zikir chaluu* and in the evening I come back home. People come to my home as well to be healed. So I go to bed at about 12 o'clock. Again at 2 o'clock at night I get up and up to 6 o'clock I am sitting in trance. Besides, I read *namaz* 5 times a day.

*What time do people visit the mazar most often?*

In spring people come to perform *zikir chaluu* to pray for good harvest and in autumn they are back to express gratitude. On Thursdays there are usually many visitors.

*What is the lesser or greater number of visitors connected with?*

It is connected mostly with the weather because the mazar is located in the mountains.

*Who helps you?*

Kai'rat whom I consider to be my student. He helps me well. Especially he helps me financially. For example, he buys sports boots and bags which are comfortable for hiking. He also buys me white clothes to wear in the mazar. Recently he has written a proposal in which he is planning to build a fence around the mazar.

*How can you explain the sacredness of the mazar?*

The distance between the mazar and the village is very long. I always pass this way every day and I am not at all tired. And those who were so tired on the way to the mazar, as soon as they get there, they would forget their tiredness immediately. Once one elderly woman could hardly reach the mazar because of her sick legs, but on the way back she could very easily run along the way. Before, having walked this much, she was not able to get up the next morning. But that case after having visited the mazar, the next morning she even jumped out of her bed.

*Who mostly visits the mazar?*

Mostly those who are sick, those who are given *ayan* in their dream and *közü achyks* also come. Also ordinary people visit, who simply want to remember their fathers and grandfathers and perform *zikir chaluu* and read the Quran.

*Do you worship mazars?*

No, I worship only God. As for the mazar, I perform special rituals. I read the Quran for forefathers, pray and wash in the water of the mazar spring.

*What other mazars have you visited?*

I have not visited any other mazars.

*What rituals do you perform?*

In the mazar I perform *zikir chaluu* and read the Quran.

*Have you noticed any positive or negative impact of mazar upon your life?*

Thanks to God it influenced me in only in positive ways. Before, when I had not visited the mazar, I suffered much in my life. My wife died and I was without a job. As soon as I started to visit the mazar I began to feel some easiness. Now my children and I are not hungry, we are healthy and nothing more is needed. One should not request wealth from God. It is an inexcusable sin.

*Do you visit the mosque?*

No, I do not, for it is not as clean as the mazar. I have seen many of those people who have taken alcohol and attended the mosque. Most people visit the mosque simply for reading Quran and reading namaz. As for the mazar, people visit it praying for good things and to be cured from diseases. Those who visit the mazar pray from their heart, as for those who visit the mosque they do not do this from their heart.

*What is the attitude of your family and children towards the mazar?*

They do not go to the mazar, but they do not have any negative views towards my activities.

*Did you happen to notice that those who come to the mazar do any bad things?*

Once one woman named Jangylkan put her hands into the water of the spring and in a second she fell on her back. When we asked her what happened she answered that she had been struck by the electricity. It appeared that she was a woman who did not believe in mazars and so had negative energy. In general when one visits the mazar one should be faithful. And some people come here having drunk alcohol which is not right.

*What do you know from the history of the mazar?*

As for the Nyldy Ata mazar, I do not know many things. But once when I was sitting in trance I was informed that Nyldy Ata was a Prophet who had lived in 33<sup>rd</sup> century BCE. This mazar might have been remained from that Prophet.

*Based on the interview of Guljan Kudabaeva, a senior student of the American University-Central Asia, Department of Cultural Anthropology and Archeology*

***Anarkül Kulusheva, Guardian of Kur Tash and Dölön Ata Mazars,  
Özgörüşh Village, Bakai' Ata Region***

*How did you happen to visit mazars?*

I started to visit mazars because of my health. When I was 14 years old I became very sick and was not aware of anything. When I was 22 that disease intensified. Since that time I have started to read namaz. Since the age of 38 I began to visit mazars. I have seizure (*talma*). Allah in such situations gives me some feelings. I have also an ability of *ai'tymchylyk* (q.v.). I have an obligation to visit that mazar, which I see in my dream. There is a mazar which I saw in my dream and gave me *ayan* and to which I gave a name. It is called as the Kur Tash mazar. Near it there is a spring, water of which heals stomach diseases and allergy of the face. And also it heals those infertile women and cannot give birth to children.

At first I visited the Kur Tash mazar, Osek Ata mazar and Dölön Ata mazar. When I was deathly sick and saw *ayan* in my dream, the *moldo* of the village named Ajbek, now he is in Ysyk Köl, healed me and made me wear white dress at the Kur Tash mazar. Because I was healed at this Kur Tash mazar I always come here and clean this place. Before we were living far from this place, now we are near. Before many people visited this mazar but now, less (5-6 visitors per a day, sometimes 10-15 people in a month). Kur Tash mazar is mostly visited by those who are unhappy, who have no children, are sick with allergies and eye diseases.

There was a man whose name was Bai'sei'it. The Kur Tash mazar belonged to him. In the beginning he did not understand it well but now he does. There was nobody to interfere with our activities.

The sacred qualities which I have, my mother also had. She also healed people. I was a child and did not understand this well. Before dying my mother told me of leaving these qualities to me, I was 37 years old then.

*Are not your family members against your activities?*

No, my husband accepts this well. He heals people by *dem saluu*. My son and daughter also had this ability. But my daughter has died. For 18 years I have been healing people and 12 years have passed since I have been healing people openly. Mostly sick people come to me,

especially those who could not be cured at the hospital and had been hospitalized and then sent away. I do my best, but I do not say that this is me. I say this is God who heals. They become well if God wishes. I do not tell people that only I can heal them. I do my best to help people, but if I see that it is impossible for me to heal them I send them to physicians or other traditional healers like me. I say them: "Go to that person, that person knows". There are those who visit me and are healed from their diseases and they go back home so happy and there are those who could not recover.

*What rituals do you perform towards those sick persons who come to you?*

If children come with a deadly cough I cure them with water and clay. A boy from Ak Döbö village came. He had a brain trauma and his backbone moved and was not able to do any work. One day we visited Kur Tash mazar and spent a night there. I saw that a boy was suffering a great deal. His mother also awakened and saw how her son was terribly suffering. I told her: "They are healing your son. If God wishes he will recover". In the morning the boy said that something interesting had happened to him that night. It was surprising that when we looked at his back there was blood on his clothes, his backbone appeared to have been sewn in some places. From that time on that boy recovered and has been working well. First it was thanks to God, as for us, we are only mediators of God's will.

Infertile women also come here. One woman could not give birth to children for 18 years, the second for 6 years and another one for 4 years. They have all given birth to children. If one has only faith it will occur.

This Kur Tash mazar once disappeared and then again reappeared. If children have *kirne* (q.v.) I wash them seven times a day during three days. Those who have caught cold in the nerves I heal with biocurrent, do massage. Because I have the ability to tell the future I tell my predictions, I tell of the future with cards, I practice *sham jaguu*, perform *zikir chaluu* and tell the future. I tell with 12 chapters (*Surah*) of the Quran.

Before a number of people who have heart diseases came to me, I performed healing in groups, now I do not practice this. Because now only a few people come. My husband performed *dem saluu* to one man who had not walked during 6 years, I performed *sham jaguu* twenty one times and he started to walk. For feet I prepare *adyrashman* boil it and give it to a sick person. I hold it above the steam of yellow water. Give a massage. Take off the sickness with biocurrent. I also heal eyes. Pour water with mouth through *oi'mok* (q.v.).

*How many times do you do this?*

3 or 7 times, differently.

*On what basis do you do these rituals?*

I heal on the basis of *ayan*. For example, if a sick man comes, I am shown by *ayan* how to heal him, where to take him. If it is said that a man is to be taken to the mazar I take him there. If it is said to heal at home, I heal him at home.

*What do you consider yourself to be?*

I consider myself a God's slave, a simple imperfect person (*pende*). People consider me a *shai'yk*, *Umai'Ene*. But I want to be a simple person.

*What is a simple person?*

Allah loves a simple man. As a person, I would like to help other people, to work for people in the mazar. I do *sham jaguu* on Wednesdays and Thursdays. I pray for the well-being and faith of my children, family and nation.

*Based on the interview of Nazira Satisheva, a student of the Talas State University,  
Department of History*

***Kylychbek Kurmanbaev, 56 Years Old, Guardian of Chynar Terek Mazar,  
Kök Tokoi' Village, Talas Region***

*What was the reason you were engaged with mazars?*

The reason for this was that I fell deadly ill, could not sleep for 3 days and as I was going to the physician, I met Chachykei' Apa who asked me where I was going. When I answered that I was going to the doctor she told not to go to the doctor. She said that in the generation of my mother there was *kyrgyzchylyk*. She said: "You go first to the Chynar Terek mazar and worship". That was Wednesday. When I asked her: "How will I do that?" she answered that I should take *jeti tokoch* (*q.v.*) there, read the Quran, sit there a little while and then come back. She told me to go to the Manas Mausoleum on Thursday and that she would also come there. So I visited mazar and my disease lessened. The cough tortured me. I coughed so strongly. The next morning we visited Chynar Terek. What surprised me was that right that day without any medicine I stopped coughing. Then she told: "You should visit seven mazars, you go there on Thursdays". Visiting mazars appeared to take a lot of time. I agreed and we visited seven mazars. So I began to learn of sacred properties of mazars. We felt what good things they may bring, that if you do wrong or bad things, or walk on the mazar in an improper way you may suffer some harm from doing so.

*Were there any guardians of Chynar Terek before you? How long have you been working as a guardian?*

No, nobody was a guardian here. I have been working as a guardian here for 3 years. I have been visiting Chynar Terek for 11 – 12 years. Since that time I have been worshipping Chynar Terek. I became a guardian here not because of my wish to be such, but simply to clean its surroundings. If some people come and tie ribbons to the branches I tell them not to do this. If there are those who engage in bad behavior, I would tell them what I know.

*Do you know what diseases may be healed by this mazar?*

I felt that if a man has but a pure heart and comes here, however he suffers, whatever desire he has, he may be heard by Allah. If he prays for a child, it will give him a child. A woman once came to this mazar who could not give birth to children. She is from our village. She saw this mazar Chynar Terek in her dream, and she decided to visit it. So when she had visited the mazar and was just going back, two birds flew up to her and sat down on her two breasts. One of them excremented upon her breast, another one did not. Then they flew away. One year had not passed as she gave birth to twins. One of twins died, the other is alive. Having heard of all this, seen and known of this, having the Quran in my hand, I came to the following conclusion. It is written in the Quran that Allah said: "I will show *ayan* signs to the people through my living substances". Now look, please, how one of those two birds has excremented and the other not. This is understandable to everybody. Consequently, it testified of its being the same in the life. If one prays for a child, it gives a child, if health, it gives it, if one comes here and prays for wealth it is also given to him. On the whole whatever mazar you go, if it gives you *ayan* in your dream and waits for you then there will be some good things of Allah.

*Do you know the history of this mazar?*

As I heard this tree has grown from the root of real white poplar. It is impossible for three men to embrace it. The former white poplar had disappeared. As for *bübü* and *bakshys* they say that this Chynar Terek was planted by Manas Ata. I cannot say that exactly, but I know one thing; it is that this place has sacred qualities. Because when I go there my body is somehow trembling and some special feelings arise. Such a feeling is not given to everybody. It is shown to delicate and special people.

*Do you heal people?*

Yes, I do.

*With what diseases do people come here mostly?*

One young man and his family came from Kochkor village. He was praying to Allah, his wife being so ill, asking for health from God. They came to pray to be healed from the sicknesses they have. I cannot define exactly what diseases Chynar Terek heals. As you see, those who came praying for children, are given them, those who came praying for health are given it. It is like this wherever you go, whatever you ask from Allah, He is an Almighty, Allseeing and Allknowing substance. What is happening inside and outside us, everything is known by Him. I have come to a conclusion that whatever you ask from Allah, in some measure you get from Him.

*How many people visit the mazar per a day or month?*

Before I knew of the mazar, people were passing near our house. As I noticed before people visited the mazar each week or once in two weeks. Here come those who come here are interested in Chynar Terek and those who were given *ayan*.

*Is not your family against your activities?*

Some misunderstandings occurred. For example, my wife even would say: "Do not go to the mazar. My brother is a man who reads the Quran and believes only in God. What I do is against his activities".

*Have you been given sacred ayan or?*

I have not been given *ayan*. It was Chachykei' Apa who told me of that. She would visit mazars with my mother. It was time when Chachykei' Apa was young and my mother old.

*How many children do you have?*

A son and four daughters.

*Has anybody else from your ancestors had such sacred qualities?*

Yes, our grand forefathers are said to have been *kalpa*.

*What rituals do you perform when you visit the mazar?*

We read Quran to the spirit of *kalpas*, forefathers and pray for peace to be among our children and our people.

*What are the duties of the guardian?*

*Guardian's* duty is to tell visitors of how to behave appropriately in the mazar, to prevent them from breaking anything around the mazar and to keep everything clean. If anybody ties ribbons to the branches of trees he is to take them away.

*What rights do think should be given to you?*

If visitors walk along the mazar not alone but taking us as *shai'yks* with them, if we visit mazars together, we would have learned more, known more than the visitors.

*What days do you heal sick people?*

Any day, all the days are God's.

*Based on the interview of Nazgiil Asanakunova, a student of the Talas State University,  
Department of Kyrgyz Philology*

***Jumadil Mamekov, 60 Years Old, Shai'yk of Chypynyn Mazary,  
Ak Jar village, Talas Region***

*Kashymbek Abdyraimov was a shai'yk of Chypynyn mazary before. After his death the duty of the shai'yk was taken over by Jumadil Mamekov.*

It was me who first showed Aigine members about this mazar. To have more precise information, I took them to Kashymbek because he had been a shepherd and spent much of his time here. Since his death (2 years have passed) I have been looking after the mazar. Yes, this is our saintly duty to take care of these places as they are considered to be mazars. We are not to let sheep or cattle walk there, not to let sacredness go out of them and to keep them clean and safe. Chypy did not have children. Those who visit now are mostly those who cannot give birth to children.

My seven forefathers have been *shai'yks* of Manas Mausoleum. Being *shai'yk* has been passed to me from them. Toktorbai', Mamek, Sargaldak, even my father-in-law and mother-in-law, then me being *shai'yk*. All my life and fate are connected with Manas Mausoleum. Since my childhood I have been living here. This place itself is our own land.

Our forefathers seem to have been really genius people. For our grandfather Mamek was Manas teller, his son who is my father's brother Jantakbai', our grandfather, was a *komuzchu* (*q.v.*), my father's another younger brother was great *dubana*. I also had the ability of Manas telling. I would tell the stories of Manas and *Semetei'* (*q.v.*). I started to speak only when I was 9, but I could not speak well. In spite of this I would tell everything which I had in my heart. Then once one man standing among a crowd of people, said: "Well, since you are a son of Manas teller, it cannot be so that you do not possess his qualities, so try to tell us something". So I began to tell. People began to laugh at me. I was 12-13 years old. From that day I have stopped reciting Manas. I understood that not my telling of Manas, but my disabled tongue that made them laugh. My tongue improved when I was 15. However, I would go on to be together with dumb people, their world cognition, comprehension and world perceptions were so close to those of mine. Their good quality is that they can easily understand others' thoughts, that they are so sensitive. Being together with them since my childhood I have been a witness of many funny stories. Not showing any sign of knowledge, having heard many different words of dumb people, sometimes not being able to bear stories of dumb people and being so sorry for them I could not help starting to speak to people, so that they would be so shocked, that language to be even close to me. So I did not have any education. Four-year education, personal search, and some good qualities passed from my forefathers, family of mine – this is the only wealth I have.

My own mother Bermet would heal little children, made a ritual of curing with water. Ritualized with a hammer, black dirt of copper and remnants of fire. Made a massage of the stomach, pulled off the knot of the backbone and made its pain leave. I do the same. My own

grandfather Chongaraaly was a *kyl tabyp* (q.v.). He was a healer with the help of pulse. He cured deadly cough and fever. Sometimes I make massage to those people whom I sympathize. It is not possible to efficiently cure close relatives for fathers' spirit does not impact them as for that of a mother, it does. Kyrgyz people say: "Mother's words are nothing, father's words are killing". Whatever bad words mothers say to their children they never impact them. As for fathers they must not curse their children. It is better to beat children than curse them.

*You are telling of your forefathers' dubanachylyk (q.v.). Do not their children have such abilities?*

One of my sons is being treated in Chym Korgon hospital for mentally ill people. He was to finish his school. Since he was 8 months old he has been sick seizure. Now, from time to time he may be very sick. I took him everywhere to be healed. We visited doctors, different *tabyps*, we even visited mazars. Because of no results, we had to hospitalize him for some time. There is a great *moldo* called Kojo Bii' who can cure such diseases. If three of them read the Quran over him he would be healed. Such *moldo* are said to be only in Tashkent and Bukhara.

*Are you sure that sick persons may be cured by such moldo? If so, then why do not you take your son to them?*

It is difficult to find them. To find 3 *moldo* is even more difficult.

*What do you think is the reason of your son's disease?*

I have told that there is something having been passed from our seven forefathers. My son is young, thus cannot tell us about it himself. Among our relatives there is certainly some person who has such a disease. As told by the elders, one of my older sisters was sick with such a disease and she died. She had epilepsy and many things were seen by her. When she died this disease moved to my sister-in-law. She died last year. But both of them seemed to have been cured by one *moldo* from Talas. And then my son became ill. This illness seems to be moving from one to another. There is one more way of being healed – this is to become *dubana* like Atamkul. But my son says: "It is better to die than to become a *dubana*". Now he has been so depressed saying: "As far as I do not serve in the Army or do not study or cannot make friends with girls, how can I call my life as a life?" You see he desires a life of mere people. He is, by the way, a very clever boy. He understood everything while studying at school. He would get only excellent marks.

*- Have you noticed anything mysterious in yourself?*

- When my son was hospitalized in Chym Korgon, it was early in the morning, before the sunrise, 3 or 4 o'clock. Suddenly I awakened, went to the street, came in again, while I was falling asleep, I heard the noise of the opening door. I saw a little boy who was looking at me. I said: "Come, come, darling", thinking that he was my grandson who was sleeping with his grandmother in the other room. He looked at me, said nothing and left the room. The closing door made the same noise I had heard earlier. My wife was also awakened having been frightened. Then I looked in the next room to see my grandson and saw that both of my grandsons were very nicely sleeping. Then I realized that it was my son's *jin* (q.v.) who came here and was looking for him and could not find him in the room. As I began to pronounce praying words "Allah, Allah", my wife told: "Are you becoming a *dubana*?" I answered not showing any sign: "No, it's me". In order not to frighten her I said: "I have simply had a bad dream". When I told her about it in the morning she said: "Ah, he appeared to be looking for Nurlan". My son would say that something is seen through eye glasses. If this boy marries

and has children, his disease will probably leave him. Doctors say that he always takes medicine. Let him do so. What else should be done?

Though I do not have education, I try to educate my children. I start some topic and my children continue discussing and solving it. I tried to interest them in reading books.

Let's come back to the topic of *dubanachylyk*. Up until 1991, it has disappeared. It was seen very rarely because of the political situation. On the whole, in Talas region, Agybai', Kurmanaly, Bala *dubana* and Akbübü Apa from the village of Engels are said to have been real *dubanas*. In 1991 freedom was gained. That year *dubana* was not seen much. Those who call themselves as *bübü* have been rare. I was told that those who were interested in money they will not wait long, so they reappeared in reality. People began to realize who was who.

*Have not you been given ayan? If dubanachylyk been given to you, would you perform this?*  
If you do not perform you die. This is not easy. If a man has been offered *dubanachylyk* he must be *dubana* or must die. If a man always drinks alcohol, he becomes an alcoholic. If he does not drink the next morning he becomes mad. He may ask it for free or plead miserably. On the whole, he cannot help drinking alcohol. You may understand *dubanachylyk* the same way. If he does not say "Allah", he may become very sick, even mad. He must be pure, practice whiteness and the good way.

*Does he mind whether people accept what he says or not?*  
Of course, he does not mind. After he has said it, he feels easier, much better. He needs peace in his soul.

*Do you have any dubana texts what your forefathers used?*  
Yes, I know some of them by heart:

Always you would repeat my house, my house,  
You will eat its blood.  
What you say as your house,  
Is only forest's wood.  
You would repeat my cattle, my cattle,  
Your cattle are only forest's bird.  
Who will remain after this world?  
Only that soul who will say "Allah",  
Who is on white and a right way.  
Allah Ah (3 times)  
Allah Üi' (3 times).

*You said that dubana has a special stick. Then such stick might have been given to Atamkul Ata. What about your forefathers' stick, who has it?*

Now we do not have it. Even I have lost my grandfather Jantakbai's *komuz* (q.v.). In 1953 my grandfather Jantakbai's wife died. Then the *komuz* had been lost in 1960s at home. As for a stick in 1942 when my grandfather Sargaldak was walking along the streets of Kirovka performing *dubana* rituals, officials from military committee caught him and sent him to war. And who knows the fate of the stick? You think they appreciated the stick? Of course, they threw it away.

Our grandfather Chongaraaly would always say to his children: "Unless you stop drinking alcohol, you may become mad. It does not fit our natives". I stopped drinking alcohol when I was 43, my brother stopped it at 45.

I have always 3 men, 3 thoughts living within me. In my dream I become either a minister or a spy or become a mere man.

*Based on the interview of Aida Egemberdieva, Candidate of Philological Sciences, Senior researcher of Aigine*

***Taryhchy Müzürbekov, Shai'yk of Nogoi' Baatyr Mazar,  
Kyzyl Oktyabr Village, Bakai' Ata Region***

*How long have you been visiting the mazars?*

For 13 years. They call me to the mazars themselves. These will be *ai'tymchy* (q.v.). Alongside with this I can find time to visit them. In most of the cases when I visit the mazar its grass throughout the whole year appears to be green and most of them are medicinal herbs. From them I prepare medicine.

I heal people. From them I take their black energy. In order not to be absorbed with their blackness I visit the mazar and throw away that black energy and take pure energy thus feeling easier and better.

I have to heal people. Unless I give my energy to people the energy from my hand squeezes through it causing circles of skin disease.

*How did you start visiting mazars?*

I have been guarded by the snake since my childhood. Once my parents offended me and I went up to the roof, laid there and fell asleep. Suddenly I was awakened with fear and saw a snake that was lying on my breast. As soon as I looked at it, it began to whistle, looked at me for a while and again lay on my breast. I laid there with fear. My mother found me on the roof and having seen the snake on my breast was frightened, cried loudly and took the snake with the fork and threw it away. That time she would have better sprayed white flour on the snake. Since then I appeared to have somehow been given some mysterious qualities by the snake. I was young then, knew nothing and at 45 I accepted *kyrgyzchylyk*. That time when I was just starting to visit mazars I came to the Ak Terek mazar and for the first time I witness a mystery. I saw a big, fat man there.

*Do you know the history of the mazar?*

Among the mazars which I have visited I know the history of Nyldy Ata mazar. There is one stone there. Visitors perform *jar saluu* and *zikir chaluu* there. Behind it there stands a stone. If one beats it dust comes out of it. The top of the rock is like a staircase, on its top there is Tashkazan. There is water. If the water drains out of it, then it is said that the good fortune of Talas disappears. It is from this place that deer drink water and give properties to it so that sick persons could recover having drunk it. The depth of that Tashkazan is 1, 5 meters, its diameter to be 2 meters. It takes 1, 5 hours for an average man to get there.

*Have you seen any mysteries in the mazar?*

One can witness a mystery of the mazar. It can be seen out of that corner. A beautiful light comes out of it. The roof is suspended. To me, some kind of very white light came forth and while I was reading the Quran, it sprayed the light so much. It touched my hands, was distributed along my body, covered it and made my whole body hot. The first energy was given at this place. In the bottom there was a tiger. He came out to greet us. When we were coming and worshipping, the last of us seemed to be completely surrounded by *azizs* (q.v.).

On that tablecloth, a teapot is standing. There was somebody with a white dress and a crown on his head. Clouds are turning in this place.

*Based on the interview of Zarima Ibraimova, a student of the Talas State University,  
Department of History*

***Batyraly Turumtaev, 67 Years Old, Guardian of Kalpa Mazar,  
Ming Bulak Village, Bakai' Ata Region***

I was born in the village Ming Bulak of the Bakai' Ata region. After finishing a secondary school I finished the driver's course in 1957. Since 1965, for 35 years, I worked as a person who waters agricultural fields in the village. In 1975, for my achievements in my work I was given with motorcycle. For my excellent job I was also presented with several medals and honorable titles. I got to visit Moscow. I married in 1964. I have 5 daughters and 4 sons. The eldest son has 4 children. They live in Orenburg. Beginning in 1988-1989, I have been working as a guardian of the Kalpa Ata mazar. Now I am retired. My wife milked cows and picked tobacco. Now she is also retired.

*When did you start your job as the guardian? What was the reason for it?*

In 1989 my father died. Earlier, my father had invited people and asked their blessing for me to be a guardian. Ahead of my being this, my father had been a *shai'yk* himself for 6-7 years. When I was a child, my father dreamed of building a house in the mazar. So my father built that house together with people. They helped him. But my father was not a *moldo*. Perhaps he was given *ayan* in his dream. My grandmother was *biibü* too. She healed people.

*What are your responsibilities as of a guardian?*

I prepare wood, water apple trees and clean. If elderly people come, I bring water from the spring and boil water for tea. I guard the mazar from cattle. I do not let them in. When my father was alive, he planted apple trees. I take care of them. I clean the opening of the spring and cut off the grass inside. In the Kalpa Ata mazar such a grass as *adyrashman* grows. This grass, when burned, is good for purifying the house. Many people ask me to pick some for them in summer. That is why I collect it and prepare it for people. I do not heal people who visit the mazar, I simply guard it.

*How can you explain the sacredness of the mazar you guard?*

I understand it as sacred judging by its history. For Kalpa Ata was an *oluya, tabyp*. His yard is said to become full of cattle on Thursday. But he distributed all those cattle among the poor, invalids and orphans. He would walk on foot. When he saw people who could not cross the river he would stop the river so that people could cross it easily. If he blessed somebody that person would become rich and have many children.

One day, Kalpa Ata wore bad clothes and entered someone's home. A daughter-in-law of the home's owner having seen his bad and old clothes did not welcome him. He asked her: "Where is your husband?" She seemed not to like him: "Take these clothes and wear them. My husband is out", - she answered. Kalpa Ata said: "Tell your husband when he is back home, that one *dubana* came and said that as soon as he arrives home, he must repair the entrance door immediately". The young woman was a daughter of a *bek (q.v.)*. As for her husband he was a hunter. In the evening as soon as her husband came home she told of what had happened. The hunter became very glad as he immediately understood: "Ee, then Kalpa Ake appeared to come to us". Then he divorced that woman and married another.

In 2-3 years Kalpa Ata came to them again. As soon as he entered their home, the second wife welcomed him saying: "Please come in, Ata, have a seat, Ata" and made him a guest with tea. Kalpa was glad and said: "Ee, he has repaired the door. Good". In the evening when her husband was back home she told: "one *oluya* came and asked about you and praised you". The hunter said: "We will go to him on Thursday and ask for his blessings and then I will go to the mountains to hunt and bring back a deer and fur". Thus they went to him on Thursday. When they arrived a lot of people appeared to be there. In spite of that, they entered his home. Expressing his gratitude, he gave those goats and deer he had hunted. Kalpa Ata distributed them to poor and invalid people who came to him. And then he gave a blessing to the hunter. After having been given blessing to the hunter he had 10 children.

As for Kalpa Ata he had forgotten to tell the hunter that he would die in the autumn. When the hunter heard of his death and came to his village, Kalpa Ata appeared to have been already buried. The hunter was so upset that he had not managed to participate in Kalpa Ata's funerals and said that while he was alive he would take the responsibility to organize himself Kalpa Ata's *ash* (*q.v.*). But Kalpa Ata's children objected his idea and did not let him do this saying that as long as they, Kalpa's children are alive, it will be shame for them to let the other person organize the *ash*.

*Have you noticed any mysterious events in the mazar where you are yourself a guardian??*

Yes, I have. Last year two young men came here drunk. They came in a car saying that came to eat apples and drink water. I could hardly make them go away. Then as soon as they have left the mazar they drove into the channel with their car. Both of the young men died. A friend of my son would also always come to the mazar drunk too. He was coming each day to eat apples. After a while my son told that that boy had suddenly died.

*As a guardian what rules do you follow?*

I read Quran to visitors, make ablution and if *bübüs* come, I join them and participate in performing *jar saluu*. I tell the story of the mazar to visitors. I also boil water for tea.

*Do you know the history of the mazar?*

Once upon a time this place is said to have been a mill of the Chinese. My father told me that different iron things had been produced. Kalpa Ata before his death, he asked to be buried right here. People buried him here.

*What are the problems that people come to the mazar you guard? What rituals are performed?*

Mostly those who have mental diseases and women who cannot give birth to children come to this mazar. I saw how women gave birth to children after their first visit to the mazar. But after that they stopped visiting the mazar. My brother could not move his leg. He started to walk again after being here in the mazar for a week. The healing property of the mazar water is strong. Because of that, most of visitors take water from here in containers of big volume. Sick persons recover after having stayed here for 3-7 days. Here in the mazar, they burn *sham jaguu*, perform *jar saluu* go to the place of the spring start and wash themselves there and sheep are sacrificed.

*Based on the interview of Nazira Jusupova, a student of the Talas State University, Department of History*

***Samarbek Ütirov, Guardian of Manas Mausoleum,  
Tash Aryk Village, Talas Region***

*What was the reason of your becoming a guardian of Manas Mausoleum?*

I was brought here by a *shai'yk* of the mazar Kanykey Apa Bulak Esengul bai'ke [*Bai'ke* means Brother] and Keneshbek *aksakal*. When I first came here I was a mere worker, then I became a guardian. I have been working as guardian for 5 years.

*What do you do as a shai'yk?*

We do different work. We clean the surroundings and there are apple trees here and we water them.

*Do you have any salary for your job, if yes, who pays you?*

Yes, salary is paid by the government. Our mazar relates to Bishkek. I work by term, 2 days I work, 4 days I am free.

*What is the opinion of your family towards your job?*

I have a daughter and a son. Their opinion is good.

*How many people visit Manas Mausoleum a day?*

200-300 people come.

*You told that you work by term, how many guardians all in all do you work here?*

We are three who guard. Me, Meder Jangybaev, and Ulan Bakeev. We guard the tomb and a museum.

*Based on the interview of Nazira Jusupova, a student of the Talas State University,  
Department of History*

***Bai'myrza Saparbaev, Guardian of Mai'mak Ata Mazar,  
Sulu Mai'mak Village, Kara Buura Region***

I was born on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of December, 1959, in the village of Sulu Mai'mak. After finishing a secondary school I finished the agricultural technical school number 13 in the village Joon Töbö. I have been working as a shepherd during 10 years and then as a water provider. A water channel was located near the mazar Sulu Mai'mak. Then the Soviet Union collapsed. Since then I have been living here near this water channel. Now I am a peasant, married in 1990, have 2 daughters and 1 son. I myself have 11 siblings.

*Who appointed you at that place as a shai'yk?*

In the time of the Soviet Union authorities, sent me here. In other words I came here as a line of work. Since then I have been living here.

*Have there been any changes in the mazar during these 15 years?*

People come, they wash their faces in the water of spring and drink it. Some of them say that they have recovered from it and are again back here. Mostly those who have sores recover from this water. During the Soviet Union religion was strongly prohibited. I appeared not to notice visitors for they would come in hiding themselves. In 3-4 years they began to visit openly.

*During Soviet times how many visitors would come a day or a week?*

Since 1997-1998, people began to visit often. Now a lot of people come on Wednesdays and Thursdays. Among them, there are many whom I cannot manage to see. In a week 4-5 come, in a month more that 20 people visit the mazar.

*Do the visitors come to you?*

Some of them come to me. Those that come in their cars do not.

*What rituals do the visitors perform?*

They mostly consider the water sacred. They wash themselves with the water and take some to their homes. Those who have headaches wash their heads. There was a big stone near the spring and they worship that stone. They touch the stone with their hands and heads. After that they perform *zikir chaluu*, and organize *kudai'y tamak* (q.v.).

*Are you a guest at those meals?*

When they organize such sacrifice meals, they call me and we eat meals together. Those who recover from their diseases thanks to the mazar, invite people of the village as well. To their *zikir chaluu* mostly people of Talas come. Near the mazar, there are graves of forefathers. In other words there is cemetery (*bei'it*). They read the Quran there.

*Have you seen any unusual, unexpected things, mysteries in the mazar?*

The visiting *bübüs* and *bakshys* tell of the mysteries. They say that the *pir* of that mazar is the camel kid and the snake. Sometimes I hear that they have seen them. As for me, I have not seen anything.

*Were there any people among your relatives having relationships to the mazar?*

My mother's brother is said to have *kyrgyzchylyk* and visit this mazar to worship. He is said to heal different skin diseases.

*Do you worship the mazar?*

Yes, I worship only the mazar of Mai'mak Ata. I have not visited other mazars. I show the visitors what places to walk and what to do.

*To whom does the territory of the mazar belong?*

That territory is my property. During the Soviet Union time that territory was given to me. At that time they appointed me as a *shai'yk* of water. Now I am doing two jobs. I guard water as an official job. Second, I am a *shai'yk* of the mazar and clean it. But some people say that the guards have dogs at the mazar and that they let sheep in and make its territory dirty. When I hear such words I feel so bad.

*What do you do as a shai'yk?*

I pick up weed and I have made a road. Many people bring here their cattle. I make them leave the mazar if they come in. I try my best not to let them in. I show the mazar to visitors, tell the rules of visiting, not to walk this or that way, to read the Quran at the cemetery. If they come to my home I read the Quran to them. In the mazar they read the Quran themselves. Visitors perform *zikir chaluu*. They sacrifice meals in the village because of the absence of a house in the mazar. That is why I thought of the opportunities to have a simple house constructed here.

*Has anybody worked here as a shai'yk before you?*

In general, there were many people living in these places but I do not know whether they cleaned the mazar or took care of it. They mostly guarded the water. Because people have this water for drinking. And they were made as *shai'yks* so that nobody could put some chemicals into the water. I was appointed by our authorities after gaining the independence. This territory was given to me as my property. I know the first man who lived here was an old man whose name was Satkei'. After him my grandfather Ajybek resided here for 10-12 years. After him, men whose names were Abdykai' and Zaryl lived here for only 2-3 months. Then I lived here. I have been living here for 15 years. From this mazar my elderly sister of recovered. She fell down unconscious in this mazar. As Turdugul Bai'ke said of this mazar, the *moldo* whose name is Dubashov Janysh comes from the Bakayyr village. That *moldo* heals people. He is said to have at his home a special room for receiving sick people. If you see his swords, they are magnificent. He heals with them. Sometimes he gives them to his patients. People call him *bakshy*. He is about 50. He does nothing except healing. People from Naryn, Osh, Jalal Abad come to this mazar. As my elder sister said that one boy from Toktogul whose could not see out of one eye. He was worshipping during a month. When he returned home he started to see out of that eye. In general, many people come here, but we in most cases do not manage to see all of them.

*Based on the interview of Nazira Jusupova, a student of the Talas State University,  
Department of History*

***Gülnahar Toktogulova, 45 Years Old, Guardian of Tamchy Bulak Mazar,  
Tamchy Bulak Village, Kara Buura Region***

I was born in the village Chong Kapka of Manas region. I finished a secondary school in Kyzyl Jyldyz and graduated from the Taraz Pedagogical University. My specialty is on Russian Philology. I worked for 15 years at school and then for 12 years was engaged with child care at home. Now for 3 years I have been working with local authorities. I have 10 children. Seven of them study at higher educational institutions, 3 children study at secondary school. My husband works as an executive secretary at the local authorities. I have two daughters-in-law and one grandchild. My grandchild is five months old.

*How long have you been living here?*

We have been living near the mazar for 8-9 years. My son guides visitors to the mazar. We give dishes or bedclothes to them. There are 70-80 apple trees. Half of them are harvested. We are going to make a shelter under which visitors could sit in rainy days. We clean the surroundings of the mazar and have planted willows around. In winter a few people come to the mazar. Some come and read the Quran or sacrifice sheep or organize meals.

We also are concerned with what this water consists of. We plan to analyze the water. We also intend to provide conditions in the name of God for praying. My elder son reads the Quran. I do not read the Quran. I am not a *shai'yk* but we clean the surroundings of the mazar.

*Do you have kyrgyzchylyk?*

I do not have it, but my husband was a *tabyp* in Kazakhstan. He would heal sick people in the mountains or steppes with herbs. I do not participate in performing *zikir chaluu* but my younger son Nur does.

*What is the sacredness of this mazar?*

As I understand the sacredness of the mazar is that it is useful for the health of people. Once upon a time it was a place of a king's wife grave. Behind it, it is said, there is a deep pit where many rich things had been hidden. Above it from the dip flows the water. That is why it was called Tamchy Bulak. The owner of that place is said to be a black giant. Some people bring sick persons take and take water in their dishes and ask for health. Through mazar they also plead to have good dreams.

The sacredness of the mazar is as follows. When visitors enter the cave they become quite different. They say that is why they do not enter it. They say that when they come in they feel different and fear it.

*Do you worship the mazar?*

We go to the mazar to wash and purify ourselves, I tell children to go there. When children get sick they visit the mazar and wash themselves there. To those who come to the mazar we tell them to wash themselves and we advise guests not to drink alcoholic drinks.

*Do you know the history of the mazar?*

It is said that a young prince was buried here. He was entombed with his wife. Then since the time when they came to discover the wealth, 100 years have passed. Since then this place has been known to be sacred. Before there was a stone outside but now it fell down. Hunters come saying that they are going to burn the straw grass that grows there because there are foxes there. We do not touch them though they eat our hens.

*What rituals are performed here?*

They come here with baked bread. They read the Quran. They mostly come in April or May. When they are going to sacrifice sheep more men come and then they distribute meat among those people who live near by. They perform *zikir chaluu* and *jar saluu*.

*Where do people perform jar saluu?*

In the bottom side of the spring.

*What if the day is cold?*

If it rains they come in the house and have their meals there. But as for performing jar they go on doing it spite of bad weather.

*Do you consider the mazar as your property?*

It is right when the mazar is not a property of somebody but that of all the people in general because people come here to pray. It is only necessary to have a special person to guide visitors when many of them come for an excursion. It would be nice if buildings were constructed here. That would have been done for people. The main thing is not to make it dirty. We will construct a shelter under which people can sit because sometimes it rains. Most of visitors dig the earth to make a fireplace. We would like to do it ourselves. Many guests from Kazakhstan come and say that its aura is good for rest and they enjoy it and then leave. They call our water *ayan*. Once they took water with themselves and when I visited them that water appeared to be as fresh as in the beginning.

*Do you drink the water of the spring?*

Yes, we drink from this spring. We water our garden with it. Since 1999, after having learned of the sacredness of the spring, people started to come here. When they come they take spring

water with them. Because when you enter inside you will see a rock, from water drops and flow. People take water home for it is good for eyes and stomach diseases.

*Has the spring influenced you as far as it is situated near you?*

From the very beginning since we came here I liked the spring water. When our eyes or stomach are ill we drink water and feel much better. That is why I wanted to bring water to the laboratory in Bishkek for analysis of its compounds. The elderly women visiting the mazar would say: “you are sitting on the sacred place and if God wills, everything will be nice”. If guests come to us I tell them not to go there without having washed and go with a pure heart. A son of Mira Eje perhaps had some problems with his head, when he visited the mazar and he has recovered.

*Have you noticed herbs growing near the mazar?*

There is barberry. Earlier sea-buckthorn grew but now it no longer grows there. Barberry is good for stomach diseases and there is a lot of vitamin C in it. It protects the immunity and is good for the liver. We also boil it with sugar and prepare a drink from it. Sometimes one can find berries here. We wanted to plant them. We were planning to make a stone fence for the spring. If fenced with a stone, the water of the spring will be cleaner. It becomes dirty when it rains. Because the earth there is salty the water also becomes salty.

*In general where does the water come from?*

This water comes from the glaciers of the mountains, then comes through underground and comes from the sides of the mountain. Visitors also say if you have a headache you go to the spring and read the Quran. Most people say that its owner is a black giant. If you bring bread and read the Quran to the owner and you will recover and feel much better.

*Based on the interview of Nazira Jusupova, a student of the Talas State University,  
Department of History*

***Chongmurunova Chachykei', 68 Years Old,  
Shai'yk of Chynar Terek Mazar, Kök Tokoi' Village, Talas Region***

*How did you become a shai'yk?*

The reason for my becoming a *shai'yk* was that since turning 21 years old I visited the mazars, have seen a number of people visit the mazar, understood the sacredness of it, read the book of Manas and learned from the book that it had been Chynar Terek in Talas forest where *Ai'chürök* (q.v.) Apa spent a night. At that time I began to be so anxious. I used to visit Chynar Terek more and more. I took a great deal of energy. That is why I began to worship Chynar Terek. Its energy is so strong. Being children when we were passing in the direction to Suusamyr, the bottom part of the Chynar Terek was white. Since Manas Ata's time it had been lessened and that tree is said to have grown from that root part of the Chynar Terek. I was so sorry. Afterwards, I figured out too late Kylychbek without having been told to me measured the land and gave it to me. He should have measured it in a larger size in order to have the building near it larger. It is so narrow.

*What was the reason of your visiting the mazars for the past 21 years?*

I had been ill, and suffered for many years. The sacred power made me walk on a very high place. I suffered it and then I visited Chatkal with the *kalpa* Beishenaly *myrza* from Bei'sheke village. Right after that visit to Chatkal something that was within me started to get larger. They said there has been born in me ray since my childhood. Since turning 21 years old I have

been healing people with that ray, I started it in 1981. I have learned to read namaz. What we call ray, is not like putting people in a group and healing them with energy giving actions. People asked me many times to heal like this but I tell them that I cannot do it this way. I treat people by touching with my hands. I heal all female diseases, such as myoma and cyst etc. I treated except kidney diseases. But I cannot say that I have cured. Everything is in the will of Allah. People who visit me are not back without hope. Even children of the village come to me. From Bishkek children come with rahitis. Last year people came from Osh and took me there. I have visited Osh. The main thing is that they recover. I do not want to advertise myself on the pages of newspapers.

*How long have you been a shai'yk of Chynar Terek mazar?*

Since the Aigine group came to our village. Before that when I was there, visitors from Ysyk Köl tied ribbons to the branches and each week I would take them away. I read the Quran and cleaned the surroundings. I made ditch for the water and if it is possible I would like to plant different trees inside the mazar. Afterwards, I was visiting and worshipping at the Manas Mausoleum. That holiday I became the 17<sup>th</sup> among those who worked in the Manas Mausoleum. We divided territories up to the top of the mountain Karool for each of us. The back side of the museum was given to me. I brought a fir tree from home that was 5 year old and planted it here. Now it has grown up to 8 meters tall. In 2001, I also brought a nut tree and planted it just in front of the grave of Manas Ata. Now it has grown. Next year it will bear fruit. Thus, I feel mazars are very close to me. I do not wish to be at home, but in this mazar.

*How do you feel yourself when visiting the mazar?*

I feel myself as a Muslim. I pray for people. What I see or not see there is a secret. Of course it is felt. That is given beforehand when you plan to visit the mazar the next day. For example, you see a trembling man with seizure. His image comes to you the day before. He comes trembling and you become angry and very anxious.

*Do you take people who come to you to the mazar?*

Yes, I do. Those women who are infertile. Those who have been infertile for 11-12 years give birth to children.

*After how long do they give birth to children usually?*

In 1 – 1.5 years. They visit to make their life way open. Loving boys make the life way of their girlfriends to be close. Thanks to God we are open to their ways. Some come having been tightened. Some people appear to spray something in the visitor's home. When they ask me to purify it, I do it. Everything is done by the way of the Quran. They express gratitude and fill in the notebook. Those who live nearby always come to me on the holiday of March 8, congratulate me and tell their wishes. They ask to advertise me in the newspaper. I say no, it is not necessary. Mostly those on whom the doctors from Talas want to do surgery on their female diseases visit me having heard from others that I heal such diseases without surgical operations.

*How do you heal them?*

With *dem saluu*, with my hands and use the light. Then, with Allah's will, they recover. If that man whom I heal cannot fully recover, in the sunrise I read the Quran 3 times until that man is well. I do not hurry. When you take rosary only after having read a *Surah* rosary is moved. For example only when you have read fully the *Surah* of goodwill you move one rosary. Thus I appear to move rosary one hundred times and one hundred times I read the Quran. For me is good if a sick person recovers. So everyone who visits is back with hope.

I treat people only for three days. I tell them that I will treat them only one day and that the next day they will be well but, nevertheless, they continue to come. I comparison with others I do not treat sick persons during 10-15 days. Sometimes the longest is 7 days that are needed for me to treat the most severe problems of people. For example, one little boy of 3-4 years old was playing from morning till night on the fire remnants of a hill. Perhaps, something influenced him then. His neck curved and his tongue stopped being able to speak. His mother had gone to another village and when she returned, her son was that way but she would not notice. She thought of another disease and continued to give a massage. In the evening she noticed that her son could not speak. She brought him to the *moldo* who lived at the beginning of the street but he failed. Doctors also failed to heal him. Then they brought him to me again. He is a son of the man whose name is Jöjö from Jon Aryk. That time I was really suffering. I felt that I was becoming old. I suffered because I appeared not to have energized myself. They came before the sunset. It took me one hour to perform *dem saluu*. My Allah helped me. I told them to come to me the next morning that if the neck was not normal. If it was normal, I told them not to come. His neck became normal. They came to me early in the morning at 6 o'clock when I had just read namaz. I performed *dem saluu* for the second time. All in all, I did it three times. The third day they came to be blessed. When they left, I was sorry for telling them not to come to me any more. I thought that I should not have told them that. Now I cannot meet with them. It would have been nice if they come to me in November once more and are performed *dem saluu* for the third time. I had forgotten to tell them that. You see, my darling, I worry so for my patients.

*Can you perform dem saluu for yourself?*

No, I cannot. When I am sick I do not visit doctors. I try to be healed by myself. When I was in the lake and swam there I felt pain as if somebody blew me. I did it for the second time with the same results so I thought that such therapy was not for me. When I took bath again there was a blow. I could not move. I had a massage and used clay therapy and I seemed to visit places which were not allowed to me.

One interesting event in my private life: I always visit the mazar Arashan. 5 days before my visit to the mazar my husband had a dream. We would go to the mazar on foot. My husband said, "You will appear to not go on foot. You will be followed by 3 boys". I said, "Why have you begun to be a *bübü* instead of me?" When the day came that we left for the mazar there were 7-8 men. Near me was a young woman whose name was Baken, with her mouth curved, whom I took with me. We heard some sounds. When we looked back we saw three horse riders. That young woman cried out: "It would be nice if these men take me on considering that I am their *okiil kyz (q.v.)*". In turn I cried out: "How could strangers take you?" Boys have first passed us then they returned back to us. They appeared to be one of my brother-in-laws' grandsons, having recognized me by my voice. Two of them got on one horse and gave me one horse to ride. When I was on and they were passing me my things, one glass bottle with milk fell down on stones, but it was not broken. This was the will of Arashan.

*Which is the most difficult case among those sick people who visited?*

I suffered very much over the young woman with the curved mouth and those with cyst. I heal goitre. I only take a few people through sign I take to the mazar. I do not want to be followed by people. When I visited the mazar in Chatkal I was supported by my grandfather. He had been a *jai'chy (q.v.)*. I was born near the stone of Chachykei' Apa Because of this, I was named Chachykei'. It is probably right when it is said there is some kind of connection from birth. That is why I go on visiting one mazar for praying for all the mazars located in Keng

Kol. I have so many dreams of building a house near Ak Terek. “Let me enter as your wood and leave as its remnants”, when requesting such from Ai’chürök Apa, there is a big stone there, she shouted so: “You, a coward, who is seeking a husband”, that Chachykei’ Apa broke the stone and divided it into parts. There are traces on big stones of the Chachykei’ Apa mazar. This place of Chachykei’ Apa is a sacred site, of course.

When I was 7 years old I met Aktilek Ata. He put a fur coat on me and gave me a gun. That moment he, who had been a *kuuchu*, had passed me his skills of *kuuchuluk* (*q.v.*). When women are suffering while giving birth to a child, on the whole when they are suffering, as soon as I smash the paper or something and give it to them to take it, they stop suffering. Until they give birth to a child I am making noise with my teeth.

*Based on the Nazgül Asanakunova, a student of the Talas State University, Department of History*

***Eshaliev Sagynbek, 44 Years Old, Shai’yk of Booterek Mazar, Booterek Village, Bakai’ Ata Region***

I was born on the 18<sup>th</sup> of June, 1962. I have a secondary education. I am a taxi driver. I am married and I have 3 children. I built a house in the Booterek Ata mazar. I became a *shai’yk* there beginning in 2005. I have had *kyrgyzchylyk* for 15 years: I visit mazars. As a *shai’yk* I read the Quran to visitors, show them all the sides of the mazar and tell the story of the mazar.

It is said that Booterek had 7 siblings. He was an *oluya*. This is the oldest among all the mazars in Talas. Its sacredness is in healing sick people: it helps heart, eyes and stomach diseases. One can get help in regards with *duba*. I tell visitors to read the Quran for certain and I give them tea. It is prohibited to break trees, drink alcohol or to laugh at the mazar.

One century ago, the grave of Booterek *oluya* became a mazar. Those who are sick or have been frightened, are going to read the Quran when they visit this mazar. They come demonstrating their faith and being slaves to Allah. Clairvoyants treat sick people. From rituals they perform *zikir chaluu* and dance. On the whole, those who have the quality of *kyrgyzchylyk* and wear white dresses. The house which I have built - is that of people’s one!

*How long have you been working as a guardian?*

For 15 years. *Ayan* came to me and then I told to my wife: “Do understand well that we should build a house in Booterek”. Then I started to build a house. Envious people have appeared, not allowing the land to be given to us. I have been worshipping this mazar from the very beginning. Only since recent times, I have started to build a house and work as a *shai’yk*. Here each spring has its own sacred property. Each of them heals different diseases. It is good for headaches and being frightened.

*How do you understand as a mazar?*

You cannot understand mazars unless you become ill. I was very sick. I heard from people that those who had been sick recovered after visiting this or that mazar. I had a headache or a stomach ache and when I heard those words I started to hope. When I visit the mazar the sickness stops. I began to feel much better. I come to the mazar because of my health.

*Have you seen any mysteries of the mazar?*

Yes, I have. I often see a white man with a stick in his hand. He is known as Manas Ata, Kalpa Ata's spirit.

*What rituals are performed in the mazar?*

Different rituals are performed especially on Thursdays. Visitors come and sacrifice sheep, read the Quran and perform *jar saluu*. Different people perform those rituals which they know.

*Is not your family against such activities?*

Here is my family. You see my wife, she always comes with me. My children are still young. They are not at all against it. On the contrary, they tell me to visit the mazar and pray.

*Why are you building a house here?*

I had a dream. *Ayan* has been given to me. I spent 3.5 thousand soms for building a house. We pay this for the mazar as we are building it for people. Nobody helped me. I have been building it together with my wife with the help of Allah. I am thinking of opening of the resort but I have no means to do so.

*Have you seen any mysteries from other mazars?*

Yes. Once, when we visited the Boztekir mazar, an old man followed me. I was walking and very frightened. When I told of this to those who were nearby they said, "Do not be afraid. He is your spirit supporter. Instead you tell him what you wish and your pleading will be carried out. He is always supporting you. Never be afraid of him. That was the first time when I saw the mystery of the mazar."

*Based on the interview of Begaim Dooronbekova, a student of the Talas State University, Department of History*

## **PROJECT OF REGULATIONS WORKED OUT ON THE BASIS OF THE INITIATIVE AND ASSISTANCE OF SHAI'YKS AND GUARDIANS**

### ***REGULATIONS***

#### ***"Conditions and Rules of Visiting the Mazars Located In Talas Region, Of Their Protection and Guard"***

These regulations define legal bases of visiting sacred sites (*mazars*) located in the Talas region, their protection and guard.

#### **Part I. Aim of regulations:**

The main objectives of these regulations are: to protect and guard sacred sites or mazars, as well as to control, monitor and manage social and legal interrelationships in the sphere of visiting the sacred sites or mazars, concretely saying:

- to legalize ratings of the sacred sites or mazars; to honor the sacred sites or mazars the titles of the monuments of cultural heritage and to include the mazars into the list of the state historical and cultural monuments of the Kyrgyz Republic on the level of regional scale;

- to discipline the responsibilities and rights of governmental institutions, enterprises and organizations, social unions as well as of special men in the sphere of the use and guard of sacred sites or mazars;
- to provide conditions for the use of sacred sites and mazars, located in the Talas region, as historical and cultural heritage;
- to legalize the rules of visiting the sacred sites or mazars, located in the Talas region.

## **Part 2. Definition of sacred sites or mazars:**

Sacred sites or mazars - are natural and hand made places, considered in the mind of people as sacred ones for performing different rituals, praying and praising God. The aim of visiting the mazars is worshipping and praising God, performing sacrificing rituals.

Sacred sites or mazars and their surrounding environment cannot be a private property of any man, organization or religious union.

Sacred sites or mazars after having been legalized as cultural and historical heritage become as property of the Kyrgyz Republic.

Its legal foundations will be carried out on the basis of the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic "On the Uses and Protection of Historical and Cultural Heritage". Like historical and cultural monuments, sacred sites or mazars are not privatized.

## **Part 3. Kinds of sacred sites or mazars:**

Sacred sites or mazars may be of different kinds:

- Natural phenomena: springs, forests, mountains, canyons, stones, willows, lakes, ants' holes and others, places for visitors to pray and perform different ritualized activities.
- Sacred sites or mazars made by people: graves of profound people, ancient constructions, places where innocent people died (*Shei'its*) or graves, etc. which visitors worship and where they perform different rituals.

## **Part 4. Visiting sacred sites, their guarding and protection:**

Visiting sacred sites, their guarding and protection include activities to carry out the following:

- to concretize sacred sites or mazars, conduct research on them, take them into account and familiarize people with them;
- to guard and protect sacred sites or mazars from destruction, mocking, making it as a tradition to carry out changes without reasons, falsification of sacred places by moving them to another place for visiting and praying, from making them far from their historical and cultural hereditary way;

Visitors have responsibilities:

- to keep purity of sacred sites or mazars, not to break anything in the mazar and take something from the mazar with oneself, not to tie fabric on trees;

- to keep sacred sites or mazars safe in the traditional manner, repair, reconstruct, protect and give a rebirth to them by information giving, informing people and education;
- to visit sacred sites or mazars only on the basis of actions providing their protection;
- to use sacred sites or mazars as the factor of development of ethno-cultural environment as well as for scientific and educational goals.

All the above said activities refer to all the sacred sites or mazars and are carried out irrespective of their kinds and protection level.

#### **Part 5. Responsibilities and rights of local authorities in regard to the use and protection of sacred sites or mazars:**

Local authorities in the area related to them:

- provide giving attention to the law of the Kyrgyz Republic on the uses and protection of sacred sites or mazars as historical and cultural monuments;
- render help towards individual persons and organizations having taken the responsibilities of guarding, protecting and developing the sacred sites or mazars;
- render assistance towards research organizations and carrying out of the projects oriented to investigate sacred sites and mazars and help them;
- help activities on propagation the sacred sites or mazars to be cultural and historical monuments;
- provide realization of activities on protection of the mazars upon the agreement with the state governmental bodies on the elaboration and affirmation of projects on construction, reconstruction and planning in the villages, cities and other places of living;
- carry out land privatization of farmers on the basis of the Land Code, orientation to purposes of farming and construction with participation of the regional governmental bodies on protection of historical and cultural monuments;
- solve the problems of prohibition and revealing of constructions or other activities bringing harm to sacred sites or mazars with orientation of governmental bodies on their protection;
- take measures in certain situations on the basis of rights given in the Laws of the Kyrgyz Republic.

#### **Part 6. Participation of research organizations, educational institutions, museums, social unions and citizens in the activities towards uses and protection of sacred sites or mazars:**

Research organizations, educational institutions and museums carry out the following activities on their own or collected means:

- conduct research in the sacred sites or mazars;
- participate as experts of scientific evaluation of sacred sites or mazars;
- consider the possibilities of including the problems of protection and development of sacred sites or mazars as historical and cultural monuments in the educational curriculum and their own research plans;
- conduct activities on familiarizing the general population with mazars.

#### **Part 7. Financing the activities on the uses and protection of historical and cultural monuments and sacred sites (mazars):**

According to the adopted rules, the protection of legalized historical and cultural monuments is financed from the resources of the governmental budget, special money of the organizations oriented to monuments exploration and preservation, by social unions willing themselves to help, by individual persons and international organizations of the World Heritage Committee under the UNESCO and others.

It will be possible to work out programs on propagation of activities on protection, reconstruction and uses of historical and cultural monuments on behalf of governmental bodies, local authorities or independent international, republican and local foundations on protection of monuments.

#### **Part 8. The order of affirmation of the list of sacred sites or mazars:**

The list of sacred sites or mazars as historical and cultural hereditary monuments is affirmed on behalf of regional local authorities on the basis of proposal of *shai'yks* of the region and guardians of sacred sites or mazars.

#### **Part 9. Guardians and *shai'yks* are:**

- the persons having willingly taken responsibilities to take care of sacred sites or mazars;
- the persons having willingly taken responsibilities to take care of sacred sites or mazars and performing healing activities in the mazars or sacred sites and providing visitors with information on such places;
- the persons carrying out activities on repair and construction in the sacred sites or mazars.

#### **Part 10. The Association of *shai'yks* and guardians of the sacred sites or mazars located in the Talas region:**

It is established with the aim of carrying out of civil rights and proposing initiatives on the issues of turning attention to legal bases, protection and maintaining of sacred sites or mazars.

According to these Regulations in part 9, those persons who are considered to be *shai'yks* and Guardians of sacred sites or mazars, can be members of this Association.

#### **Part 11. Conditions and Rules of visiting sacred sites or mazars:**

All those who have desire and demands to visit sacred sites or mazars, have the right to do that

The prohibition of visiting the sacred sites or mazars is prosecuted by the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic

The road to the sacred site or the mazar may be closed or limited in the cases of construction or repairing works as well as of the suspect to the security of sacred sites or mazars or the visitors.

When one visits sacred sites or mazars with the aim of conducting research, training, education, with tourist or excursion purposes, the following conditions and rules are to be carried out:

- to respect visitors' feelings and the sacredness of the land, give attention to the rules of behavior distinguished by the Guardian of this or that sacred site or mazar;
- to keep order and sanitary in the sacred sites or mazars and their surrounding environment;
- to have clothes on suitable to conditions and rules of visiting sacred sites or mazars;
- not to bring to sacred sites or mazars things (loud music, fire producing things, alcoholic drinks and weapons) that may bring harm to their sacredness;
- in the cases of breaking of the above told rules, citizens and guests of the Kyrgyz Republic may be prosecuted on the basis of the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic "On the Uses and Protection of Historical and Cultural Monuments" shown in Part 6.

*The chapter was translated by Dr. Ümüt A. Asanova*



## Chapter Four

# MAZARS AND PEOPLE

## Foreword

*Mazars (q.v.)* can be sorted into a variety of types. However, there are three components that can be found at every mazar: an aura of sanctity, a local history of special occurrences that are usually seen as miraculous and *kyrgyzchylyk (q.v.)*.

A particular place gains its reputation as a mazar because some miraculous event is said to have occurred there or because the existence of the site at that place is, in itself, seen as miraculous. For example, a spring coming out of a spot on a mountain side with no apparent reason may be special enough to be counted as miraculous. Whether it is a spring, stone, mountain, anthill or other place, there is usually a story in which a locally notable person, often a leader, has discovered the place and then informed others who then accepted it as a sacred place that has always contained previously unknown sacred qualities, which is taken as evidence that Kyrgyz land is sacred land.

Individuals' beliefs in the sanctity of mazars are reinforced by the anecdotal evidence of their special properties in treating physical and mental problems; visits to mazars are also said to teach people about harmony between people and nature.

In the Kyrgyz world view, life is always problematic and mazars are seen as one road to solving those problems. From a Kyrgyz perspective, the solutions found through a visit to a mazar, which has a miraculous quality. Typical of those problems are issues of health, unhappiness and loneliness. At the same time people come to mazars for finding other miracles. One informant noted;

*What I am looking for is an invisible and untouchable world. I do not know when this process finishes but only life can define it. I imagine real life and living as a true man are possible only in paradise, that's why I am constantly in search of that world.*

*I am an ordinary man. In my early childhood I thought I will produce writing. Then I thought I am not a poet or writer and how can I write literature? But I could not forget my idea of writing, I was thinking about it all the time. Because of it I became ill. The name of my illness was writing. I had a great desire to produce writing but was aware that I lack both confidence and patience. I had a feeling that I need more consciousness and energy. I have searched for them in mazars. I have strolled about various mazars, I think Insh Allah I will find sacred consciousness and energy soon and I will be known among all people. Insh Allah if spirits, oluya (q.v.) and mazars help me, I hope I can reach my goals: successful life, well educated children and to make things more interesting in this life.*

There are many ordinary people such as Tilegen Sei'itbekov who searches for a sacred world in mazars and visits to them.

Kyrgyz mazars are places where miracles and magic exist. Miracles and magic are deeply integrated into our everyday lives and have become inseparable parts of Kyrgyz mazars.

We can consider one example to illustrate our point. There are at least three ant mazars in Talas oblast where barren women go. They are Chekir Ata mazar, Kumuru Baba mazar and Chynar Terek mazar. Across cultures of the world ants have been viewed as the origin of many things. In most cultures, when one looks at ants, their multitude, and ability to live in large groups or families, are the immediately noticed characteristics. In Kyrgyz culture in particular, ants are seen as a good example of persistence and reproduction. Barren women go to ant mazars and pray there in order to acquire the ant's ability for reproduction. Then one

woman gives a birth to a child. In this way the magic comes true. This magic is about an anthill's ability to heal barren women. Barren women who hear about this magic go to ant mazars and pray there too. If the mazars were frequently unhelpful then it would become useless and unattended. Ants are insects which reproduce well. According to healers in Talas this may be connected with ant's acid. According to these same local experts, the acid of black ants is more effective than the acid of red ants. So, unknown attributes are discovered through this kind of magic. Magic is a reflection of miracles. It shows and explains undiscovered things.

The third component of mazars in Kyrgyzstan is referred to as *kyrgyzchylyk*. We asked many people in Talas to define *kyrgyzchylyk* and Dariha Törögeldevia, a palm reader in Talas, provided one type of answer: “*Kyrgyzchylyk* for us means *bübü* (*q.v.*) and *bakshy* (*q.v.*)”. If we summarize the answers of local people, two meanings emerge, one broader than the other. The broader meaning of *kyrgyzchylyk* refers to a group of activities that typify Kyrgyz behavior. *Kyrgyzchylyk* is manifold and contains concepts such as: *tabypchylyk* (*q.v.*), *ai'tymchylyk* (*q.v.*), *bübüchülük* (*q.v.*), *bakshylyk* (*q.v.*), *manachylyk* (*q.v.*), *dubanachylyk* (*q.v.*), *jai'chylyk* (*q.v.*), *kuuchuluk* (*q.v.*), *tüsh joruu* (*q.v.*), *tölgö achuu* (*q.v.*) and others. The narrower meaning of *kyrgyzchylyk* is connected with mazars and refers to folk or traditional healers such as *tabyp* (*q.v.*), *bübü* and *bakshy*. Most of this chapter focuses on the broader meaning of *kyrgyzchylyk* and several things associated with it.

However, both meanings of *kyrgyzchylyk* have a single origin. The core concept refers to:

1. the interrelationship between the past and future of Kyrgyz people
2. the interrelationship between invisible and visible worlds, both of which are a part of this life. Regardless of the practitioner, be it a *tabyp*, *bübü*, *bakshy*, *manaschy* (*q.v.*), *dubana* (*q.v.*), *kuuchu* (*q.v.*) or *ai'tymchy* (*q.v.*), without a connection to supernatural forces, they can not effectively carry out their functions.

Each of them somehow possesses an aura of sanctity and with the help of supernatural forces they can carry out their tasks.

Almost all of those who have worked with Aigine consider *kyrgyzchylyk* as being inherited through genes. Several people based on their personal experience shared an opinion that *kyrgyzchylyk* is not transmitted through genes. But we have also studied our informants' ancestors and discovered that they too had a reputation for possessing supernatural qualities.

*Kyrgyzchylyk* is a quality that our informants believe can be inherited. A major question revolves around using the quality in ways that are seen as appropriate. A person practicing *kyrgyzchylyk* appropriately, that is, to help others solve their problems, can feel that a sacred mission in this life has been completed. The personal life histories presented in this article show that people believe it is impossible to ignore *kyrgyzchylyk*. People in Talas believe that the only way to avoid *kyrgyzchylyk* is through death.

The interrelationship between *kyrgyzchylyk* and Islam is not a simple one and is expressed in a variety of ways. Some of those varying opinions are described in this article. Village *moldos* (*q.v.*) who say that praying in a mazar is contradictory to Islam silently accept that *kyrgyzchylyk* and Islam can go well together. One of our informants described one *moldo* who says he does not like visiting a mazar but sometimes he will visit one when people ask him to go there with them and read Quran. After visiting a mazar this *moldo* sometimes admits that he is not entirely indifferent to mazars. These kinds of views do not impede, but help us to explore this world of mazars. It is important to note that for ordinary people these two concepts are not contradictory. Mazar visitors practice a mixture of *kyrgyzchylyk* and Islam.

Mazars have played an important role in the personal lives of the people who have worked with Aigine. This article focuses on the impact of learning about mazars for ordinary people. The people learning about the effects of mazars and visiting them, did so while in the grip of a variety of sufferings, misfortunes and even other mysterious conditions. The miracles and magic of sacred places help people not only to discover their living environment and the mysterious world of the unseen, but also may help them to learn about their potential and abilities.

## **”THE WORST ILLNESS IS KYRGYZCHYLYK”**

***Ümötbaeva Toktosh:***

***When I Was a Girl I Had Not Lived and Experienced Things That Girls Usually Experience; When I Was a Young Married Woman I Had Not Lived and Experienced Things That Young Women Usually Experience***

You ask about *zikir* (*q.v.*). I keep it all in myself and do not tell people. It is forbidden to tell about it. If I tell you about it, I will be sick for 10 days. During this ritual I see owner of the mazar and the spirits of people whom I knew. I called Jankoroz Ajy [*Hadji*]. This is my grandfather. The name of my mother’s father was Ajy. When the spirits of great people come I get nervous. Their sanctity is great and helpful for people. I have been healing people for 32 years and during this time nothing has happened to people who have come to me, all of them are healthy. Mazars are indeed are very sacred.

My grandparents lived in the Keng Kol area. Do you know the place Obo Chachyke? They lived there. I met them there. I swelled up quickly and lost my consciousness. People thought I was dead. But my mother whose grandfather was Ajy said “She is not dead, put her on the bed and cover her”. I slept whole day. I had visions of cemeteries and dead people. I also had visions of long green grass there. People were working like in our world. Nature and waterfalls were beautiful like in this world.

I have experienced almost all kinds of torments. There was a man Kara Dubana. He was my master (*ustat*). He was a person who shook hands with a *kojo* (*q.v.*) in his life. He said “Your *koldochu* (*q.v.*) is very powerful; my forces are not strong enough”. He took me to Shamshykal Ata. I met with the greatest *kojo* and *kalpa* (*q.v.*). Then I was made to perform *zikir*. From that time I became a healer. On the 1000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Manas* (*q.v.*) someone took a picture of me and took it to Turkey. People have told me that my portrait was on the wall in museum. My sister thought that was not me but she was told that the family name on the portrait was the same as mine. They may have taken my picture when I was on *Karool Choku* (*q.v.*). Many people know me. You know authorities come to me and I have helped to catch criminals and those who acted against the law. Social status does not matter, I heal them all. All people who have come to me are healthy and prosperous now. Girls like you who have come to me are happily married. They have wonderful families and children.

Many people came when I practiced *zikir* in Zulpukor. When they come to me they dress neatly. I know *zikir* is very powerful and people feel it.

People with serious physical and mental health problems come to me; sometimes people with unknown illnesses come to me. They get healed after visiting me.

I let people come with me to Zulpukor if the my *kooldochu* allow it. My *kooldochu* people tell me the place where I should take sick people and heal them. I am telling you my first home is my house and my second home is *Zulpukor*. Kyzyl Choku is also very good place. If you visit mazars you can feel their sanctity and power.

Mazars differ from each other. For instance, Zulpukor is older than Manas Ata Mausoleum. People would come to Manas Ata Mausoleum and look at it from the distance.

Now people walk inside of it and damage it. We did not climb Karool Choku. There was a spring on Karool Choku but there is no water now. If you climb to Karool Choku, angels can be seen in the form of white rabbits. They make your wishes come true. They tell the truth directly, for instance if they see a person who can not be healed they say “Do not bring him to us, bring him to a doctor.” I became a person with supernatural powers very young. I did not have the chance to experience things that girls and young ladies do. I never drank *bozo* (*q.v.*) and vodka. I follow all the things that my *koldoochu* people tell me to do. Insh Allah everything is good. I only want my children be healthy and prosperous.

My oldest son has gone to Afghanistan. During that time I have experienced the most difficult times in my life. I have cried all the time thinking about my son. These people (spirits) would come to me on Thursdays. I did not like their visiting, but from the distance they would notice that I did not like their visits. I thought “My son is in the war now and why are these people coming to me when I am experiencing difficulties.” One day they stopped coming to me. I was glad that they were not coming anymore. On the next Thursday they came again, they brought my son’s hat. I thought they brought the spirit of my son. They gave me the hat and said that I should keep it. That was a sign given to me by Allah. Allah also gave me a whip. I do know Arabic words from Quran, Allah has taught me this as well. Since that story I read namaz regularly. I do not forget Allah. May he bring only good news.

Many people invite me their house when they conduct *tülöö* (*q.v.*). I say: “Conduct *tülöö* if you have a good will to do so, if no then do not do it Most of them have serious problems and hope that I can solve their problems or I can heal their illnesses. Many people get sick when bad people wish or send negative energies to them. They follow me hoping that I can help them.

***Sooronbaev Sonunbüü:***  
***Ai’tuuchuluk and Dubanachylyk are from this House,***  
***Ustachylyk is from My Parent’s House***

I have been visiting mazars since I was sixteen. I experienced the most difficult times during the war (World War II). I worked for 5 years as a tractor driver behind the lines. I studied this profession in 1940. During the ordeals of war I started having problems with my health. I worked when I would feel my self better and other days I just stayed at home trying to receive treatment. When my illness had reached its peak, I wished I would die in front of a tractor. In 1947 I was dismissed.

I have had epilepsies. I learnt all the mazars I have to visit through *ayan* (*q.v.*). Every time I had a siezure someone would take me to a mazar. I had difficulties and decided to practice my ancestral activities and I was cured. After long period of difficult life, I was freed when I was forty five years old.

Allah has brought me to this age (85 years old). Out of 7 children I was the only daughter in my family. Six brothers died when they were very small. My only brother who was older than me is considered missing in the war. No one knows what has happened to him. In 1932 when Soviet government persecuted people here we went to Ketmen Töbö. My father had serious problems with his health and died in 1935 and I became an orphan at the age of thirteen. Since that time I have been living the hardest life. I wish my son and daughter never experience a life as terrible as I had.

I have healed people who came to me themselves. I have never invited people myself. Now I also heal very little children that have health problems or who have *kirne* (*q.v.*).

When it was time to visit a mazar, I would get a sign from Allah. In my dreams Allah tells me what mazar I should visit. Now *dubana* people visit mazars for five days and consider themselves real healers, *dubana* or *bübü* with supernatural powers. But one should dream and

get direction from Allah about what mazar to visit. Nowadays *dubana* and *bübü* people try to become real *dubana* in a short period of time but they also stop *dubanachylyk* very quickly. Without directions from Allah in his dream a *dubana* can not become a real *dubana*.

My grandfather was a smith. He had contact with supernatural powers in his dreams. He also diagnosed people's illnesses through their pulse. He would feel when guests were coming and tell his daughters and sons to be prepared. If he had felt that someone who can not be healed is going to visit him, then he would say to his children to tell that visitor that he is not at home and requested to lock him in the shop. My grandfather died when I was six years old. Kutman is my husband, his mother did not accept *kyrgyzchylyk* and was seriously ill for five years, then she died.

*Ai'tuuchuluk* (q.v.) and *dubanachylyk* belong to this house. *Ustachylyk* (q.v.) comes from the parents of my side. My grandfather was a smith, he would heal people with physical traumas; he would diagnose people's illnesses by their pulse. His name was Mamyrat. He was in a group of 7 other healers, their names were: Kydyrman Ata, Kutmanaaly, Shatmanaaly, Jumaaly, Sydyk, Ai'tike and Bechel. With the help of water and by saying "Move, move, move *baadik* (kind of illness), you will not tell your secret" they would heal people who had the illness *baadik*. These people had great skills in people healing.

When I simply visit mazars I do not feel anything supernatural. You can not see any sanctity. But if you visit mazars after having dreamed and been directed by Allah, you may feel and see something supernatural. Many people simply say that they see something when they visit mazars. I do not believe those who just visited mazars without having dreamed and been directed by Allah.

Mazars are very powerful and influential. I have taken someone to Arashan Ata mazar for three days. He felt better already after first day. Those who could not move and walk would walk after the third visit to this mazar. I saw how deaf and dumb people would hear and speak after they have visited this mazar three times. A mazar helps unbelievably. When people go to a mazar they go with a great hope for treatment. I am very thankful to Allah. My grandmother who died, once said to me "Do not think that you can be healed in one day, never say I am alone, always say I would like to be by Allah's side. I foresee that you will have seven children." As this old woman said, I have given birth to seven children in my life. The first two daughters died. Then I lived alone without a husband for five years. Then I married this man and could not get pregnant for nine years. After nine years I gave a birth to Emilbek. Then I had heavy problems with my health again. There were times when I spent more than two months in the hospital. I was swelled up. After the hospital, I started practicing *kyrgyzchylyk* again. I have appealed to *moldos* and I became healthy. Then I gave birth to a child in 1954, it was a girl. Later in 1957 I had twin boys and in 1960 had the last boy. The youngest son works now in Kara Balta as a road inspector. So I gave birth to my children when I had difficult times in my life.

My husband and I have gone to Korgon Ata mazar with Moldosak and his wife. Moldosak's mother had a problem with her ears and he wanted to take water from this mazar. I was very tired on the way to this mazar and sat down for a while and fell asleep. When I woke up I heard someone saying "Go to the right side, there is a road." I looked at right side and saw a narrow road and went up through this road. When I came up to the mazar doors I felt giddy and sat down again. I read Quran. I remembered my dead parents and relatives and cried. We reached the water of the mazar, it was located on the knoll. It was flowing to the east. Grandfather and Moldosak wanted to scoop up some water but it suddenly disappeared. I wanted to get some water; it appeared and I got one bottle of water. Moldosak said: "Hey it did not give us water." I scooped up one bottle of water. I said please *oluya*, please let me take some water from you. I gave one bottle to Moldosak so that her mother can wash her ears with this water. I took one bottle for my children. We went and saw a shallow gully. There

was a *tündük* (q.v.). It was broken into four pieces. I felt giddy again and sat down to relax. Then I heard voices saying some bad guy has broken the *tündük* of Korgon Ata. We spent the night there. We brought livestock there; slaughtered it; made a meal out of it and ate. During the night it rained, but we did not become wet. This was a very sacred place. I do not know if trees protected us or the sanctity of the place did not let us get wet.

I fell asleep early in the morning. Somebody said in my dream “Wake up, go there, do you see that big tree? Around that tree you can find berries, take some berries for your children. When I woke up I saw that tree and indeed there were berries around it. I collected them in a one liter container. Half of it I gave to Moldosak’s children and half of it I took home for my children. This was an extraordinary event.

### ***Gulmai’ram:*** ***I Fully Accepted Kyrgyzchylyk***

I have been seeing and healing people since I was a third year school student. Let me tell you something extraordinary. There was a backyard with apple trees. My grandfather was working on that yard. He is an old man. Suddenly something fell down from the sky, no one felt this except me. I had a presentiment that something may happen and told grandfather about it. I said to him that he should work carefully because something may happen to his eyes. He did not pay much attention to what I said and later I also forgot about this presentiment. As I had felt earlier, something did happen to grandfather’s eyes; it was a piece of twig in his eye. Then he remembered my warning and asked how I could know that something was going to happen to his eyes. He started rubbing his eyes and told me to tell about this to mother so that she can help somehow. Suddenly I heard voices saying that I can help grandfather myself. I listened to this voice and offered him my help. At first he refused my offer and as an obstinate person I did not call mother. Grandfather had a terrible pain and said “Ok, check what has happened to my eyes, I feel terrible pain.” For the first time in my life I pronounced some conjurations that I never knew before and the piece of twig came out of grandfather’s eyes. This was when I started practicing *kyrgyzchylyk*.

Bei’shenaaly, the son of Ai’daraaly *bolush* (q.v.) in Talas region has become a *moldo* and *közü achyk* (q.v.) without obtaining any education. He has learned these skills just by regularly visiting the graveyard of Manas. Bei’shenaaly has married, but his children died in their early years. He came to the graveyard of Manas several times hoping that he would have more children in the future and they would not die. After some period of time indeed his wife gave a birth to a child. They gave him a name Toktonazar. Once, when Bei’shenaaly was sitting next to his sleeping child he fell asleep. At that time his wife had gone to guests and was supposed to return late. Suddenly when he was sleeping one old man with a white beard appeared in front of him and said: “Open your eyes, stand up, my son, Manas is coming. He saw how a front door of the house has opened. *Ai’köl* (q.v.) was standing on the threshold. Rays that were beaming from the eyes of *Ai’köl* were so bright that Bei’shenaaly could not look at his eyes. Bei’shenaaly heard voices: “Hey *Almambet* (q.v.), give to this person that horse, he we will take care of it, give it water and food on time.” Bei’shenaaly wanted to see what was happening around him but could not see it, he saw only the shadow of Manas when he was leaving. Almambet was much shorter than Manas. Since this event Bei’shenaaly has become a great *moldo*.

I did not understand earlier the meaning of mazar. Later I had serious problems with health. I had hand and foot pain. One day in my dreams two people on donkeys came to me and said that I need to visit a mazar. Next day I woke up and told my husband about it. He was not against of my visiting the mazar. For the first time in my life I went to a mazar. It was Sharkyratma mazar. I did not know the road to get to this mazar. Two persons on donkeys

accompanied me. One of them was the spirit of my father-in-law. My father-in-law was a great *oluya*. We did not know about it when he was alive.

When I was sitting in Sharkyratma mazar I saw one big stone, it opened and water started coming out of it. I washed my face with this water and drank some. Suddenly someone commanded “Do not touch it!” The stone closed itself. Other than that I felt how one tiger approached me from behind, when I was in Kalpa Ata mazar. Then old men came to me and gave me rosary (*tespe*) and a whip (*kamchy*).

My fourth grandfather has received *kut* (*q.v.*). Let me tell you this story. *Kut* does not come to ordinary people. My grandfathers were very sacred persons. *Kut* has fallen down to my grandfather’s house and they have kept it appropriately. We could not keep it well because we have drunk alcohol. My sisters died after my grandfather. Once when I was experiencing the hardest times in my life I saw, in my dreams, an old man on a donkey, I opened my eyes and heard: “We brought your grandfathers *kut* I went out and saw in the middle of the yard a round and splendid thing, after that I do not remember anything. Since that time I stopped to drink alcohol and started practicing *kyrgyzchylyk*. I understood that earlier in my life I was controlled by evil forces.

#### ***Kumarbüü:***

#### ***Kyrgyzchylyk Caught Me when I was 29 Years Old***

*Kyrgyzchylyk* caught me when I was 29 years old, but I did not accept it until I was 49 years old. I could not move. I have suffered terribly from this. I tried everything to heal my illness. One day I was brought to a famous *moldo*. He said: “Our father has a burden; you must take it.” I said: “I will not take it; how will I live with that?” I was against it. Eventually I could not resist it because I wanted the pain to go away. I have accepted it. It is a very difficult task; one should execute all the rules. If one does not follow its rules properly he may be sick. This is sent by Allah. We do not notice when this is sent and keep visiting doctors to understand what is happening with our health. If one chooses this way, this does not mean that everything becomes good, because once one has chosen this way, he must follow all the rules and if not, then something bad may happen. This is a difficult task.

#### ***Anarkul:***

#### ***Suffered from Unknown Sickness***

I would lose consciousness and foam at the mouth. I was 14 years old. I could not speak and was heavily sick for more than a month and could not walk for more than a year. I would get irritated when seeing unknown people. I would get very nervous, tear my hair and beat myself. Our family had worked in tobacco plants during that time. I could foretell something before going to sleep at night. If I said this or that person will die then that would happen next day. Because of my serious illness I had to be healed by my *moldo*. In my dreams I was told that I will get healing qualities. I have started seeing/healing young children. My illness would disappear if I practice those activities; assaults would stop if I visit a mazar. In order to maintain good health I have started to be on Allah’s way and visit mazars.

The *moldo* told me that I need to visit a mazar. Most people get directions in their dreams and go to mazars. At that time I was very young and I did not get any directions in my dreams. When I was 38 years old I chose Allah’s way and saw the spirit of Manas Ata. He would come naked to me during the night, when I was asleep and lay in my bed. Once I saw a big yurt in my dream, it was located close to Manas Ordo. In my dream I was told that this place is the graveyard of Manas Ata, I went inside it and I could not move and breathe. I told this dream to Narkojo *moldo*. The *moldo* said that I will get support from the spirit of Manas

Ata and he is waiting for me, I should regularly visit that place that I saw in my dream. In Manas Ordo there is also spring of Kanykei'. That place is also a sacred place. When one visits that place with the support of Allah one can communicate with the spirit of Kanykei'. There are seven springs, water of these springs are very helpful for barren women, people with different allergies and girls with different problems.

In 1993 when I just started moving on the way of Allah I visited Nyldy Ata mazar. I went there with my master and many other people. When we got there and started praying we felt like a huge burden was on us; the mazar was showing its power and sanctity. The mazar was located in the cave. Suddenly plenty of water appeared in the cave, we thought we may sink in this water and most of us cried out to Allah and he saved us. In this way this mazar showed us how it is meeting people, showed its power and sanctity. One girl among us walked away while *oluyas* still were among us because of this she suddenly lost her ability to walk. According to the rules one should not make any moves while *oluyas* are among us. That girl came again to this mazar and asked Allah to forgive her. Only after that she could walk again.

I was healed after I visited seven mazars. I have visited Kalpa Ata mazar. This mazar has seven springs. When a person, who was cursed by bad people, washes himself with one of this spring waters, it may help to destroy curses. Water of one of the springs is helpful for stomachic illnesses. Usually I speak weakly [*Indeed Anarkülspeaks very slowly and weakly*-comment by the Aigine interviewer]. But when I visit Kalpa Ata mazar I speak really well and loudly. The *oluya* of this mazar is so powerful. In the mazar Kalpa Ata and four other *oluyas* also exist.

***Gulai'Supataeva:***  
***I Have Been in This Way for Five Years***

*Közü achyk* people told me in 1980 that I need to visit mazars. I was very young I only had my first child then. Once when I was sleeping I saw three men approaching to me. I could not believe my eyes and rubbed them. I saw that one of them was holding a big knife in his hands. I was very frightened and screamed. This awakened my husband. I could not go out of the house during the night. If I slept I would always dream that nightmare. I was so tired, I could not sleep during the day or night time.

I had no other problems with my health. I just did not have strength and spirit. When I visited doctors, they could not diagnose my illness. My husband's sister told me that in Pokrovka village there is a very powerful *moldo*. We visited him. The *moldo* said that the persons who always pursue me in my dreams can be helpful to me. I told the *moldo* that I am afraid of them and do not want to see them at all. I also asked the *moldo* to lock them out. The *moldo* said: I can lock them out, but later you will regret it. Do not visit funerals or watch TV for a year.

Two years have passed. In 1982 I gave birth to my second boy child. One day this child started suffering from an illness. When I took him to doctors they said that he has no illness. He would eat food and drink water but not urinate. He was swollen constantly. I brought him to all the famous *bübü* people. We also spent some time in the hospital of Kyzyl Adyr. One day when I was sleeping in that hospital, the three men came to me again. They cut my nose with a knife and said: "If you do not listen to us, you will regret it". I was frightened and woke up. Next to me an old lady was sleeping; I told her that three men came to me in my dream and cut my nose and I have a presentiment that my child will die. This came true; the next day my child died.

I decided to accept and ask for Allah's forgiveness. I asked my husband to stop drinking alcohol. He did not listen to me and we had a quarrel. One day he came up to me and

said: You were right, I should stop drinking; I have received sign and warning. But next day he drank again. He went out with his friends to drink on the beach in the evening; he drowned in the lake.

I have heard that there is a very powerful young man in Kochkor. I came to his house and saw so many patients. When I entered the house I saw many old women waiting for their turn. Suddenly this famous guy Almaz Asanhodjoev said: “*Bübü Eje* [*Eje* means sister], come in please” I could not come in because it was not my turn. But Almaz said to other people that I am a *bübü* and he should see me first. People who were waiting said that they do not mind. Different healers use different things when diagnosing a person’s problem. This healer uses a kerchief. He tied the kerchief round my waist. Then he said to me: Mother where did you go? Whom did you visit? If you do not tell me, I will tell it myself. Indeed, he told everything himself and everything that he told coincided with what I experienced. He said: You are an innate *közü achyk*; you should accept this. He also said: In my childhood we had an excursion with classmates. During the excursion I fell into a river and I climbed up from this river myself. Usually anyone who fall down there cannot climb up alone. You met those three men in that water, you are tormenting them by not accepting them, if you do not accept them it will cause harm to your children. This was in 1989. I accepted *kyrgyzchylyk* and started healing people.

It was in 1990 when I was working as a milkmaid on the local farm. I would heal people during the night and day time. Serious mental problems occurred to a man and he came to our house several times and begged me to heal him. At the beginning I refused to heal him. I said that he must visit experienced *moldos* and I am only a beginner, I can not be helpful. When he came next day to me and said: Please heal me; I saw you in my dreams three times, you were totally dressed in white. I knew that he has an evil spirit inside.

I could not deny him anymore after he told me about his dream. I healed him twice and he felt better, but I started having health problems. I was lacking energy; I became unsuccessful and unhappy. I did lit *sham* but it did not go smoothly. I understood that I had received that person’s burden and could not get away from it. One should do namaz in order to gain power for destroying that burden. I have not done namaz, that is why I was lacking energy to overcome these difficulties. It has been exactly five years since I have been this way.

***Sharshenbieva Jumabübü:***  
***I Think I was Afraid of Myself and Started Healing People***

I became a *közü achyk* in Ak Tash mazar; it was an apple garden. Nobody knows about that mazar. I knew that it was a mazar because I worked in that garden as a guard. Many people have worked there as guards. Previous guards left that place because the son of one of the guards died; one of the guards was paralyzed. When I came there to work I became a *közü achyk*. At the beginning we did not know about the sanctity of this place and conducted noisy life. We have told people who visited the garden not to drink alcohol and they should clean this place instead of drinking alcohol. We also have told them that when they drink alcohol knowing that this place is sacred, then something may happen to them, but if they drank without knowing its sanctity and ask forgiveness then they may be forgiven. We have told everyone to make this place as clean as possible. Later we left that place. I do not know what happened to that place.

It is almost a year since I started to heal people. I think I started to heal people because I was afraid of myself. I was an atheist before. My father was a teacher. I could not accept this and suffered from it. Then I started visiting mazars. I have been visiting mazars for four years. I have visited 41 mazars. In my dreams I was told by Allah which mazar to visit, he even told

me the names and locations of the mazars that I must visit. I visited those 41 mazars in three years. I am not allowed to tell everything about these visits. The first mazar I visited was Ata beyit mazar, then K k Tal in Kichi Kirovka, Booterek, Ak Tash, K k Oi', Chynar Terek, Kanykei' Apa, Ai'ch r k Apa, Manas Ata, Ajydaar Ata and Sharkyratma ata later. Other mazars that I have visited are: Bala mazar (location: K k Sai'), Sary Unkur ata (location: K k Sai'), Ata Bei'it, Bai't tt r mazar, Tamchy Bulak in Kapka; I accepted clothing there. Kapka is along the Kirov water reservoir, which is on the way to Jambyl. Chech D b  (in Manas village of Talas region), Arashan Ata, Talduu bulak (Aral), Jankoroz Aba (Kozuchak), Kalpa Ata, Chech Dobo (Naryn), Koshoi' Ata (Naryn), Kochkor Ata (Naryn, Kochkor), Ak Mazar (Naryn, Kochkor), Manjyl Ata (Ysyk K l), Burana Ata (Chui'), K m shai' Ata (Chui), Ata Bei'it (Bishkek), Bai'tik Ata (Bishkek), Chong Tash (Bishkek), Tashtar Ata (Bishkek), Sei'il park (Bishkek), Ming Bulak (Bishkek) and mazar in Manas village (Bishkek).

In the first year mazar visiting took up 41 days and in the second year it was 21 days. I will visit in this year as well. I will stay as long as pleasure from mazar visiting does not end.

***Davletova Chynar:  
Kyrgyzchylyk is Inherited from Generation to Generation***

In 1920 my grandfather visited Azimbai' Ajy and died a year later. My grandfather would wear only white clothes and always carry rosary. I started having serious problems with my health. In 1980 my child died. My relatives said to me: You must practice *kyrgyzchylyk*; you have inherited *kyrgyzchylyk* from our family's ancestors I found out that *kyrgyzchylyk* is inherited from generation to generation. Now I fully follow the rules of *kyrgyzchylyk* and try to practice it appropriately. I also visit mazars on a regular basis.

Great people wear white clothes. Those who choose to wear white become members of this material world and of the other world. They communicate with the spirits. They have the ability to foresee the future and to serve Allah.

At the beginning when I was sick I visited many hospitals. Unfortunately, they did not help me and I went to Kazakhstan. Thank Allah, there I met a person who practiced *kyrgyzchylyk*; he gave me a massage and healed me. That healer said that I have also *kyrgyzchylyk* skills. Since then I fully accept that I have *kyrgyzchylyk* skills and practice them. Then a person whom I have healed becomes my master.

In my dreams I receive directions about the time to visit mazars and I visit mazars exactly at that time. Every day of Allah is sacred for me. When I visit mazars I do not do *sham jaguu* and tie ribbons to the branches as other *b b s* do it because I consider it is contradictory to the rules of Allah. I do not visit mazars alone but with my students (*shakirt*). When we visit mazars we do only *zikir*.

Other members of my family do not visit mazars. My husband is not against of my mazar visiting. Every time I visit mazars he lets me go without causing any obstacles.

Allah does not divide people to into bad and good people. We divide people ourselves. Be it bad person or good, when he visits a mazar fully recognizing his sins and wants to be forgiven then he gets help from that mazar. Every person, when visiting a mazar, must be sincere.

An ordinary person never can be a *tabyp* person. *Tabyp* skills are given only from Allah. I can not be a *tabyp* just by wishing it. Oh my daughter this is an mysterious world with many puzzles. *Tabyps* talk to angels like normal people communicate with each other.

***Sultan:  
I Would Not Believe that Kyrgyzchylyk Really Exists***

In 1990 I had a serious problem with my health, I could not walk. I visited all the famous doctors in Bishkek, I visited hospitals in Kazakhstan and many other hospitals but they could not help me. We had an old *moldo* in our village. He said to me: Daughter, you should visit mazars, you have *kyrgyzchylyk* in your blood. Indeed, my grand parents had supernatural skills. I never thought that *kyrgyzchylyk* and mazars really exist. I was a very Russified person. But when one has serious problems, he starts to believe in everything in order to be healthy again. My relatives also said to me that I should visit mazars; I might feel better. I visited mazars with that *moldo* and I was healthy again. When I do not visit mazars on a regular basis, I start to see and hear things that others do not see and hear. I also sleep badly. But when I visit mazars all these problems go away. One day we decided to spend a night at a mazar. In my dreams I saw an old man with white beard; he was standing next to a stone and calling me; he was holding a piece of wood in his hands. He said to me: My daughter, take this stick and make a whip for yourself; learn namaz and do it regularly and suddenly disappeared. Early in the morning when I woke up I saw the stone next to our camp and that little wood that I saw in my dream. I was frightened. I made a whip for myself and learned namaz. I heal children and visit mazars regularly.

***Gulya:***

***We Should Call It not Kyrgyzchylyk but Supporters***

I had a dream. I was standing in Nyldy Ata mazar. Not far from me an old man with a white beard was sitting. Then he gave me his blessing. I woke up and understood that I need to visit mazars. I visited Nyldy Ata mazar firstly. Then I started to heal children and later adults. One day in my dreams, I saw a sick boy in the hospital. I found that boy in reality and took him to Kai'nar Bulak mazar. I have been visiting mazars for seventeen years. The most famous mazars that I have visited are: Dubana Ata in Kirovka village, Two springs in Joon Töbö village, Ak Tai'lak (Bakayir village) and Kosh Bulak mazar and Booterek. Kosh Bulak mazar is helpful for people with skin problems. Booterek is used for non-contagious illnesses.

We usually visit mazars on Thursdays. This is an old tradition. Oluyas and spirits come on Thursdays and stay among people until Friday. *Moldos* say that during these days one should not pray to water or stone, but I say that every sacred spring and stone have their sanctity. I have been visiting mazars for a long time and have never seen dissatisfaction from anyone. Every person who has come to me was healed. For instance, one young women was sick and spent days in the Bakai' Ata hospital, in Talas and Bishkek. She could not get the right treatment and went to one *moldo*. This *moldo* said she must come to me. When she came to me she could barely walk. After healing her for more than a month she was healthy again. I go with that woman to mazars now. She also has supernatural skills. We should never say people with *kyrgyzchylyk*; we should say people with supporters or with supernatural skills. Every person has a guardian angel. This is inherited from generation to generation.

Whip and rosary are my tools. Others may have hawthorn or a book as their special tool. Some buy those things from shops; it is not correct. Those instruments can not just be bought; they should be given by *ayan* or told by one's master. Concerning the white clothes, one should wear them only for certain occasions. One should not wear them just to show off.

***Madiyarbekova Bayizbüü:***

***My Grandparents from Mother's and Father's Sides  
Have Had These Supernatural Skills***

I have been visiting mazars for ten years, since I was in the seventh grade at school. I knew about mazars from childhood. One day, when I was in the seventh grade, my mother

took me to Bübüsada who was a *közü achyk*. The reason for that was our cows; we had many cows and they were stolen one after another. We went to this person so that she could tell who had stolen our cows. I was waiting outside, my mother went inside and after some period of time she told me to come in. *Közü achyk* Bübüsada said to mother and me: Why did you come to me while there is great *közü achyk* among you, and she can tell all the things. I did not see anything. I tell you I was astonished by what she said and suddenly, everything started emerging in front of my eyes as on TV. I was able to see how somebody was stealing our cows, his clothing, a dog with him. I saw everything but I could not pronounce a word. I know many things now but I do not tell it. My grandparents had these kinds of strong skills as well. My brother's daughter had this skill too but she did not accept it and she died at the age of thirteen. One of my siblings died after that.

When I was studying in ninth grade this event occurred: I and my sister were at home, later my sister went outside, I was left at home alone and suddenly I saw some Russian lady with a man and a child. I was so frightened. I closed my eyes and ran outside. I had a feeling that I ran over them. I called my sister but did not get answer. I was afraid to go inside of the house and sat outside. Suddenly Gulkayir, my brother's dead daughter, came to me. I started screaming that Gulkai'yr is here, at this moment my sister came to me. Then my mother took me to *közü achyks* and *moldos*. They told me that I should visit mazars. For the first time I visited mazar Kalpa Ata with my mother and sisters. When we started to read Quran near one spring somebody suddenly appeared in front of us. I screamed and started to run. I have experienced many difficulties. Allah has given me many tests. People also have called me a mentally ill person.

Another story, during the high school graduation party, I and my friends drank some alcohol. After the party, my friend and I came to her house. I could not enter the house, I simply could not walk. My classmate took my shoes off and put me in the bed. Next morning my mother took me home on the bus. I still could not walk. I missed a school excursion to a forest.

I have accepted *ai'tymchylyk*, but I do not follow all the rules properly. I feel myself embarrassed.

Yes, I have seen many dreams. I have communicated with older people. That is why I speak like an old person even if I am young person. My parents were young.

People call me *ai'tymchy*. I do not heal people but help them to muster their strength. I tell them where they can be healed; I foretell their future. I can foretell everything. I do it in two ways. First way: spirits tell me, second way: I just see the future. We are five children in the family. Only I have this skill, other brothers and sisters do not do it. They do not possess *kyrgyzchylyk*.

Of course, I have my supporters, guardian angels. They always look after me. They tell me the future. I have rosary, by using it I perform *zikir*.

Skills may go away from a person. I have been working in Bishkek for two years. I sell things. I do not cheat clients and am always honest with them. If I do not come to a mazar regularly, I miss many good things. I heal people in the city as well. When I feel very badly I go back to my village and visit a mazar there. I have a master in the city as well.

I do not have health problems, just my soul misses the mazars. When I come to a mazar, I feel better instantly. Some *bübü* people stay alone; I can freely communicate with other people. Bübüsada says: You have an enormous power; when you come to me, I feel giddy and can not see anything

**Burul Kojobekova:**  
***Scientific Medicine Never Helps People who Posses Kyrgyzchylyk***

I am 47 years old. I have been in this way for more than 10 years. I have been healing people all this time. Insh Allah, people come to me and get healed. If people get healthy and happy again, I feel myself happy too, but if they are unhappy then I am unhappy too. There are difficult and easy things on this way. Insh Allah I have more good and easy sides of it. I overcome this fate easily. I work only after getting certain directions from Allah in my dreams. Allah does not give healing skills right after one accepted *kyrgyzchylyk*. These skills come five, 10 or 12 later.

For instance, when I chose this way I did not start immediately to do *zikir*, *sham jaguu* or prediction. If one does good things, Allah slowly grants those skills. For instance, I have been telling the future for four years, doing *zikir* for six years. I have started visiting mazars and there I have received skills too. Now I have a whip and rosary. They were given to me in my dream. Telling about my *tespe* history, my uncle was a *moldo*. When I accepted *kyrgyzchylyk*, my uncle received direction in his dream that he must prepare rosary for me in one month. It was ten years ago when my uncle gave me this rosary. He is dead now. I have had the whip also for more than ten years. One guy was sick and was in a hospital. He had a dream; in his dream someone told him my living place and my name. He found me later and gave me the whip. I have taken him to Kanykei' Apa and Ai'chürök Apa springs and healed him with this whip. After that the boy got cured. Insh Allah this whip helps to heal many other people.

At the beginning I never thought that I would be on the way of *kyrgyzchylyk*. I have analyzed our family history. None of our ancestors have had *kyrgyzchylyk*. I have no problems with my health. I have never dreamed of something unordinary.

10 years ago I gave birth to a child. *Kyrgyzchylyk* began from that moment on. It happened in winter. I came home from hospital; it was cold in the house. When I was sitting on the sofa I heard some noise. This noise did not stop. I looked around the house and saw no one. This noise was approaching me. My younger brother-in-law was sitting next to me, I told him that I am hearing this noise. He said that I had just came from the maternity hospital and I am very weak and suffering anemia; this noise is just my imagination. He left the house to buy bread. I was left alone. I heard that noise again and it was approaching me and I was so scared, and I felt something heavy on me. Suddenly the doors of the room opened and a huge black scorpion came to me and threw down my body. Everything started from that moment. For six months it would come and torture me. It would follow me everywhere. I fought with him for six months. I had an assault every day and relatives would take me to the hospital. Doctors have said that there was nothing wrong with my health and relatives took me to the hospital for mentally diseased people. That place could not help either. I ran away from that hospital. I came to Bishkek. My sister's husband works there for the institute of balneology [therapy by way of bathing or drinking spa waters], his name is Korchubekov Baratbek. I told him about my problems. He said that he would check my heart and blood pressure with medical equipment when the assaults happen again. For three days I had no assaults, and after third day I felt that monster was coming to me again. He was coming under ground. My sister was sitting next to me and I screamed: Sister it is coming under ground. Sister said: It is just your imagination and that she does not see anything strange I felt that there was an earthquake but nobody except me felt this. Suddenly that scorpion appeared in front of me and threw me down. Every time during his visit he cuts my stomach and takes away stomach organs. I lost consciousness; my sister's husband checked me with medical equipment, gave me a massage and gave injections. After thirty minutes I had my consciousness back; my brother-in-law said that everything is ok with my health but I have Allah's burden on me. The professor understood the problem was not connected with the health but with Allah.

He took me to the room of *közü achyks*; the room had the number 217. There we met a young lady Saltanat; she has been working there for two years and she started practicing

*kyrgyzchylyk* recently. My brother-in-law told her that I am his relative and he would be thankful if she can help me. Right after she saw me she said: I can not help this girl now; if she stays here for six or seven months it may help her. She really has *kyrgyzchylyk*. So I had to stay with Saltanat. It was difficult for me because I had left my child and my house. When I was with Saltanat I could see devils. I would see them everywhere, I would see snakes and frogs coming from the window. When I ate food, it would turn into insects, when I saw people I would want to kill them because I would see snakes and devils sitting on their necks. I wanted to remove the devils from people's necks, but people would run away thinking that I am mad. My illness was at a peak at that time. I would see devils almost everywhere. I said to Saltanat that I am going crazy and asked her to heal me. She said: I can not heal you; you should heal people with me. One day an old woman was delivered to us by helicopter. She could not walk. Her feet were fully covered with sores. I wanted to kill that woman and I was feeling very angry. Saltanat told me to take sores away from the woman's feet with my hands. When I started touching this woman's feet, I felt relief. I slowly took away all sores; I understood that I possess healing skill as well. After two days all of this woman's sores were gone, and after four days this woman was fully recovered. I did not do anything, I even did not read conjurations, I healed them just by touching with my hand.

Saltanat was very satisfied with me. She invited me to her house. Her family cut a sheep for me. We ate food and in the evening we slept. I saw a two headed snake in my dream. It came up just in front of me and said: Hey Burul, wake up, wake up; I woke up. The snake said: I am the *koldoochu* of Saltanat, her work will not be successful until she stops some negative things. Burul open that cupboard, do you see there is vodka; this is the first negative thing; second she cheats people sometimes; third she does not do her ablutions regularly. Please tell these things to Saltanat; if she stops these things she, will get additional power. I said I would tell Saltanat. Then it said good bye to me. I woke up early in the morning. At six o'clock Saltanat and I went to work.

I told to Saltanat about my dream that the two headed snake had come to me and said that it is your *koldoochu*. I asked her if she has vodka at home, she answered yes. I asked her who the alcohol drinker was; she said it was her mother. Most people from Issyk Kul region like to drink alcohol. I told Saltanat everything the snake had said. Saltanat immediately understood the matter and did everything the snake wanted. She threw away all bottles of vodka; she took an ablution and asked for forgiveness.

Insh Allah I started working well. Many people have started to visit me. We would come early in the morning and go home late in the evening. Insh Allah, through healing other people I was healed. After being healthy again, I came back to Talas but did not visit a mazar.

I have healed people for three years with my hands. I do not tell the future; I do not visit mazars; I just heal people at home. My illness has completely gone and I am not crazy anymore. One night I had a dream. Manas Ata broke the window, came inside of the house and sat next to me. He said: "Hey Burul wake up, wake up". I woke up and saw Manas Ata; his big horse was next to him. He said to me: "Look at that alp; do you want me to take you there?" He put me on the horse and we flew to that alp; there was a waterfall. When we reached that place, he said: "Look at the Talas rayon side". I looked there and saw it was completely with dark fog; I could not see anything. Then he said: "Look at the Echkilüü Mountain side". I looked there and saw a very beautiful place like paradise. There were so many bright and red flowers. He said: Look thoroughly that place. I looked at that side again and saw one narrow road. He said: This road is the road of my father. Now I am guarding all of Talas region, its waters, people and lands. Now I am in hurry; I must go. Now look here. I looked at it and saw water flowing to Talas. He said: Make a wish here. I made a wish and washed my face with this water. I was deeply touched by water coldness and transparency. When I started to drink this water Manas Ata was going away from me very quickly. After

couple of steps he turned to me and threw me a very old *surnai* (*q.v.*) with three holes on it, actually with four holes but one was disfigured. I took this *surnai* and hide it in my sleeve thinking that it was Manas ata's gift. In this dream Manas Ata also told me when and where he will come next time and I can find him there.

When he disappeared, my younger brother suddenly appeared there and brought one woman and said: "Heal her please". I said that I can not do that here, let us take her home. Brother said: "No sister, you should heal her here" and he disappeared. The woman was sleeping like a dead person. I did not know what to do. Then I remembered that Manas Ata told me drink that water. I took some water and spat into the woman's face three times and touched her with the *surnai*. After that, this woman suddenly woke up and was so fresh. She coughed several times like new born babies. She was cute, tall and a woman about 400 years old. She looked at me and did not say anything; she just kissed my foot and went away. I wanted to get down and go home, but I saw the number of people staying in the line to see me. The line was from Talas to Jambyl. I told these people I can not see them there and that I can see and heal them only at my house. One old man looked at me and said: "Oh daughter I will not let you go now; please heal me here; I am blind and I want to see again" I asked how to do it. He said: "Manas gave magic to your hands". Then I touched his eyes with my hands and he started to see again. The old man thanked me. After that one old woman came and said: "I want to have my hand again. I touched her body and she had her hand again". Uzbek, Russian, Turkmen, Kyrgyz and Kazak people were waiting for me on the way. I could not get home because there were so many people. Suddenly I woke up; only five or six minutes passed since I fell asleep. There were young women in my house. Usually I do not sleep but that time I slept surprisingly calmly. People at home were also surprised and they were very calm so as not to wake me up. When I woke up, I immediately looked at the window, it was not broken as I saw in my dream. Through window I saw the waterfall in the alp.

Then I decided to visit the graveyard of Manas Ata. I had not been there before. This was for the first time. I took one young woman with me. She had been here before. First we went to the spring of Kanykei' Apa and Ai'chürök Apa. I did not know how to pray; I did everything that the woman with me told me to do. Somehow I prayed and we were going to the graveyard of Manas Ata through someone's garden. Suddenly Manas Ata with his three warriors on their horses galloped around me. They galloped over me and threw me down. I lost consciousness for more than thirty minutes. I saw them very clearly. The woman who went with me did not see anything. She thought that I just had a faint. She was crying because I was on the mud. She said: "Burul, I think you can not reach the graveyard of Manas Ata; it will better if we go back home". I said that I will not stop and will go to the graveyard. But I could not get up; I could get up only after thirty minutes. I told my companion that I just saw Manas Ata with his warriors. She did not believe me and said: "You just had a faint". I understood that only I saw him.

Later we reached the graveyard of Manas Ata; We prayed and came back home. On that day Kanykei' Apa accompanied me from the graveyard of Manas Ata to my house. She had a blue dress and kerchief on her head. She was very angry and said loudly: Burul, wake up; wake up. I am Kanykei' Apa, I followed you from the spring because you did not pray according to the rules. You came to my spring and prayed for Ai'chürök Apa; you came to the spring of Ai'chürök Apa and prayed for me. You did not know which spring belongs to me and which spring belongs to Ai'chürök Apa. After saying this she disappeared. I woke up and understood that I was having heart aches. As we understood later, we really mixed up springs. Next day we went up again to those springs and asked to forgive our mistake. I said: Insh Allah, first I will visit the spring of Kanykei' Apa, then the spring of Ai'chürök Apa and then the graveyard of Manas Ata.

Insha Allah, I started the way of *kyrgyzchylyk* and began to heal people. As was mentioned earlier, all instruments such as rosary and whip were brought by people. After four or five years I started seeing dreams. I started working on the basis of these dreams. I started to practice *jar*, *zikir*, *sham jaguu* and tell the future. If I do things that were not told in my dreams then these actions are inefficient. In this way I started doing only those things that I saw in my dreams. I did not learn from somebody, I did not have a master. I did not visit *bübüs* and *bakshys*. Sometimes my uncles taught me to do some things. My uncle once said that it does not matter where you pray. If you pray sincerely, your wishes will come true anywhere. I do not visit mazars often. I think it is incorrect that Allah gives only in mazars. If Allah wants to give then he will give it anywhere. Indeed at the beginning I did not think I will become *bübü* or *bakshy*. I became *bübü* at home without going somewhere. That is why I consider my house to be like a mazar, a sacred place. People come to my house and they get healed. Sick and unhappy people become healthy and happy again. That is why firstly, I consider my house is a sacred place; secondly if other mazars help then they are good too. One can visit three times per year. I saw the power of mazars; that is why it can be helpful to people. But people need to be very clean and sincere when visiting mazars, only if we fulfill these requirements mazars can respect us. If we do bad things or say bad words inside of mazars then they will not accept us and show us their sanctity. Mazar visiting is a serious thing. One should be very careful when visiting it. One should be sincere, make seven bread, read conjurations and read Quran. I think that one should stay for a long time in a mazar, Kanykei apa told me about this. Since then I do stay in a mazar for a long time. A mazar is sacred; one should visit it seldom. But at the end of the day only Allah decides who will visit a mazar.

My house is a sacred place, that is why many people believe in me and come to me so that I can heal their illnesses. For example, people with eye, ear, stomach, hand and foot problems come to me. Other people who possess *kyrgyzchylyk* come to me for advice. I do not take them to mazars. All the healing activities I do at home.

***Dariha Törögeldieva:***  
***There are Two Kinds of Kyrgyzchylyk***

Under the word mazar I understand the following: A mazar is a sacred place where one prays. I knew the term mazar a long ago. I can give additional definition for the word mazar: The shortness of a word is a proverb; a sacred place is a mazar. As this proverb says, a mazar is the most sacred place of the earth.

Here is the story how I visited a mazar for the first time in my life. At that time I was young. Once I drank alcohol with my friends and went for a picnic to the graveyard of Manas ata. There an old lady Supai'ra was sitting, she was a *shai'yk*. She was a guard of the graveyard. She came to us and said that we must not touch anything here and to be careful with everything that was here. Suddenly I started feeling not well. That old woman felt that something was happening to me. She said: Girl, you are drunk and why are you sitting here? You possess *kyrgyzchylyk*; you must worship Allah and do namaz five times per day. I went home. After I married, I started to have serious problems with my health. I went to Satylgan *moldo* and started visiting mazars. The first mazar that I visited was the graveyard of Manas Ata.

When I was young I thought that the graveyard of Manas was the place for picnics. When I understood that it is a sacred place, I started to respect it. Sometimes when people do wrong things in mazars they face unhealed diseases. Thanks Allah, this did not happen to me. I came to the way of Allah.

There are two kinds of *kyrgyzchylyk*: white and black. If one receives black *kyrgyzchylyk* then he faces bad diseases and mental problems; if one receives white *kyrgyzchylyk* then he faces prosperity and harmony.

I think every one has his own opinion. When we hear Islam we think of *moldos* and when we hear *kyrgyzchylyk* we think of *bübü* and *bakshy* people. *Moldos* are educated people. But *moldos* memorize the Quran; they memorize the Quran and all other things in Islam. They are limited by this. On the contrary, *bübü* and *bakshy* receive their skills directly from Allah and they can see the world beyond. *Bübü* and *bakshy* do not have a book to show facts; they can only tell what they see and feel. *Moldos* have the Q'uran and always show facts from the book. They also consider *bübü* and *bakshy* as evil people. For this reason there is a confrontation between *moldos* and *bübü* and *bakshy* people. Without understanding each other, this confrontation will always exist.

### ***T. Y. : Kyrgyzchylyk Tortured Me***

My mother and I saw a snake when we went to the spring of Kanykei' Apa. We saw the snake was approaching us and we ran away from it. At the same time we heard a loud noise. I did not know what was going on. Even now I do not understand what that was. Once I told about this story to Unut Apa. She said that we should not have run away at that time.

I have heard one story. In a village there was a flood. In this flood one mazar was damaged. When a tractor driver was cleaning the mazar his boss came up to him and asked why he was not paying attention to his main responsibility in the village. The driver answered that he is cleaning a mazar at the moment and later he will go to the village. The boss was very angry and said some bad words to this mazar. At the same time when the boss was returning home on the horse, he fell from the horse and broke his nose. When he came inside of his house, his wife was frightened and called her brother. The brother brings the boss a mirror so that he can see his face. The boss was so frightened and told his wife that he said bad words about the mazar. He visits that mazar, prays there and asks for forgiveness. Later after these activities he was healthy again.

One day my father and I swore at each other. He beat me up. I was not guilty. My father was guilty. God knew about it. In the evening the window of my room fell down, they did not break down but one could see a cleft on the glass. I saw a little stone on the glass. Later on my way to Ak Tai'lak mazar I found a little mirror; it looked like my own mirror, that I had at home. I brought it home and compared the two mirrors; they were identical to each other. The mirror was given by God. I went to Ak Tai'lak mazar; I could barely walk on the way to the mazar. But when I reached the mazar and read Quran there, I received a great relief. *Kyrgyzchylyk* has tortured me. My parents took me to an addiction clinic. My body became swollen because it did not like the medicine. At that time I accepted *kyrgyzchylyk*. God healed me and forgave my sins.

When I was in the hospital there was another similar story. I was sitting in the street. Next to me there, drunken guys were sitting. In front of the bench there was a little fir. A stone was thrown to my side from the place where this fir grows. I took this stone to my room. When I got out of the hospital I brought the stone to Beiish ata spring and put it there, right after that the sun shone on me and it also began raining. Since that time God helps me.

I do not have *koldoochu* and I do not believe people who say that they have their own protectors.

***Bolot:  
Believe in Bübüs and Bakshys***

13 years ago, a friend of my brother from Bakayyr village came to our house. At that time he had just become a clairvoyant. He told us his story. He used to drink alcohol much. His sisters wanted to help and brought him to *bübüs* and *bakshys* and *moldos* in the city. They locked his evils so they could not influence me. If he did not drink alcohol he would have no problems at all. They knew his power. They knew that he had healing skills. They envied his skills. Later he returned to his village. In the village he met a person with *kyrgyzchylyk*. He told him he must heal other people. That person also said to him that *kyrgyzchylyk* will protect a young man from the negative energy of others. This friend of my brother told my brother that he should not drink alcohol. He listened to him and stopped the alcohol. Now he prays for namaz five times in a day. At the moment my mother prays namaz as well.

Some *bübü* and *bakshy* people are well educated, some are totally uneducated. It is good when educated ones use their knowledge for good purposes but if they use it for bad purposes, then it is very embarrassing.

### ***Kojo:***

#### ***I will be Able to Have Students Only When I Am Fully Open***

I have been on the way of *kyrgyzchylyk* for 22 years. The reason for this was my father. He would always talk to the universe. We thought that he became mad and from time to time we took him to a psychiatric hospital. After his death my younger sister fell sick with epilepsy, it appeared to be a disease of *kyrgyzchylyk*. I took her to *bübüs* and *bakshys*. She became a little bit better but I could not decide anything. I studied in the Islamic University of Turkistan, at the department of Eastern Studies. We opened the Islamic University according to the testament of Prophet Mohammed. I worked there as a Deputy Director. It was opened in Kazakhstan. Now those who work in the big mosques of Almaty and Astana – are our first graduates. They later started to call me *kojo*, which as I understand it, means a man who distributes religion.

While I was on the way to *kyrgyzchylyk* a man named Kaplambek who lived in the place of Saragash in Chimkent, who was 52 years old became my master. In 1989 I visited a mazar in Chimkent; when I came there I slept for 24 hours. When I awoke I saw a man with a cap. I asked: “Who is it?” A *shai'yk* answered: “Just look at his cap (*kalpak*), he seems to be a Kyrgyz man”. I came up to him and got acquainted with him. It turned out that he was a Kazakh man, a clairvoyant one, and he told me: “Son, follow me, I will teach you many things”. He would always keep me on his right side. He told that I would be informed of many things, that he had started to see in *ayan* and that for three years he had not gone home. He did not tell me that he would be my master but I treated him as my master and loved him as my father. His name was Seyit Omor.

It is necessary to have a master, because you may go a wrong way, otherwise. A man without a master may lose his way in many tests. If one has a master it will help him distinguish good and bad, black and white; he will tell you to do this but not that, that this is mission and should be carried out. He will tell you not to talk ahead of elders that one might do harm, that it could be shameful. When elders are sitting, a younger one should not read Quran. And what are young men doing now? They may go directly to the top place (*tör*) in the house leaving elder ones in the lower place without any sense of shame.

Everybody makes as a master a person he likes. Until you are satisfied with your master you may choose the one whom you like. To be satisfied or not is a very big problem. I had the same situation. If your master cannot answer your questions, if you are not satisfied and you make another person as your master, nevertheless the former one remains as your master because he is the one who taught you about the other worlds. He opened your mind and you should be grateful to him.

I am not preparing students, because I am not myself fully opened. Only when I am fully opened I may teach somebody. It is not right to say that you may be a master, until you can satisfy your students. A great deal of work must be done before gaining mastership. A male may never make a female person as his master. A female should be a master for a female person and a male for a male one. Because when a man was created he was created from the rib of a male. A female must not give blessings. Only one *bübü* from a thousand may be a strong master. Oh, we are such and such, they say, wearing white kerchiefs, grouping with each other, being not able to open one's way, cursing each other, making barriers to each other, losing their way. An ignorant master leaves you at a halfway place.

In order to be a master one should not receive knowledge from just anywhere. Sacred quality given by Allah, a given man's experience, and reading many books are all useful. As for a student, how is it possible for him to be without master? No, a man who does not know the way cannot walk. It is necessary to be careful while making somebody a master of yours. It is possible to merely ask for knowledge from other person even if he is not your master.

I do not say that it is by all means necessary to start teaching students when one becomes fully open. You do not need to seek a person whom you say will be your students. Those who are not able to become fully open will come to you themselves, and you are to give the knowledge and show them the way. If they do not, then you merely should say nothing and do not worry people about becoming a master.

***Correlation of Islam and Kyrgyzchylyk***  
***(Based on the Discussion Conducted by the Aigine Foundation)***

**Mamekov Jumadil:** The issue is about shamanism (that comes from the middle ages) and Islam; they develop independently from each other, but they coexist in the modern society. There is a confrontation of the followers from both sides. *Bübü* and *bakshy* people conduct their work under their own rules. They have an enormous advantage-people can not lie to them. For instance, those people can directly curse a person's enemies and the envious surrounding people. *Bübü* and *bakshy* people practiced these kinds of activities long before Islam came to our land. *Bübü* and *bakshy* people have had their guardian angels and supporters. People have believed what *bübü* and *bakshy* people have foretold, because when they have predicted something and foretold the future, it would really happen in that way. If a *bakshy* person said that someone must be killed the people listened to him and killed that person.

When I was working in Manas Ordo I saw many *bübüs* and *bakshys*. Just before the celebration of the thousand year anniversary of Manas, thousands of *bübü* and *bakshy* appeared. At the moment only a few are left and still conduct their activities. There were also fake *bübü* and *bakshy* people who lied to the people. There was chaos in the world of *bübü* and *bakshy* people. They could not develop duties and rules. Most of them just stopped their activities against their will.

Nowadays the question of religion is the main discourse. Islam is based on belief. It makes people to believe only to Allah. Curses, folk medicine and *duba* (evil filled messages) are contradictory to Islam. Here one can see a confrontation between Islam and *kyrgyzchylyk*.

These two things can coexist in the society. Manas worshiped Algara. Our ancestors worshiped goats, or the sun or birds. Nowadays, *bübü* and *bakshy* worship springs. They should not be ashamed of worshipping springs. This is an old tradition.

Nowadays, *bübü* and *bakshy* say that worship means pilgrimage. We say that we all should worship Allah. But when coming to a spring means pilgrimage. We should make clarifications on the national level. We should explain that worship is done only for Allah.

Otherwise there will be never ending conflict with those who worship stones, water or mountains.

We have mentioned the word *bakshy*. In the Russian language it means shaman. If we analyze the word shaman and review its history then we find that there two tribes in that history; the first tribe was Chaa and the second tribe was Mann. The tribe Chaa had lived in the south. This nation migrated from India to China and spread their ideology, called Koko-Tengir. People from this tribe have had high positions in the state. The writer Tügölbai' Sydykbekov wrote about this tribe in his book *Kök Asaba*. The tribe Mann had lived in the southern and western China. Those folks spread their ideologies in China, their ideology was called shamanism. Shamanism must stem from *Tengir (q.v.)*.

**Toktobübü:** When the *moldos* recover spirit, then a person can be healed from his illness. It is god. There are some people who worship water, but you must understand them as well. *Kyrgyzchylyk* is very sacred. There were cases when paralyzed people visited the spring in Nyldy Ata and walked again. There were cases when people visited Booterek mazar and could foretell the future or make right predictions.

**Emil Ümötaliev:** I am a psychotherapist (head of department in the medical academy). I consider that there must be some kind of certification for folk medicine ( for *bübüs and bakshys*). An organization must be founded that will check the activities of people who practice folk medicine. They should have rules and regulations. This organization must find solutions which will make it possible for Islam and *kyrgyzchylyk* to coexist in harmony. I think that Islam is a religion and *kyrgyzchylyk* is not a religion. As I mentioned before, there should certification for folk medicine saying that it is really helpful. Those who practice *kyrgyzchylyk* should stick to certain standards. They should solve contradictions with Islam by organizing round table discussions with the *moldos*.

**Satymbek, assistant of the governor:** We are talking about a relationship between Islam and *Kyrgyzchylyk*. We lack of competence to understand this deeply. Personally I do not see confrontations between Islam and *kyrgyzchylyk*. They coexist. When a child comes to this world we give him a name and sing azan, this is Islam. When this child starts to walk we make *tushoo kesüü (q.v.)* this is *kyrgyzchylyk*. When person dies, we bury him according to Islamic rules. You see we face *kyrgyzchylyk* and Islam in our lives. There is no clear division between Islam and *kyrgyzchylyk* in our society. In order to solve confrontational problems we must create systems for each direction.

For example, when *moldos* worship in mosques it means they worship God, when people visit mazars, they worship God as well. The final result is the same in both cases. For instance, every mazar can have its stone or spring. We have a belief that the spirit of water is Sulai'man. Does it cause confrontations for us? No. We just have to systematize both directions. At one time, there were no discussions about confrontations between Islam and *Kyrgyzchylyk*. Nowadays the Aigine foundations arranges conferences and round tables to discuss these problems. It is a good sign. One can find truth in discussions.

For instance, I have been worshipping for four years in the same way as you worshipped. We visit Manas Ordo afoot. We walk from Manas Ordo to Talas. We can drive there, right? We visit the waterfall, Nyldy ata mazar, Besh Tash mazar and other mazars in the Talas region. We see many things on our way; we have much to talk about, but at the moment we do not have enough time. If you have specific questions we need to work on them, and then we can answer your questions. In order to answer properly we need to work and make deep analysis. You want us to organize activities. All these issues started from Manas Ordo. We have much information about this. I think we do not have to search for confrontations

between Islam and *kyrgyzchylyk*, but find solutions that may allow them to coexist in harmony.

**Opinion:** Every mazar is associated with something. In Islam there is no belief in mazars.

**Satymbek:** Every mazar has its features. Every mazar has spirits of sacred people. We do not know, probably, what they want from us. We have talked about this. A *moldo* told us that by visiting Manas Ordo we benefit from this place. When we visit this place, energy from our pilgrimage spreads. The energy positively influences spirits. For example the more sincerely people visit mazars and communicate with spirits, the better spirits realize our interests. We are talking about 225 mazars. All meet people needs. There are always plenty of people in mazars such as Zulpukor Ata, Kyzyl Choku, Üch Emchek, Besh Tash, Ak Tai'lak, Mai'mak and Sharkyratma. People go there afoot; they do not drive vehicles there. That means these places are needed much. People get healed there; they see positive things there. We can learn about mazars gradually. It is also necessary to give the common definition for mazar. If we do, it we may solve the main issue. What kind of power do they have? What is a mazar? Let us think about it.

**Jengish Kudakeev:** You say mazar. What does it mean? Can you tell us?

**Satymbek:** A mazar is a place where the power of Allah is concentrated. If you pray and make wishes in a mazar, then your wishes will reach Allah faster. This is a place which brings people closer to Allah.

**Jengish Kudakeev:** The word mazar comes from Arabic language and means cemetery. What is a cemetery? I was only in Nyldy Ata mazar, it is a shallow gully and that is not place where people should make pilgrimage and pray. The really powerful place is at the entrance to this place, where a bridge is constructed and the cemetery is located next to the bridge.

**Fatima:** I do not agree with your opinion. There are not only spirits that live in mazars, but energy exists there too. "Spirit" is only a figurative notion.

**Davletaliev Üsönbek, Director of Manas Ordo Museum in 2005:** I have been working in Manas Ordo for many years. You are asking what "mazar" means. According to our famous scientist Kusei'in Karasaev, the word mazar comes from the Arabic word *apak*. *Tapak* means a sacred place. We are talking about sacred places, where our ancestors were buried.

There are 225 mazars in Talas. Only the local population knows the road to these places. But if people from Osh or Ysyk Köl come, then they will have difficulties in finding the locations of these mazars. That is why we need to develop guidelines for people. We must save and keep these mazars. A mazar is a sacred place. Thousands of people visit these mazars and pray there, worshipping God. When I was in Arashan mazar I saw how people were preparing dishes and firewood for the next visitors. This is a good sign. You also saw in our village that roads to springs were fixed.

Muslim people and people with *kyrgyzchylyk*, all of them pronounce: "*bismillahi rahman rahim*". We are sitting here to solve some issues. Some one said earlier that *kyrgyzchylyk* is not separable from Islam. *Kyrgyzchylyk* exists in our blood. When we take our children to doctors and if they can not diagnose the illness we automatically say that our children have obtained *kyrgyzchylyk*. It does not matter where we worship Allah, be it in mosques or be it in mazars, what matters - is our sincerity.

**Japarkul:** You know that this museum is located in a mazar. How can you think it is ok, according to Islam or *kyrgyzchylyk*, not to wear a hat in this sacred place?

**Üsönbek:** Of course a Muslim person should wear a hat when he is in a mazar. But a person should have the choice what to wear and what not to wear. The main thing is that he must wear clean cloth and be neat, and behave himself appropriately. His attitude plays an important role; everything is considered sacred when it is done sincerely.

**Talant Moldo (from Alekseevka village):** The Kyrgyz word for society is Kyrgyz, a person can not be from another nationality. We can not change a Kyrgyz person into a Russian person. An African person can never be a Kyrgyz person. Every nation has its features. I understand the question of Japarkul. There should be some rules in sacred places, for instance, the proper way to dress.

**Üsönbek:** Let me answer your question in this way. Recently I worked out certain rules for mazar visitors. Those rules were: to take an ablution before entering the mazar; to wear a hat or kerchief that we put at the entrance. We have heard criticism for our rules. People asked why they should they wear hats that do not belong to them. After that we cancelled the second rule. A person must come to a mazar with his natural purity and sincerity. No one can speak against this person, if he is honest and comes with kind wishes.

**Kasym:** At the beginning we talked much about contradictions between Islam and *kyrgyzchylyk*. I think one can understand many things under *kyrgyzchylyk*. *Kyrgyzchylyk* can be a religion, treatment or tradition. Insh Allah, there were times when Kyrgyz have worshipped Tengir, nature, mountains or even fire. Islam has shown the right way. This is a very good thing. For instance, Arabs before they accepted Islam, had cruel traditions and rules for certain cases. They could bury a person alive, or if a woman did the wrong thing, she would be run over by camels. Islam supports good old traditions and destroys cruel and wrong traditions. For instance, before Islam, Kyrgyz were very hospitable, Islam supports this characteristic and we are still hospitable. But Kyrgyz still have some rituals, for instance when a person dies, relatives keep his body for three days at home; relatives slaughter a big animal and this is contradictory to Islam.

**Aitpaeva Gulnara:** We are talking about what is right, what is not right, what is good and what is bad, but who decides it?

**Kasym:** Concerning what is right and what is not right, as a Muslim I believe in Islam and consider it right. We were given a book to read and to live by, following the rules that are written in the Quran. Our prophet gave us Hadiths. Shariah is the set of rules for right living. It regulates all aspect of our lives. We have nice traditions such as *tülöö*, inviting people for food and thanking/worshipping Allah. These kinds of traditions are supported by Islam.

There are so many *oluyas* in mazars. *Oluyas* are happy if we read Quran for them while we are in mazars. Allah has prepared a certain kind of death to every person. Every person is responsible for his sins. If we live under the rules of Allah, read *namaz* fives times a day in this life then Allah may prepare for us a good life in the next life as well. The Q'uran says that Allah will bring everyone back to life at doomsday. We should believe in it.

**Momohanov Aibek:** I do not agree when people say that *kyrgyzchylyk* is only among Kyrgyz. Every nation has its sanctity and special qualities.

## DUBANACHYLYK

### *Atamkul Dubana: There are Only Two Ways to Get Away from Dubanachylyk*

One of my ancestors was Baabedin I did know about it. I even knew that I had *dubana* qualities and skills. Later I became suddenly sick and I had mental problems. I could not understand why this was happening. I went to many doctors; none of them could help me. One day I met one famous *dubana* from Ysyk Köl region. He said that one of my ancestors was a great *dubana* and if I do not accept *dubanachylyk* I will not get healed. I wanted to live further and I accepted this. There are only two ways to get away from *dubanachylyk*: first is death and second is acceptance of it. I decided to continue my ancestor's way.

There are five types of *dubana*: Dervish *dubana*, Kai'yrchy *dubana*, Eshen *dubana*, Kalpa *dubana* and Baabedin *dubana*. For instance, the Eshen *dubana* learns a book by heart, he is always with books. Even if he is not really *dubana* people call him Eshen *dubana*. Kai'yrchy *dubana* is the one who always begs something from people. Dervish *dubana* is considered a state service man. He is an educated person. People like those who wander from one village to another are called baabedin *dubanas*. They have also powers. There is no person without powers. The problem is that not everyone manages to use that power in a proper way. By doing wrong things, that power leaves us. It is very hard to be a *dubana*. One of the requirements to become *dubana* is to have ancestors who were *dubana* as well. If there were no *dubana* in your ancestors then you have no chance to become *dubana*. That is why there are very few real *dubanas* in Kyrgyzstan.

A cane is the *dubana*'s main tool. Where *moldos* and *bübü* and *bakshy* have rosary, *dubanas* must have a cane. This is an old tradition and we must not change it. The cane that I am holding now is not an ordinary cane. Tears of a prophet have fallen on this cane. But I do not know which prophet's tears. This cane grows only where tropical plants grow. I attached an iron to both ends of the cane. At the beginning I did not know much about his cane. Once I had a dream; in this dream I saw this cane. I told my relatives about this dream. My uncles interpreted this dream and said our ancestors have given you this cane and you should continue their way. Since that time, this cane is always with me. Some people say that I am a strange man who cares always about himself and a cane. They do not understand that I am a *dubana*. A long time ago *dubanas* had a high status in society. Be it a peaceful time or be it wartime, no one could mess with *dubanas*. A *dubana* was a favourite son of God. Allah has fulfilled all the wishes of *dubanas*. For instance, no one could look at him directly, only *dubanas* could look at him. They could also foretell when Chingizhan is going to fail and when is he going to have success. *Dubanas* can predict the future.

I have not lived in a village before. I moved to the village ten years ago. I lived on that mountain before. I had a yurt there. When the Soviet Union collapsed, I moved to this village; I brought my house to this village as well. I have visited mazars numerous times. During the Soviet Union I worked as a doctor; my sister was a shepherd. We moved to the village in 1985 and since then I practiced the duties of a *dubana*.

My *dubana* grandparents wanted to visit the place called Aksy and they left for Aksy. It was already evening, it had started raining and they could not get across the pass. They talked together and decided to fly over the pass. They flew over the pass. There is Archaluu mazar behind the pass. They sat there and made an ablution, ate food, read Quran and made *namaz*. During that time three soldiers of a local wealthy man walked along the road. They did not pay attention to the *dubanas*. When the soldiers came to their master, he asked if they saw anybody or anything new on the road. The soldiers said that they saw three *dubana* making *namaz*. The wealthy man said to his soldiers that they should invite those *dubanas* and he

could learn many things from them. At that time when the soldiers came to them, the *dubanas* had finished *namaz*. The soldiers invited the *dubanas* to their master's house. The *dubanas* talked with each other. The oldest *dubana*, Ashyr, said: Let us visit him; his soldiers can take us home tomorrow. When they came to the house of the person who invited them, they saw Eshen ata. They talked all night with each other. Kara *dubana* ata understood that Eshen ata came to this house to ask something from the owner. The *dubanas* did not listen to Eshen ata, because when they come to somebody's house they do not ask for something. They may take something only when house owner gives voluntarily. This is the principle of *dubanas*.

This place of *dubanas* meeting is called as Chat mazar. There are sheds in this mazar. The first shed is called Kurmanaaly Sarai', second is Barpy Sarai' and there are two more sheds. The small river next to these sheds is called Kara Buura Suu. Rivers flow from Chatkal through Jangy Bazar, Ala Buka and Jalal Abad. *Dubanas* used to gather stones here. There were many stones here before. People come here to conduct *jar*. If the weather is cold they come down to the house that is located on the lower level and conduct *jar* there. I consider Chat mazar as my mazar. I know mazars are not private. This mazar belongs to the public. Poor, wealthy, bad and good people come to this mazar. That is why we say that mazars are public and the living places of our ancestors.

I have heard a legend about how three *dubanas* brought three stones here. These kinds of legends are transmitted orally. Old people know about these legends and they tell them to younger generations. I have heard that legend from clairvoyant people. I think the legend dates back a century.

I have heard a story about Oi'sul Ata. One day I was invited to *kolkhoz*. I went there on horseback. When I was coming back home in the evening, my horse felt something and started to run; the horse was scared of something. I looked behind and saw someone very tall. I assume it was Oi'sul Ata; he was carrying something. That was it; I did not see anything else.

There were not so many *dubanas* among people in our village. There was only one *dubana*. He has died. Now I am *dubana*. I wandered in Naryn, At-Bashi and Tyan-Shan. Before that man died, I visited only Leninpol, Manas and Kara Buura regions. Now I travel much. I have visited Suusamyr and Osh. People say that I am unique and ask if I have a student who will continue my way. Unfortunately, I do not have one because this way is very difficult; not everyone can pass it. A *dubana* is the favorite son of God. If God gives us tasks we execute them undoubtedly.

These are my songs for people, they contain the following thoughts:

(The song contains the main ideas drawn from the original text in the Kyrgyz language)

*Laaillohi illallo,*  
*My Baabedin kai'ryllo.*  
*Alla ii, alla ii,*  
The *Dubana* is one person.  
But he has many names,  
*Dubana* is the only one among thousands;  
He wears white clothes;  
He rides good horses.  
*Dubana* helps people;  
His way is always prosperous;  
He has his angel protector;  
He has a house to live in;  
His house is a mazar.

He has a friend;  
His friend is a tiger.

*Laaillohi illollo*

He travels all the time

*Laaillohi illollo*

This world is a place of storage.  
Musaka is not with us anymore.  
Who is with us now?  
*Chaldyyar* does not exist anymore.  
Only water is with us;  
Only a broken tree is with us.  
When a person dies,  
His livestock remains in this world.  
You may wear bad cloths;  
You may live in a house without doors and windows.  
Life is like a river. It flows and someday it ends.  
Nobody knows what comes in the next world;  
Nobody knows what it looks like;  
Nobody was there before.  
Life is full of contrasts;  
There is happiness and unhappiness.  
The main thing is that you stay healthy,  
And then you will feel happy.  
When one feels death coming,  
S/he does not know what to do.  
You can offer death to your livestock,  
But they can not save your life.  
If it is your fate,  
You will die anyway.  
May angels support you,  
When you go to the next world.

***Mamekov Jumadil:***

***My Dubana Grandfather Protected Our Motherland from Aggressors***

My grandfather worked in the place where the graveyard of Manas Ata is located. He worked there as a guard until 1942. In 1942 he went to the war. I came to his position after he was gone. Once I asked the Supai'ra grandmother if she had seen something extraordinary during her stay and life in this place. She told me the following story:

It happened in 1993; I was milking a cow early in the morning; it was five in the morning. I heard the voices of children; I looked behind to see who was there. I saw nine children. Their ages ranged from 9 to 12. All of them were happy and were smiling. I asked them what were they doing here, they said "mother do not stop reading Quran regularly." I answered, "Oh children I never stop reading it." The children suddenly disappeared. That was it, other than that I have not seen any other extraordinary things.

My mother-in-law died in 2006; she was 82 years old. I left that place because the graveyard was transferred to state bodies.

It happened in autumn, early in the morning. I was lying next to my dad. Suddenly, someone from outside screamed “Mamek” I told to dad that someone is calling Mamek outside and I wanted to go outside. Dad said: “Sleep, do not go out”. An unknown person from outside called Mamek three times and went away on his horse in the southern direction. I asked dad who was that but he kept silence. Then he asked my mother to wake up. We read Quran and drank some tea. My mother told us that the spirit of Manas visited our house tonight. After this incident, my mother had terrible headaches for a week and then died.

Sargaldak, son of Mamek, was also a *dubana* he predicted the war. He was sent to the war and did not come back.

***Toktogul Moldo:***  
***My Heart Stopped Beating, I almost died***

When Junusaaly *Dubana* Ata died we witnessed a special story. When he was on his deathbed, he said he would come out of his graveyard after three or seven days. I had not heard that. But after he died, I had a dream. In my dream I received an order to visit his graveyard in the night. When I was on the way to the graveyard I met an old man *Dui’shönbai’*. He asked what I was doing in the cemetery zone at night. I told him about my dream. He was scared, but still went with me to the graveyard. When we reached the graveyard, we saw a big hole in the grave. Junushaaly Ata made that hole and left the graveyard. As time went by that graveyard disappeared. Now people do not respect that place much. People have thought about conducting *tülöö* there every twenty years. But people did not do it. We now call that place the mazar of *Dubana* Ata.

You might think that I am telling you a fairy tale. Once, when my heart stopped beating, I almost died; that is why I came to this work. Otherwise I would not have worked in this way. In Kyrgyzstan I have visited all the mazars in Talas and Osh regions. Let me tell my story. Once I decided to visit *Baba* Ata and *Bash* Ata mazars. I took another person with me, *Ergesh*. He was the man of science; well educated. It was my first visit to a mazar. We made the *zikir chaluu* ritual there. I took an ablution and was sleeping. I had a dream. In my dream one *Hadji* from *ayan* came to me and said: “The graveyard of *Bash* Ata was not completed, you should finish his graveyard”. Then he said that I should write something down; I did not understand what I should write, I saw a pen lying next to me, I took this pen and started writing.

There was one mazar near our village mill. One goes through an old road to that mazar. When we went to that mazar, on the way evil spirits followed us. After reading Quran, the evil spirits were gone. We interpreted it differently.

**STORIES OF MANACHY**

***Jumaliev Asankan (58 Years Old):***  
***I Witnessed Many Magic Events during My Work at Manas Ata’s Graveyard***

Thousands of people visit the graveyard of *Manas* Ata. The spring of *Kanykei’* *Apa* and the spring of *Ai’chürök* *apa* are located there. This one is *Kulan* mazar. This is a magic mazar. Inside of *Keng Kol* there is another mazar called *Ak Terek*. This mazar is also full of miracles. Most people do not notice its miracles. By miracle I mean that one can see invisible things.

Now, I can tell you only one story, I can remember the details of another at the moment. When I went for the first time to Ak Terek mazar I did not expect any magic or unordinary things. In the mazar I saw a snake and decided to kill it. When I approached, it ran away. It ran away when I was thinking of killing it. I hunted for it. I ran after it up to the peak of a mountain. I could not get it. It was so fast. I got very tired. The snake was so fast it was moving on the ground as if it was swimming in the water. Suddenly, I got scared and decided not to follow the snake. And I went back home.

This was the first story. Here is the second story: I went to Sharkyratma mazar. On the way to that mazar I met some people from Ysyk Köl region. They did not know the road to the mazar and asked if they could go with me. This time I experienced a strange story. We had bottles of mineral water in our bags. Suddenly one bottle exploded and water splashed on me like a fountain. A little river along the road stopped flowing. I said to my fellow travelers that this mazar is not going to accept me and I did not go there. In the evening my fellow travelers said that right after my leaving that place, the little river started to flow again. This was my second magic story.

When the great manachy Sayakbai' Karalaev was still alive, I met him once; he gave me his blessing and we had a small conversation:

- My son, I feel that you drink alcohol some times, do not you?

- Yes, sometimes.

- I would like to request one thing from you, will you agree? I will recite the Manas epic now. You look right at my eyes, and if you see something pronounce it.

He recited for about thirty minutes. He talked about the marriage of Manas with Kanykei'. Believe it or not, but I saw with my own eyes that piece of the epic. It seemed that I was there participating in their wedding. This event happened in the house of Sayakbai' Karalaev in 1969. Sayakbai' said that I should visit him regularly. I was afraid and never visited him again. Later I was so sorry that I had not visited him anymore.

In 2003 a Russian woman came to the graveyard of Manas Ata and recited the epic of Manas. Her name is Smirnova Konstantina.

One lady asked me what I saw in this place. I read Quran there several times. Her name is Rapahan.

- I have not seen anything.

- Lets go to the mountain. Do you see horses right there?

- No, I do not see them.

- Look better.

- Are you sure that there are horses?

- Yeah, I am sure.

- You should look better.

I saw six or seven men on horses. They were running. Sometimes I saw them clearly; sometimes they would disappear.

The graveyard of great Manas was built in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. There is no detailed information on that. According to the story of *Bübü Mariam (q.v.)*, the daughter of Musa, Manas died between the years 620 and 725. She told about this in great detail. She received this information from spirits. You know we have Jai'san Yrchy in our history. Yrchuul Jai'san lived in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. The spirit of Jai'san has taken Bübü Mariam everywhere she wanted. I saw it with my own eyes. I feel uncomfortable about it because I was told not to tell this story to people.

More enigmatic stories will be written in the ninth book in 2006. Bübü Mariam was a very calm and kind person. According to one story, once she went to the Kyzart pass, which was located in the middle of Jumgal and Kochkor. She wanted collect some herbs to heal her children. She saw many people there falling and dying. She also saw one old man. This man

was crying: “you are dying but not me”. Mariam was scared and ran away from that place. She returned there a month later to collect herbs and she saw that old man again. He came up to her and said: “You are a very good and beautiful person. You never cheated your husband; you think only of him. There are very few women like you in the world. From now on, I will be your master. I am that master Jai’san, one of the warriors of Manas. I will tell you things and you must write them down and spread them among the people”.

Bübü Mariam came from Jumgal to Talas twice. I went with him twice to the Echkilüü Mountain. She flew when visited the first time; the second time she just appeared in front of me. It was like a fairy tale. I would not believe this story if I had heard it from somebody else.

“This place is wonderful, I should make *tüilöö* here. Could you buy a sheep for me?” asked Bübü Mariam. He gave me 2000 soms. I went to the village. When I came back, he was gone. I saw him from a distance. It was 18:30, on the 20<sup>th</sup> of October. I saw her flying. This was the first story.

The second story: Mariam told me go with her to the Tashkazan (or Köz Bulak) spring; it was located inside of Nyldy Ata mazar. We went to Nyldy Ata mazar on the 15<sup>th</sup> of May, 2003. We went there. We could not find that place right away. On our way we saw the place Kalba. In order to find the place that we were looking for, we went to the house of a local person. The owner of the house was the head of the local electric management system. He and his wife went with us to Tashkazan. They helped us to find the place. The place was full of water; it had a very little spring. The water contained licorice. We prepared tea and drank it. We drank a lot of tea. Then we decided to perform *sham jaguu*. We knew that if someone among us was not sincere, then it is not allowed for him to do that. All of us were sincere. Everybody was gone. I stayed there alone. We had a conversation.

- Why are you here? Why did not you go?

- I want to see how you fly.

At that time Ernest came and said:

- I have been coming along with her for more than four years and I have never seen how she flies. You think that you can see this from your first visit?

-Yes, I would like to see it. You can not see it now, because I have problems. If you could leave me alone now, it would be good. Suddenly she disappeared.

When I came later:

- Can you tell me the truth?

- When Jai’san comes, the sky is covered with dark clouds. He comes and says: Let’s go to my darling. I travel the whole world with him. I have visited China, the Caspian Sea, the Caucasus Mountains, Iran and India with him. He has lived in Tadjikistan. There his daughter hung herself. He left his home and came here. He built new house here. Once I was traveling through Suusamyr. On the way I saw a written sign Manas Ordo. Three days later I saw a man in my dream who said: You must go there; you must go, otherwise you will die. Then I came here.

This was strange. He was reciting the epic of Manas in the Russian language, not in Kyrgyz. Not far from the tree he was loudly singing: Leg Manas, Tenir Manas. I went to see him. He recited for a while and felt that was observing him. I asked what he was singing. He said he was forced to sing the epic of Manas.

### *Meditation in Tashkazan or Story of Visitors*

Every person who visits this mazar has his own aim in the bottom of his/her heart. Bübü Mariam has her own aim too: to meditate and meet with the spirit of *Bakai’* (q.v.) Ata and acquire very important information concerning the epic.

This group made a plan to go to Tashkazan mazar in Tuyuktör *jailoo* (q.v.) two months ago. They started doing preparations for the mazar visit two weeks ago and did main preparation last two days. So the planned day came and they left to the mazar.

Two cars stopped one after another and mazar visitors and came out of car. All the necessary food and things was taken out of car. Visitors walked about 2 kilometers and reached rock on the right of Tuyuktör. There was a fireplace made of stone, copper, kettle and other necessary things. We supposed that all the visitors stay here and worship mazar. So we understood that we are obliged to stay in this cave.

Not longer after having been settled in this cave it started raining. It was cloudy in the afternoon and was raining in different parts of Talas region then it started raining in Tuyuktör Mountain. But it was not a simple rain. It was tears of Bakai' Ata. That's why these raindrops were warm and pleasant. Bakai' Ata who was the wisest man in Kyrgyz history, the one who knew well the language and mystery of nature must have asked clouds to rain for his descents who overcame long distance. In short, not only *Bübü* Mariam but all the other worshippers were feeling that it was raining in honor of their visit.

Covering themselves from the rain visitors settled under the cave and placed the cauldron, laid the tablecloth, set the samovar to boil, and after having tea sacrificed sheep for the spirit of Bakai' Ata. Then it stopped raining. Nurgül and Atyr started cleaning the intestines, and one of the men started cooking meat. Other four men went down for taking things, which were left. *Bübü* Mariam and Asankan went up to the hill.

Waterfall falls from the hill and *bübü* Mariam and Asankan stopped looking at it for a little while. And then they started climbing the low hill on the left of the waterfall, helping each other to go up. When they reached waterfall on the top of the hill they saw Tashkazan.

This natural Tashkazan look like real cauldron, it is just a little oval. Longitude of it is a bit longer than a meter and width is a little less than a meter, and its depth is about 70-80 cm. Water flows in from one side and it flows out from the other. This little water, which flows into the Tashkazan seems like having stayed there wakes up inner energy and then flows out turning into waterfall and courageously jumps from the hill.

For both of the *dastanchy* (q.v.), *bübü* Mariam and Asankan, it is the first time they are visiting such a beautiful and wonderful place. But in comparison to Asankan *Bübü* Mariam is seeing this place for the second time. A year ago she saw in prophetic dream that she would meet with Bakai' Ata right in this place.

Last year when the seventh book was published Jai'sang Ata told *Bübü* Mariam Eje that he will take his place in the other world and if she needs any other additional information she could meet with Bakai' Ata and ask him. He told this during the meditation on March 27 of 2002. In one of the days when *Bübü* Mariam was thinking of how she would meet with Bakai' Ata she saw a prophetic dream in which she take part in the events, which were to occur in a year. That is why *Bübü* Mariam is familiar with Tuyuktör and Tashkazan.

Having asked, "Is this Tashkazan or is there any other one here?" and not waiting for the reply Asankan suggested looking for it and they might find it.

*Bübü* Mariam agreed on silently. Asankan headed one direction and *Bübü* Mariam headed the opposite side. She started what she has to complete till the dark; she started looking around and studying the place she and other visitors are located. When she will be returning from night meditation this will be needed; after the meditation *Bübü* Mariam will easily identify where she is and it will be easy to find the place where other visitors are. That is why she wandered around for two hours. When it turned dark all the visitors who stayed in the cave came to the Tashkazan.

When we came here two years ago, in spite of the fact that water was not flowing into the Tashkazan it was full. But we did not notice that water was flowing out of it, said Murat and added, and the water flowing in must be from the rain.

“You are right”, said *bübü* Mariam. Only water from melting glacier in the spring and the summer rain flows into the Tashkazan. When snow melts away water does not flow. Sometimes there are times in summer when it does not rain at all. In such times water in Tashkazan does not evaporate at all; either it is very full or it lessens but does there is still some water. If the water in Tashkazan is full it would indicate that current year people would live in peace and well-being, but if the water lessens then it would indicate that there would be lots of diseases, war and internal conflicts. Great people who leaded people would know this. And everything would be prepared according to it. In short, Tashkazan served to our people as a fortune-teller. Even now it is doing the same service.

“People were telling that it does not become frozen in winter”, said Murat in order to emphasize Tashkazan’s sacred power. And then people stopped talking.

*Sham* lit in a special place, which was prepared by Talant was burning really strong and the fire reached man’s height. This must be the most successful *sham* since the time when *Bübü* Mariam started inferring in *dastan* (q.v.).

*Sham* died away. Nine visitors went back to the cave and *Bübü* Mariam stayed alone.

None of these nine would dare to stay alone near Tashkazan. They would be frightened. But nobody was afraid for *bübü* Mariam, they even did not worry about her. With a belief that *bübü* Mariam’s meditation will be successful and she will come back healthy, they all went down to the cave. Those who were responsible for samovar started heating it, those who did have nothing to do sat at the tablecloth and started talking about different things.

“We are surrounded by the hills from three parts. I am wondering from which part *Bübü* Mariam *Eje* will come? Maybe she will appear in front of the cave”- thought Jumadin.

It is 11 pm already; 2 hours have passed since Mariam *Eje* left. She might come now. Please, prepare tea, said Talant to Nurgul looking at his watch. Just after Talant the voice of *bübü* Mariam *Eje* calling Talant was heard.

Mariam *Eje* came, pronounced Nurgul and showed to the top of the hill. *Bübü* Mariam *Eje* was standing on the top the high hill. Visitors understood that *bübü* Mariam *Eje* appeared when Talant said, “*Bübü* Mariam *Eje* might come now”. All were glad for it. Since the distance between the cave and the hill was great they wondered how she could hear words told in such a low voice. Even though the sister of these nine visitors would go to the meditation in the same way, she would return from it differently each time. This time was different from others since *bübü* Mariam emerged on the top of the hill as a magician and it was even more wonderful how she could hear what Talant said in a very low voice. Seconds later this wonder turned into fear because *Bübü* Mariam was walking to the abrupt rock.

What will happen now? Will she fall not realizing that she is walking to the abrupt rock? What will happen to unfinished epic? What *Jai’sang* Ata’s spirit will do? What will be the fate of the Kyrgyz who were to receive such a great epic soon? Will these nine people stand look at *bübü* Mariam is about to fall from the rock? Will they do anything to prevent the trouble? Do they have any idea for saving her?

As it is said, “do not die lying, die shooting”, they did not stay calm. They had only one choice and they used it.

“*Eje*, there is abrupt rock ahead of you. You might fall. Turn left”, they shouted.

*Bübü* Mariam turned left and was saved from death. She walked down by the hill. Talant ran there and Jumadin followed him.

*Bübü* Mariam continued her way by the edge of the rock. Talant and Jumadin were heading to the right way for climbing the rock and they shouted to *Bübü* Mariam: “Continue your way. There is little distance left!”.

In such situations ways and time seems to be very long. They overcame the way, which seemed to be short when they were returning from Tashkazan but now it seemed to be very long and endless. Talant reached *Bübü* Mariam first and they were sitting and talking when Jumadin came close to them.

“Is everything well?” asked Jumadin. *Bübü* Mariam held his hand to let him know that everything went smooth.

“Only now I came to myself completely”, said *Bübü* Mariam after a little while. “This time when I was returning from meditation I felt that my feet came to the senses first, and then I felt rest of rest of my body parts. Before my mind would first come to senses and after it would down my body. This time it is vice versa. And today’s meditation went as I wished. Meeting with Bakai Ata’s spirit was very successful. I received invaluable information from our wise father. He showed me all around wonderful cave called Nyldykana” told *Bübü* Mariam answering to the question “how did your meditation go?”, which was the minds of these two men. “At the end of the meditation when I said goodbye to Bakai’ Ata I could not see him. Ray was disconnected because moon was covered with dark cloud. If moon would be open for a little more time I would appear right next to you” continued *Bübü* Mariam.

“You might appear in flat land front of our cave I thought. My thought might have been conveyed to you and served as a direction in some sense” said Jumadin. “You appeared right at the top of that place”.

“Maybe” *Bübü* Mariam said smiling mysteriously.

Jumadin continued, “Generally speaking, in this unlimited universe there must be no place or corner, which human thought would not reach, I thought to myself”.

Just after I said to Nurgul, “It is the time for Mariam *Eje* to come, please prepare tea”. We heard your voice calling me from above. And “Mariam *Eje* came” Nurgul pronounced astonishingly and showed to the top of the hill. We looked and saw you there-said Talant.

“I do not remember hearing your voice, nor calling your name”.

Talant continued, “When you stepped towards the abrupt rock we were all frightened that you would fall. And then we shouted to you to turn left and you did”

“I am telling you, I felt my feet first and then the rest of my body. And I slightly remember your shouting to me. And then I turned left and continued walking by the edge of the rock. And not long after that I felt that someone was approaching me. Due to your body shape I figured out that it was you Talant. You asked, “did you come back safe?”. You feared in vain that I would fall from the rock. When I am just back from meditation I listen to my feet since I cannot know where I am exactly. If there is precipice or abrupt rock in ahead of me I pass without falling. It seems like I fly when it is necessary. I must be able to fly after meditation as I do fly during it. In my opinion, firstly, through meditation’s inertia, secondly, because I do not feel my body’s weight and thirdly, because I do not have any feeling of fear then I am out of laws of physics. When my mind completely comes to its normal condition I am deprived of these abilities and I turn to an ordinary person”.

“You do not remember you answered Talant. We were directing you shouting because of fear, it is interesting that you were doing everything right. How could you define your left when your mind still was our conscious?” asked Jumadin not being able to conceal this question any more.

“I must have been controlled by your voice as a toy controlled by remote control”

This was the end of conversation at the edge of the rock.

“Let’s go to drink water from Tashkazan” suggested *Bübü* Mariam. “I not thirsty as after meditation in fall at Echkilüü Mountain but I still want to drink some water”.

They went to Tashkazan. Each of them drank water from the spring. They noticed that the water is warmer than it was in the evening.

“Water warmed up” surprisingly said Jumadin, and there was no any other talk.

They went down by the edge of the rock and they soon reached the cave. Everyone sat around tablecloth and drank tea prepared for *Bübü Mariam*.

At the midnight prepared meat was taken out of cauldron and put on the table. Quran was read to the spirit of Bakai’ Ata and blessing was asked. Everyone talked of different things while eating the meal.

*(From the pages of unpublished book about Bübü Mariam, which is being written by Jumadin Kadyrov, who is the poet and writer, the director of publishing house “Bii’iktik”)*

***Tilegen Seyitbekov (46 Years Old):  
I Am Looking for an Invisible and Magic World***

I come from the village of Kotormo, in Toktogul region. By the way, my mother is Seidene. This was our first visit to this place with my family. The reason that I am going is to make a new version of the epic of Manas and to introduce it to all people. I came here to visualize the appearance of the heroes of the epic. For that I try to contact with *oluya* and angels. I have been dedicating my self to this work for twenty years. I am looking for an invisible and magic world. I do not know what outcomes I can accomplish; it all depends on my fate. I believe that real life exists only in the next life in the next world. I am the one who is trying to find that.

Mazars have their magic and miracles. There are different types of mazars. They do not all look like each other. The whole earth is sacred not just some places. Mazars are sacred places with their own features.

I am an ordinary man. In my early childhood I thought I be a writer. Then I thought I am not a poet or writer and how can I write literature? But I could not forget my idea about writing; I thought about it all the time. Because of that I became ill. The name of my illness was - writing. I had a great desire to write but was aware that I lack confidence and patience. I had a feeling that I need more consciousness and energy. I have searched for them at mazars. I have strolled about many mazars I think “Insh Allah I will find sacred consciousness and energy soon and I will be known among all people. Insh Allah if spirits, *oluya* and mazars help me, I can hope to reach my goals: a successful life, well educated children and to make things more interesting in this life. I feel success. I see in my head images of my heroes. I usually visit mazars on Thursdays, but when I am free I do not limit myself in visiting mazars”.

Of course I met and have seen many extraordinary things, several times. Every time I visit a mazar, I find more magic in it. Mazar visiting helps me in creating my writing. I am very happy for that. We live in the south near the big Shamshykal ata mazar. This mazar was named after Shamshy Tabirip. He was an *oluya* man. He was a religious person and lived properly. He died while he was on the way to Ketmen Töbö. People say that his body was buried in a place where his enemies could not find it. The place where he was buried is called Shamshykal. The place where he was buried later became a place full of salt. Now people call this place salt center. The mountain where this place is located differs from other mountains in the area. There are many rivers on this mountain. Mountains next to this mountain do not contain salt at all.

***Bakchiev Talantaaly (35 Years Old):  
The Relationship between Mazars and Manaschylyk***

There have been no scientific observations or research on the relationship between old notions such as mazar and *manaschylyk*. However, one can notice that some research has been done in the last two years. One of the first scientific approaches to these issues was done by G. Aitpaeva. She wrote the article, “Phenomena of mazars in Kyrgyzstan (Problems and hypothesis)”<sup>13</sup> One can notice that *bübiüs* and *bakshys*, singers, poets and people who recite epics are connected to certain places. For instance, Kazaks have the following belief: If someone wants to become a good *dombura* (*q.v.*) player, he has to go to a cemetery and play the *dombura* for a long time. In the cemetery, the spirits can see the weak sides of a player, his errors, and can direct and help him; they teach him new melodies<sup>14</sup>. The Turkmen also have a similar legend: When one wants to play *dutar* (*q.v.*) he needs to go to the graveyard of Baba Kambar and sing the whole night and when he goes to sleep, he sees a dream where a dragon and a camel come to him. If he is not afraid of these animals, then Baba Kambar comes himself and gives his blessing<sup>15</sup>. People of the Khakas and Buryat nations [in Siberia] have a belief that obtaining great poetic and art skills is connected with nature and, spirits of the mountains and forests. In order to sing an epos one should develop contact with those spirits. Only after that, can he fully understand nature, people and other phenomena<sup>16</sup>. Uzbeks also have a legend concerning epic singers: The one who wants to be an epos singer should visit Muratbakshy place. This is a sacred cave. In this cave an old man makes *domburas*. The singer must drink the water in this cave and spend the night there. After that he gets a *dombura* from the old man. This means the singer get his support and can become a good epic singer<sup>17</sup>. The legend of Kara Kalpaks: the one who wants to be a good epic singer must go to an intersection of ancient roads, and must not come back unless he hears there new melodies<sup>18</sup>. According to the observations of the famous scientist K. Rahmatullin, singers of the Manas epos (*manaschy*) start to sing this epos after visiting certain places. Those places can be sacred caves, somebody’s yurt or the graveyard of Manas<sup>19</sup>.

Of course, the theory that the births of different nations’ epics are connected to sacred places is widely articulated among ordinary people. It is hard to find scientific support for this theory. Scientific research about our *manaschy* is very much needed. If we consider most of our famous *manaschy*, then we can see that their artistic activities are connected with mazars. Most mazars have the names of great *oluya* people or Manas Ata. As a *manaschy* I have experienced many events, now let me share some of them with you.

It happened in November 1999. I was working for the American University in Central Asia. In November I had a strong depression. I was so tired; I did not know what to do. I wanted to go to my village. The Head of our department understood my situation and allowed me to have a rest for three days so that I can go to my village. I came to my village Karakol, in the Ak Suu region. Just after my arrival at my home village, I wanted to go to the place

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<sup>13</sup> Aitpaeva. G., Fenomen mazarov v Kyrgyzstane (postanovka problemy i gipoteza)//Akademicheskiy vestnik: Annual collection of articles of professors from the American University in Central Asia, Bishkek, 2004. Issue # II, pp.128-139.

<sup>14</sup> Tursunov E.D. Vosniknovenie baksy, akynov, seri i jirau. Astana: IKF `FoliantA, pp.43-44.

<sup>15</sup> Rahmatullin K. Tvorchestvo Manaschi, AManas-geroicheskiy epos kirgizskogo naroda», Frunze, 1968.

<sup>16</sup> Basilov V. Kult svyatih v islame. M., 1970, pp. 32-34.

<sup>17</sup> Troyakov P.A Magicheskaya funkcia skazivania kak esteticheskaya kategoria s sujetoslojenii arhaicheskoi skazki. `Esteticheskie osobennosti folklorA. Ulad-Ude, 1969. p.48.

<sup>18</sup> Putilov B.N. Epicheskoe skazitelstvo: Tipologia i etnicheskaya spetsifika. M. Izdatelskaya firma `Vostochnaya literatura, RAN, 1997, p. 6.

<sup>19</sup> Aimbetov K. Karakalpakskie narodniye skaziteli: Avtoref: PhD Philology. Tashkent, 1965. pp.93-94.

where, in my childhood, I tended a herd; that place was a river in Jyrgalang. This place was the treatment for my depression.

I wore my father's jacket and wanted to go. My mother was worried and said that my brother Talgat should go with me. I said ok. But when we went out of the house I sent him back home. When I reached the place where I wanted to go, I performed Quran for the spirits of forty warriors of Manas. I sat near a tree. And fell asleep. Later I heard a noise. When I opened my eyes I saw a white snake just in front of me and it was staring at me. Of course I was scared; but did not make a move. Suddenly the snake disappeared and a big, white frog appeared in front of me. It was staring at me as well. It slowly started to approach me. I was very frightened and my body was sweating. Suddenly I heard the noise of car engines. An old red car was passing along. When the car was about hundred meters from me, it suddenly stopped and could not get started again. I looked back again at the place where the frog was sitting, but did not see it. I think it was frightened by the engine noise. I stayed there a bit and looked at my watch; it was two in the morning. I went home. On the way home, I was followed by some kind of purring creature. It had a tail and was very refulgent; I do not know exactly what it was. I was very frightened. When I stopped, he would stop too; when I walked, he would walk too. He followed me until the village bridge. (Parts of this story were written in A. Egemberdieva's book, *Manaschy and Mezgil*, pp. 42-43<sup>20</sup>).

It is possible that this magic story is just part of my imagination, coming from my fear. I am not going to make you to believe this story. I have told this story in relation with our theme. I wanted to tell about the history of that place. This happened several years ago. When I was tending a herd, I met Chyi'yrdy, Kanykei' and little Semetei'. Later in that day, I saw the graveyards of two warriors of Manas. Later I asked my grandfather Subanov Kobogon about the history of that place. He said this was a mazar of Nurgai' Mullah. This mullah came from Kazakstan in order to find a better life here. Kazakstan was experiencing a depression. There is no information how Nurgai' made this place sacred. Nobody knows if this place was sacred before Nurgai's visit, or if it was made sacred by Nurgai'. We have heard that in 2000 some people visited this mazar and prayed. Geographically this mazar is located between Karakol city and Karakol village (the former name was Tasma Karanar). There is a river Jyrgalang between Karakol city and Karakol village.

There is an also another interesting story. The story is about the history of the scientific documentary film of the famous director Melis Ubukeev (1935-1996). The name of the documentary is "World of Manas" it was made in spring 1995. This was one of the most important works of Melis Ubukeev. Not many people know where this documentary was shot. It was shot in that mazar. Was it coincidence? No, the author searched for a place that somehow had a relation to the hero, in this case to Manas. He searched for a place which could help him to discover mysterious phenomena. The author had a great respect for Manas. He understood that in order to learn more about Manas, he must take into consideration a mysterious world. The Russian historian Lev Gumilev has also said this to Melis Ubukeev.

Later in our interview with Shaabai' Azizov, a great *manaschy*, Azizov said that he recommended that place to the author for film shooting. In this place Semetei was wounded by *Kongurbai'* (*q.v.*). Ai'chürök flew here and healed Semetei'. Shaabai' Azizov had that piece of the epic, but it was not in a written form. But according to Sayakbai'' Karalaev (1894-1971) in the book *Semetei'*, that episode happened in Jyrgalang. Here is that piece of the episode:

Marvelous Ai'chürök  
She flew like a bird.

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<sup>20</sup> Egemberdieva A. *Manaschi jana mezgil*: (personal observation). B. 2005. pp. 42-43.

You flew a long distance without a pause  
You had many obstacles on your way  
But you came to Jyrgalang.<sup>21</sup>

Bakai' and Kanchoro put Semetei' in the river so that he would not bleed much. Ai'chürök came.

She cried loudly,  
She was bothering about Manas' son.  
She stepped over the Semetei',  
The bullet fell out of the body,  
And Semetei' was healed.

The place we are talking about is also mentioned in *manaschy* S. Orozbekov's works (1867-1930):

Between the the great mountains,  
Along the great river,  
With lots of plants,  
With marvelous birds,  
Many people came here  
Having enjoyed it  
They named it Jyrgalang.<sup>22</sup>

The name of this place originates from the word *jyrgal*. In the Kyrgyz language this word means joy, pleasure, harmony, prosperity, satisfaction and cheerfulness<sup>23</sup>. In the epic we see that Kalmaks have called this river Jyrgalang, that was why we looked for this word in the Mongol dictionary. In the Mongol language the word *jyrgal* means happiness<sup>24</sup>. We see that in the Kyrgyz and Mongol languages the word *jyrgal* has almost the same meanings. The river Jyrgalang and this area have helped a lot of people to discover everything connected with Manas.

Concerning M. Ubukeev's documentary film, *manaschy*, Shaabai' Azizov plays the role of *Yraman yrchy* (q.v.). Before this film in 1994 M. Ubukeev made a film, "The Last Manaschy". It was about Sh. Azizov. During that time Sh. Azizov told Ubukeev about the Jyrgalang river's characteristics and its relationship to Manas.

These things tell us that indeed there is a mysterious connection between *manaschy* and mazars. Mazars somehow help *manaschy* to perfect their skills.

***Ismailov Ulan (23 Years Old):  
Support of Kai'yp and Spirits***

A person, in his/her life, experiences different stories. I have also experienced an interesting story. After graduation from the Karakol high school I decided to continue my education in the university, I failed exams and I went to my grandparents in my village in the mountains in order to help my grandparents tend a herd.

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<sup>21</sup> Epos Semetei'. Sayakbai' Karalaev's variant. F. Adabiat, 1989, Second book, p.210.

<sup>22</sup> Manas: Kyrgyz elinin baatirdik eposu. Third book. S. Orozbekov's variant. B. Kyrgyzstan, 1995. p.150.

<sup>23</sup> Kyrgyz tilinin tushundurmo sozdugu eki tomduk. Volume I, F. Mektep, 1984. p.381

<sup>24</sup> Russko- mongolskiy slovar. Sostavili A.R.Damba-Rinchine. G.S.Mupkin.under supervision of G.D. Sajeeva. M: 1960, p. 671.

When one of our relatives died, my grandparents came down from there. My brothers and sisters went to the village for a week. I was left in the mountain alone. In the morning, when I was milking a cow, someone came to me and clasped me from behind. I could not see his face.

This person said: Stop milking! *Ittin balasy!* [Son of the dog!] Stand up; go to that hill. I could not say no. I ran to that hill but still could not see that person. When I reached the hill he ordered me to sit down. The place where I climbed up was Eshperdi. The voice said: Look there, do you see some *kai 'yps?* (*q.v.*) When they come to you, must greet them loudly and answer all their questions and do everything they tell you to do. Suddenly a whirlwind appeared in front of me. The voice said: Hey Alisher look after that whirlwind well. Now, the hero will come; remember this face. When someone came out of the whirlwind, I was very frightened. He was a big man, on a horse. He had a lance in his hands. He was armored. His horse was very restless. The person behind me said that I must meet him and greet him. I greeted him, but could not look at his eyes. The voice behind me said to listen to him:

He is a hero created of moon and sun

He is a hero created of sky and earth

He is a hero created of Kyrgyz peoples blessings

The fame of *Kabylan* (*q.v.*) Manas ata is all over the world

He had great wars in Beijing

My son, remember the face of your grandfather Manas

The voice stopped. Another person came out from the whirlwind. This one did not have any armor but had a whip in his hands. The voice behind me told that I must remember his face.

He is the one.

Then the voice introduced me to the hero, Almambet:

He escaped from Beijing;

He is the one who carries arms;

He protected Kyrgyz land;

He is the only Aziz khan;

His name is Almambet.

Never forget him.

Never forget his heroism in Beijing.

I met forty five people introduced in such a way. Every one of them had their own qualities. A man who was called a hero said to me: "You must recite to people about us, about our lives. You must recite not with simple words but with great words. If you do not sing, you will regret it. But if you recite it and do not give up, you will have everything that you aim for. If you recite to all the people, regardless of number, then you will live a happy, wealthy and successful life. If you do not recite may my words be a curse on you. Will you recite?" he asked. A person behind me commanded: "Lift up your head and answer positively, *kakmar* (dirty, naughty child)." I nodded and answered positively. "Hey, speak louder, *kakmar*, the hero might not be able to hear you" said the person behind me, and he continued: "Now you have to remember the hero very well." I looked at the hero, he was staring at me and his eyes were sparkling. I was frightened and lowered my gaze. "Hey, *kakmar*, look well at him", he forced me to look at him a second time. I looked at him again and he was in his previous condition. I was frightened even more and lowered my gaze again. "Hey, *kakmar*, look at him carefully, how will you recite about him if you do not know his features"- yelled and lifted my chin and made him to look at him again. The hero's stare was more baleful. I stared at him for half a minute and I could not bear it, and lowered my gaze. "Hey, look, we are now going to the east; you see the crowd. It is *Kongurbai's* force said the hero indicating to the east. I

looked and saw a crowd of many thousands. The hero told me that and went eastwards. When he went over the mountain ridge “Do not leave the boy’s mouth empty, give him something”. The man behind me gave me oat flour mixed with melted butter and said: “Take and eat it”. I bit a piece but could not finish it. “Eat everything and do not leave”, he took everything and put into my mouth and commanded “Swallow!”. I swallowed everything because I was afraid. Then he continued: “The hero did not give you his blessing, in a year you will go to *Ai’köl’s* (*q.v.*) graveyard and will pass the examination of *Ai’köl* and other *manaschys*. If you pass the examination of *Aikol* and others you will get a blessing, if you do not you will be handicapped. Prepare, *kakmar*. I am *Sayakbai*”. I will train you for that examination, and I do not know about what will happen further”.

I woke up late next day. The herd was already in the pasture. I realized that I did not sleep in my bed, but covered myself with my grandfather’s fur coat. I felt my mouth was dry and I was thirsty. I drank cold water and for three days I drank anything other than water. I was very pale. That day I went to the place where everything had happened yesterday, and I saw footprints of horses in the shed. My grandparents came in the evening. I told them everything that had happened. Grandfather put his handkerchief on this neck, looked in Mecca’s direction, murmured something and did a blessing. Then we invited our neighbors and made a sacrifice; we cut a sheep. We received blessings from neighbors. For the next days my eyes were red. The pain in my eyes lasted for more than two weeks and was cured with the help of my grandmother’s *uchuktoo* (*q.v.*). And my illness moved into my left eye and it took ten more days to get cured.

In the week after that story, I went to bring our cows home from a place called *Kök Seki*. They had gone to forest. I was waiting for their return and fell asleep and had a dream. In my dream a tall red man came to me and said: “My son do you know me?” I answered no, and then he said: “How is it that you do not know me, Kazak and Kyrgyz used to know me, I am *Soltobai*’. My son I have a task for you. Collect my songs from people’s sayings and present them in front of people. I wanted to come earlier but I could not come ahead of the hero. Will you do it for me?» I said yes. He blessed me: “May your way be successful; may you have great fame among people” and added “Wake up my son, your cows will be gone». I woke up and looked around, there was nobody.

A week after that story, when I was coming back with horses from *Ak Terek*, I saw an old man. He was tall, red- faced and had a long white beard. I greeted him, even though I did not know him. He greeted me back and asked: “Whose son are you?»

- *Jumabek’s*.

- Who is the father of *Jumabek*?

- *Yi’manbek*.

- Who is the father of *Yi’manbek*?

- *Ismail*.

- Who is the father of *Ismail*?

- *Masylbek*.

- Who is the father of *Masylbek*?

- *Chychy*.

- Stop, my son. That *Chychy* is me. *Aikol* has turned to you; may it be good for you. May you be always successful and may your offspring grow in number, be ahead of us. My son I also have a task for you but you have a heavy burden and I do not want to be an obstacle. I was a *tabyp* (*q.v.*), continue work. Try to be on the way of science. May your path be open. Be ahead of everyone», he blessed me this way. When I woke up after that I was at home. There were times when I would recite *Manas* at nights, I would go to solitary places and recite *Manas*. In my dreams *Sayakbai*’’ ata would come and say: “Why are you sleeping?” and compel me to recite *Manas*. I would not remember what I recited but my family would tell

that I recited Manas at night. My grandfather told everyone in the family that they should not wake me up, if I start reciting at night; that's why no one would stop me.

A year has passed. In my dream Sayakbai' ata asked: "In thirty days you will meet the hero. How are the preparations going?». I answered: "I can recite for quite a long time». "My son, do you have strength for thirty days?». Then I could recite only two days and told him that. Hey, *kakmar*, do not mock me. I have been leading you for a year and you are telling that you will work only two days. You should recite at least seven days in front of the hero. From today, start reciting every two days". I did what he said. A week before our trip to Talas, he said: "Stop reciting and gain strength. Remember, you have to recite with all of your energy, otherwise you will be handicapped». All my thoughts were about the coming event and I was very worried.

Early in the morning, on the 25<sup>th</sup> of August, at 4am, my grandparents, I and another seven people left for Talas. We took fifty thousand soms, seven sheep, dishes and mattresses. On the same day at, 11pm, we arrived at the hero's graveyard. We went with a local guard to the graveyard and read Quran, there I heard someone saying to me Ahave a rest tonight, tomorrow read Quran and revere the spirit of Manas. On 27<sup>th</sup> of August, early in the morning, you will recite, competing with the sun from sunrise till sunset». I looked behind but did not see anyone, I told everything to my grandparents and they did everything according to that. We got up at 4am on the 27<sup>th</sup> of August. We made *boorsok* (*q.v.*), read Quran, cut sheep and prepared the place where I was to recite Manas. At sunrise I started reciting Manas. Suddenly I saw a group of huge people surrounding me and urging: "Recite well and louder». I recited well for three days and on the fourth day I was tired. Some tall men with lance threatened me "I will split your liver, recite louder». I was scared and continued to recite. I continued reciting and on the seventh day I stopped but I could not see my parents, grandparents and those who came with me, only those huge people were with me. The hero was in front of me and at that moment said: "Good job, now you deserve my blessing. May your tongue have good words, your eyes have light, fire on your heart and strength in your hands. May your head always be up (do not experience anything embarrassing), may your name be famous among people from this day and never be forgotten, may there be no one equal to you when you compete, may you have power and wealth. Reach the universe. Amin». I do not know, but I must have lost myself after those words. When I woke sun was already up. My family and other people from Talas were drinking tea.

So I became a *manaschy* suddenly. I was seventeen when I got this *ayan* or big mystery. Now I recite *Manas*, I do not know if I will be able to accomplish the tasks of Soltobai and Chychy.

## **BURDENS ARE LEFT IN MAZARS**

***Kojobekova Burul:***

***Mazar is the Place Where One Can Purify Himself***

I heal people and sometimes their burdens and difficulties transfer to me. When I would like get rid of them, I visit mazars. When I visit a mazar, I feel myself clean and relieved. Before visiting a mazar, I make a wish and take an ablution. I go to mazars alone. I think of mazars as places where one can purify himself.

***Düi'shönkul Moldo:***

***Allah Chooses Certain People to Give Them Power***

Ordinary people do not get power from Allah. *Oluya* and angels come to only good and sincere people. These powers and skills are inherited from generations to generations. Our grandmother had this. My grandfather could tell the future by counting stars. We get skills and power and live by accomplishing a mission, which is given by Allah.

Sometimes, people come to me by saying that they are being followed by dogs or enigmatic people in black. Children are frightened by people in black. They see different things. You saw that recently one child came with his mother; this child was frightened by enigmatic people. This has happened because the father of this child drinks alcohol and his black people come to his child. I can see that black people of the father fall on the child. I purified the child from those black people.

A girl of twenty-two years from Kai'nar visits me. Her father is Aman and he possesses *kyrgyzchylyk*. The girl says to me that she sees two white and four black men coming to her. Four black men come to her to kill her. I can see them as well. They come and hang a person. Nowadays, there are many cases when people hang themselves. In villages if one person dies you see that in a couple of days five or six more people die. At the beginning, four of them come, the other two incite to suicide, then four black people take a person's soul. That girl said that when she saw those four men, she ran away. When she was sleeping, the two white men came and said do not close your window. They had rope in their rope. They put the rope on her neck and she does not remember what happened next, she lost consciousness.

I went to see her. I saw her; she was not sick; she had *kyrgyzchylyk*. I recovered her spirit and she woke up. If you ask her she can tell you this story herself. She kept silence and cried. She could not speak because of the rope which was put on by those two men.

The girl had this burden because of her mother. Her mother had *kyrgyzchylyk*, but she did not accept it, that's why her mother's burden was transferred to her daughter. I returned her burden back to her mother. I told the mother that she should accept *kyrgyzchylyk*, otherwise this will continue. The mother promised to accept it. I told them they should live clean, should not lie and say bad things and repeat rumors. Now they are good. They visit me sometimes. Recently the daughter came to me again. She was told that she has appendicitis. I saw her and understood that I was not appendicitis. Those black people came to her again. This happened because her father drank some vodka. I healed her and she felt better.

One young woman lives in Kök Sai'. She was having problems with her health. The local *mullah* Kochkorbai' and Raish (A young man who graduated from the Islam Institute. People call him *mullah*- Aigine.) and her relatives called me. When I came she told that her kidney hurts her. Doctors told her that she has appendicitis. I saw her; she had no illness. The local *mullah* tried to heal her but there were no results. The burden of the *mullah* was transferred to the woman. I saw her two times and recovered her spirit. After that she felt better and fell asleep. I threw her burden away. Her burden should have been thrown to a mazar so that it will not come back.

By leaving a burden in mazar, I mean that when healing a person with the help of rosary, you imagine a mazar and call *oluya* and angels from it, then they heal sick person.

## **THINGS THAT ARE DONE WITHOUT DREAMING HAVE NO RESULTS**

### ***Düi'shenbieva Kumar: One Gets Direction/Instruction from Allah in His Dream***

Allah gives me orders in my dreams. I have written all that Allah said to me. I have about five hundred papers of what I wrote. Let me tell you about it.

There is a woman in Talas. She dreams while she sleeps. I write down everything that I hear from her while she is sleeping. Adhering to her dream, we have collected herbs in mountains for two years. We have collected herbs under the snow. Instructions from dreams have helped us to collect necessary herbs in the right places. We have searched herbs that were located sixty kilometers from us. We could not go by car; only on foot otherwise we would not have found the herbs. At the end we have made a pill called "Universe". It can be kept for one thousand years. One of the deputies from the Parliament has offered to buy this pill, but we have denied him. He wanted to sell it in drug stores. People with health problems, my relatives and friends come to us for this medicine. The pill does not harm anybody. Those pills must stay in dark places. The pill helps a person if he is clean and sincere. The one who drinks alcohol can not take the pill.

Aigine: These people have collected herbs for two years, but only after two years they received an instruction in their dreams to make a pill by mixing all the herbs that they collected during the last two years.

Patients after taking this medicine became healthy in a short period of time. One of our relatives was sick by echinococcus [a tapeworm genus]. Doctors said that she needs an operation. She has taken these pills and became healthy again. According to Kumar, scientists from the USA and Russia have come to Kyrgyzstan and analyzed that pill for a year. At the end they gave a certificate<sup>25</sup>. They said that this pill is helpful for seven different diseases. In Kumar's sisters' dream this medicine was helpful for forty one diseases. The color of the pill is reddish, has the taste of a cherry.

Kumar's son is angry when her mother tells people about mazars. Her son is a fundamental Muslim and does not like when his mother speaks things contradictory to Islam.

***Güljamal:***  
***All that I See in My Dreams Comes True***

I was sick. I had pain in my back. One old man with a white beard came to me through the window. He said: My poor child, you are suffering terribly. He patted me on my back three times and recovered my spirit. I was so scared. When this old man was gone I did not have a pain in my back anymore. I was completely healthy again.

One day my mother fell sick. I cried and asked from God: Oh Allah, my father is blind and now my mother is seriously sick, how I am going to live alone? Will I be left alone? That old man came to me again and said: Your mother will not die now, she will die in seven years. My mother died exactly seven years later.

I saw a star in the sky. It did not talk to me; it just stayed in front of me. I went inside home by saying Oh Allah. When I went out of the house in one of the summer days, I saw an eagle. It was sitting in a tree. It stared at me and I stared at it. I went inside of the house and told my husband about it. He said: There can not be an eagle in our village I understood that this eagle was seen only by me. I wanted to touch this bird and I approached it, but it suddenly disappeared. The tree where the eagle sat was wonderful tree. One day without any reason it fell down. I told my neighbor that one eagle has sat here and after it the tree fell down. The neighbor was amazed; he approached the tree and murmured some conjurations.

I usually see how somebody tells me about the future when I fall asleep. Everything they tell me comes true. When they tell me things, they tell me not to be afraid. But I am still afraid. In the evenings I can not go outside, I have to awaken everybody at home.

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<sup>25</sup> Information from respondents. This is not checked by Aigine.

***Külipa:***  
***The Influence of A Mazar on People is Diverse***

I live in Amanbaevo village, Kara Buura rai'on. I worked as an accountant for twenty years. At the moment, I heal people in Bei'ish center in Bishkek city.

I was sick for a while. During that time I saw in my dreams the spirits of Manas ata and Kanykei' apa. I've learned from them about diseases and how to cure them. Since then I became a healer. If I visit mazars I feel a big relief. One girl could not walk. She visited Ak Üi' mazar and she began to walk again. Nobody knows its quality and sanctity. If mentally sick people visit this mazar they become healthy again. Those who have stomachaches should go to doctors.

The influences of mazars on people differ. Some sick people after visiting a mazar feel better. Some get positive influence. Every mazar has its own features. For instance people in Ak Üi' mazar usually see the spirits of *mullahs*. In Manas ata mazar people see different ancient heroes. Spring mazars help those who have problems with eyes/vision. First of all one should believe in power of mazars, if he does not believe he gets nothing, no treatment and no support. I visit mazars such as Manas ata, Kochkor ata, mazars in Turkistan and Jambyl, Boo Terek and other mazars. Earlier I used to visit mazars every seven days. At the moment I visit only after I get an order in my dreams. Now I go once or twice in a month. It is good to visit mazars often. My grandfather used to make medicine from herbs. I am very happy that his skill was transferred to me.

Of course among *közu achyk* (*q.v.*) people there are many charlatans. But they will be punished soon...

I feel in the following way about some mazars:

Kochkor Ata is my great mazar.  
When one truly believes, then this mazar opens his eyes.  
This mazar is for seven people,  
It protects our children.  
My seven grandfathers have visited this mazar,  
They left here thousands of livestock.  
There was big tree in this mazar,  
Those who came here tied a piece of stockinet on its branches.  
Some who had no idea cut this tree,  
They thought it was a remnant of old thinking.  
One of those who cut the tree died there,;  
One of them became crazy.  
At that moment the weather changed,  
The tornado began.  
Loud noise was heard,  
The tree remained a mazar tree.  
If one sees the tree, he enjoys its beauty;  
He enjoys many beautiful birds on it.  
One gets real pleasure from this tree,  
One smells various wonderful herbs.  
I come and tell about this  
I ask Allah to help me in telling people about this tree in a proper way.  
So that many people can come here ,  
I ask Allah to give miracles.  
I am telling only truth.

I can not lie.  
If I lie I get a punishment from Allah; I am afraid of Allah,  
But do not know fully everything.  
I try to heal those who come to me.  
When I do it then I get energy from it,  
I am surprised at my dreams that come true.

## **MAZAR AND FAMILY**

### ***Törögeldieva Dariha: My Husband Is Against My Mission***

I would like to visit many mazars, but my husband is against it and I can not visit them. I do not have many problems with my health, thanks to God for that. If I start to have serious problems I will go to mazars without my husband's permission. He would understand me if he had problems with his health...

I do not heal people that come to me, Allah heals them. Most patients feel better after they visit me. When I would like to heal someone, Allah helps me. In healing patients, I follow everything that Allah tells me. At the beginning I was afraid, I thought how I am going to heal people, but my supporters, guardian angels, help me. I have no fear about that now. Not all patients become healthy, but probably they get healthy after visiting other healers.

Mazars play an enormous role in my personal life. Since I visit mazars, our family is prosperous and we live well. I was sick. Now I am not sick anymore. My children are healthy and happy.

My husband does not believe in religion. During the Soviet Union he was under a strong ideology, the ideology of atheism. I try to explain him about religion, but he does not understand and believe. He does not believe that God exists.

I go to mazars on Thursdays. Sometimes we go on Tuesdays. I visit whenever Allah tells me to visit.

A Mazar is a very sacred place. It has healed me from deadly disease. I was healed by the power of the mazars. When I was sick, I visited mazars and cried and asked for help. Allah felt sorry for me and he healed me. My little business is also very successful. It is a very small business, I make good profit. I am very thankful. This is all due to power of mazars.

When we go to mazars we take a whip, rosary, a book and stones with us. In my dreams I am told to bring these things.

People call me *bübü* sister. Usually people take their children to me. Insh Allah almost all who come to me become healthy again. This is not my achievement; this is the achievement of Allah.

### ***Orozmambetova Zuurakan: I Visit Mazars Because of My Son***

From his childhood, my son has been in the hands of my mother. When he was little there were no problems. When he reached the age of sixteen he started to have problems with his health. I took him to many *közu achyk* people. No one could help him. We learned that he possess *kyrgyzchylyk*. I took him to a *bübü* woman in Klyuchevka village. We visited her for about a year. It still has not helped us. Since he was not healed, I started not to believe in them. Allah excuses me. Then I started having health problems. I could not move for eight days. Relatives took me to local doctors; in the hospital I threw up right in front of the doctors. They said that I must be taken to the rayon hospital. There doctors could not help me

either. Then I was taken to a *közy achyk* person. Right after she saw me I felt better. Since then I started to accept *kyrgyzchylyk* and started visiting mazars once in a week. I stopped drinking alcohol. None of my children like alcohol. If they drink they get sick. In 1963 my son began to read *namaz* (*q.v.*) anonymously; he felt shy of people. Our family must not drink alcohol. If my children are sick I heal them myself.

***Jakshylykov Rysbek:***  
***I Feel Guilty Myself for My Daughter Illness***

My daughter is nineteen years old. She has been sick with epilepsy for sixteen years. Her attacks come suddenly and foam comes from her mouth; she cries and loses consciousness. She opens her eyes again only after a long time. I have nine relatives. My ancestors had *kyrgyzchylyk*. My oldest brother also has had epilepsy. Doctors could not help him. Then my mother heard that acceptance of *kyrgyzchylyk* might help and she accepted *kyrgyzchylyk*. After that my brother became healthy when he reached the age of twenty three.

I have taken my daughter to many well known *bübü* people. Then I heard about a Russian *bübü* person. I took daughter to that person. He asked thirteen thousand som and promised to heal my daughter with herbs. But it did not help us. Last year my daughter was accepted to a university, but because of illness could not continue her education and she came back home. I took her to another *bübü* woman. She said that we must take our daughter to a mazar on Thursday. We brought seven loaves of bread and other food there. We read Quran along the spring and left food in front of the graveyard of the Janybek hero. Since then we have seen some improvements in my daughter's health. We learned that our daughter has *kyrgyzchylyk*, but she has not accepted it.

A *mullah* from Kai'yingdy village has taken my daughter in order to heal her. He has healed her at his house. This has not helped either.

One of the clairvoyants has told that my daughter must visit with her grandmother. They have visited four mazars together.

My daughter is still sick and I feel myself guilty for that. Maybe God does not want to help her. Maybe some day he will help us. I try to believe sincerely in the power of mazars. I ask for forgiveness from Allah.

***Nazima Hadji Tursun uulu:***  
***I Am on the Way of Kyrgyzchylyk for the Sake of My Children***

I remember once my mother said: A *dubana* will come today; give him this flour. I had not paid much attention to the visits of *dubana*. I would play on the street with my friends. My mother knew beforehand about the visits of *dubana*; I was very surprised about that.

Because of my disease, I had to visit *bübüs*. I had to accept *kyrgyzchylyk*.

My first master was Aksana, a young girl. She said I need to make a *jar*. At the beginning I misunderstood her; I thought I must climb to some kind of hill. Aksana said I must come in the evening. I prepared thoroughly. I took an ablution and made seven loaves of bread. My first *jar* experience collapsed because I saw many spirits coming and I was scared of it. I wanted to run away, but one black man put me down. This is how my first *jar* experience was. Since that time I am on way of *kyrgyzchylyk*.

I have been visiting mazars for sixteen years. I used to go there with my master. Once I took two women to a mazar and I could not find the mazar that I had visited before. We searched for that place the whole day. Later I understood that mazars do not accept all people. Now I visit mazars alone and do *jar* (*q.v.*) alone as well.

All mazars are equal. It is not allowed to say this mazar is powerful and that mazar is weak. People go to all mazars with hope. I came to the way of *kyrgyzchylyk* for the sake of my children. Once, Aksana offered to go to a mazar with me. We went to Nariste mazar. There I saw a *dubana* taking ablution and I felt shy. I told two other women about it; they saw nothing. Later after taking ablution a *dubana* appeared and the other two women could see him. I understood that one must be very well prepared when going to mazars.

Once when we were on the way, my daughter ran to a spring. I went after her and saw how she was digging in the ground, after while water came up from the place where she dug. It happened in 1990. My daughter said this water is helpful for skin problems. She had skin problems and this water has helped her.

***Shai'dyldaeva Ashybüü:***  
***My Family Was Against Me***

When I started to visit mazars my mother-in-law was angry at me. She used to say to my husband that I became crazy after the car accident. My husband did not say to me anything about that. I have started not only visiting mazars but also healing children. Mother-in-law was against it as well. I have tried to stop healing children, but suffered from stopping. I started to heal people secretly, not showing my family. One day my oldest daughter suddenly lost consciousness. We all were worried. She was dying. Mother-in-law then told me to look at her, maybe I can help her. I took an ablution and looked at my daughter. Had I looked at her a bit later she might have died. This is how I saved my daughter. Since that case, my mother-in-law believes in my power. She gave her blessing to me. Since that time I visit mazars without any permission from the family members.

People bring their children most of the time. I take an ablution and heal them. Insh Allah, those who come to me go back home healthy.

My grandfather was a famous ruler. He had predicted many things. I think I inherited power of my grandfather. My master was Umut, a great *bübü* person. Now she lives in Talas. She also comes from our tribe. Supaira *bübü* is also one of the great *bübüs*. She also comes from our tribe. There are many famous *bübüs* and *mullahs* from our tribe.

Why do *bübüs* wear white clothes? White indicates white shroud. In Kyrgyz culture when somebody dies people put white cloth on his body. We wear white and that means we are people of both worlds.

***Kushubekova Rahat:***  
***Since I Have Been Visiting Mazars, We Have Success in Our House***

My first visit to a mazar was Manas ata mazar. I still go to this mazar. I do not visit other mazars much. I do not have time to visit mazars. I have little children and do not have a husband. I have many things to do at home. If go to mazars then who will take care of my family. I think this reason can be a good excuse.

I do not feel power in mazars. I do not see spirits. I am a beginner.

I have a master. Her name is Dariha and she lives in Jon-Aryk. She has taught me many things about how to behave in mazars. These are very difficult things. I have not participated in *jar* and *zikir(q.v.)* rituals and have no knowledge about them. Insh Allah I will learn step by step.

It seems that since I have been going to mazars, success has come to our house. I do not feel good when I do not go to mazars. At the moment I visit mazars sometimes.

I have learned in mazars about their power, *kyrgyzchylyk*, and how to respect people.

***Asylbübü:***  
***I Saved My Children by Visiting Mazars***

I was twenty five years old when I had an epileptic attack. Later I was married and had a child. After that, I was sick again. I did not accept *kyrgyzchylyk*, even when I was thirty two years old. When I reached the age of thirty five, I decided to visit mazars. Once, in my dream, I saw my five children hanged in a shed. Then I heard a voice: If you do not accept, I will kill your children. After that I accepted *kyrgyzchylyk*.

***Omuralieva Myrzabübü:***  
***My Family is Not Against***

At the beginning my family was against. Now they do not say anything because I was healed from mazars. How can they be against after that. If my students want to come with me I can freely go. We go to the graveyard of Manas on Thursdays.

***Tagaeva Nurgül:***  
***My Son is Against of My Mazar Visiting***

I was afraid, at the beginning, of healing children. Now am not afraid. My grandmother used to heal with the help of flowers. I do these kinds of rituals with no problems.

One of my sons studies in the Islamic school in Bishkek city. He believes in Allah and prays for *namaz*. I believe my son will be a great mullah. He is against mazar visiting. Mazar visiting is contradictory to Shariah.

If a spring near our house is cleaned it can turn into a mazar. But we also have a mosque near our house. I do not know what to do; Islam does not accept mazars.

***Ybralieva Marita:***  
***My Father's Atheistic Worldview Has Made Many Obstacles for Me***

I started visiting mazars because of my weak health. I have been sick since I was a child. Once I was put in a hospital. I did not like the treatment in the hospital. In the hospital I saw enigmatic things and wanted to go home when my parents visited me. Nurses did not let me go. I was sitting in my room and cried. Suddenly I saw seven tiny men; I was frightened. Next time when my parents visited me, I told that I want to go home. My father agreed. When I was leaving my room those men applauded to me, they were happy. I told my father about it, but he did not believe. When I came home I started seeing those tiny men in the evenings. I saw them every time I was left alone in my room. One day when I was alone, one boy came to me and sat on my shoulders. Somehow I moved out of my room to my parents. I wanted them to see this boy. But they did not see anything. They did not believe what I told them.

At the age of thirty, I accepted *kyrgyzchylyk*. My father was an atheist; this made it difficult for me to accept *kyrgyzchylyk* earlier in my life.

I can say that my family was against it and was not against it at the same time. My husband was very much against it at the beginning, but later he believed me. My parents were atheists and I guess I took for myself their *kyrgyzchylyk* as well. When my brother was sick, I did not heal him myself, I asked another *mullah* to heal him. He could not heal him and my brother died. Later I regretted that very much. I thought if had healed him myself, he might not have died. But it was very far from me; I live with husband in Talas and brother lived in Talduu Suu.

***Kubatbekova Kenjesh:***  
***They Said: If You Do Not Accept Kyrgyzchylyk, We Will Take Your Child***

My son fell seriously sick. I started to see strange things. I and my children stayed in a hospital three times. One day when I was in the hospital someone came to me and said: If you do not accept *kyrgyzchylyk*, I will take your children. I said I will accept it, but do not touch my children.

Later my daughter fell sick; she cried all the time. One man came out from a cupboard and said: When are you going to accept? If you are not going to do that, I will take your daughter right now. I screamed at him saying that I will not give him my daughter. At that moment my husband came home. The man from the cupboard disappeared. I told this to my sister and her husband. They cut a sheep and we made a meal. Then we slept two days.

Since I accepted *kyrgyzchylyk* and visit mazars, my children do not have problems with their health. God has helped me because I asked help from him.

***Chotueva Nurila:***  
***If I Do Not Come to a Mazar, I Have Health Problems***

Once I fell terribly sick. I thought I will become crazy. People have called me a crazy woman. Then I went to a mazar and was healed there. Now I heal those who have called me crazy.

My whole family is against me visiting mazars. But I must come to mazars, otherwise I suffer. I wrote a song when I suffered:

Allah says that he does everything he tells.  
He says he will give power.  
There is only one Allah; he says it is me, and I am Allah.  
Allah's way is great.  
He takes care of the mere mortal  
(The more you respect older people the better it is for you).  
When were you born?  
Take your mother's blessing.  
Allah the Creator gives power to those chosen  
I came to you to give the power  
(I gave my blessing to a woman. I wished her to be happy, to have children and feel children will care for you when you get old. Recently she has given birth to a child).  
When you say tell, I tell  
When you say stop, I stop  
One can not get away from death.  
If Allah wants it, it will be so.  
Allah tells me that I will fly soon  
I am thankful for my current life,  
But my family does not understand me;  
I wake up at nights  
And I cry.  
I had a misfortune during Orozo month.  
Allah said: Think during these thirty days; then Allah gave relief  
Allah helped me.  
Oh Allah you made me tired  
I cried but never forgot about you.

After the test time,  
 Now I believe I can work well  
 Last time I was in Booterek mazar  
 I remembered my ancestors  
 It would have been good if they could live forever.  
 An Angel came and told me that I should visit Manas Ordo  
*Oluya* came and said think.  
 I saw Jeti Üngkür mazar for seven days  
 Tell your hope  
 Sometimes I cry, sometimes I smile  
 Now I collect berries in all Talas.  
 I went to Ak Tai'lak asking for a blessing  
 Aziz angel gave his blessing  
 My grandfather supported me  
 My mother did not support me  
 (I was told to stop *kyrgyzchylyk*. Grandfather supports me. I visit his graveyard when I miss him and when I have difficulties).  
 You are covered with soil  
 You might be missing your house  
 If Allah wants, he will support and give energy  
 I came to your graveyard to tell my problems.  
 I came to you to ask for advice  
 Grandfather find a solution for me  
 Have your relatives made difficulties for you?  
 Do you know what loneliness means?  
 Have your close people betrayed you?  
 Have your relatives embarrassed you?  
 Were your relatives against you?  
 Have you had relatives that love you much?  
 Have you had relatives who could support you in paradise or hell?  
 (It was written about my relatives who do not support me).  
 My life is difficult  
 You granted me difficult life  
 Even if you died  
 I am with you; I can rely only on you  
 Your daughter is left with much pain  
 It is so pity I can not tell you my pain

## SANCTITY OF MAZARS

### *Asan Moldo: I Have Seen Many Phenomena*

I have seen many enigmatic events in Talas. I have been visiting mazars for more than ten years. The reason for that was my health. Doctors could not diagnose my illness. I could not speak. There is much to tell...

I was healed with the help of Allah. I used the wrong way of healing before. I took unnecessary medicine from hospitals. The medicine was not good for my body. That is why I had a disease in my stomach. Since I started taking ablutions and praying for *namaz* everything has changed. I believe in the existence of Allah not for a hundred percentages but

for two hundred percentages. I have experienced unbelievable stories which are now called legends.

When we meet *mullahs* and imams we tell them about these events. They say: Stop it, why are you making things up? These people have not, themselves, experienced these events, that is why they do not believe in them. Once I met a person who was born in 650; I flew with him. We met three times. He gave me a book. I forgot to ask his name. He was handsome old man with a white beard. At that time I had not read the book thoroughly. Later I learned much about it. We have crossed Kök Jar pass which could not be crossed by anyone else. He was on a camel. I asked where he got this camel and learned that this camel was born on the same day this old man was born; the camel died on the day this old man died. Overall we met three times. I have been waiting for him, but he never came back again. I hope we will meet each other in the future.

Do not ask what we did in Kök Jar, I can not tell you. I am not allowed to tell about it. I can only tell those things that I am allowed to.

I was a hooligan when I was little. I arranged all the parties in school, but I was not drunk. After high school I was accepted at a local technical school. I came back to the village after my mother was left alone. When I came to the village I fell sick. I spent ten years in hospitals. I have not attended friends. One day I met an old woman; she was eighty-six years old. She said: You can not be healed here; you should not have come here. She also told my mother about it. She said that even healthy people become unhealthy. It was a republican psycho-neurological hospital. I came out of the hospital and went to Kabyrstan in Bakyian. There was a graveyard. I looked at the graveyards and saw six men there. There was also a garden. In the garden there was a tunnel. One of the six men went into that tunnel. I felt that somebody was following me everywhere. I did not know who was following me, but I could talk to him; I asked where the old man went, he said that the tunnel is a bath room. Suddenly one young lady went to that tunnel too and came back. I wanted to see the face of this person but I could not see it. Other than that I did not see more. Six old men were eating food. I wanted to enter but they did not let me go in. I went out from the graveyard.

Later, on the way, I saw another person standing next to a house. This old woman was my neighbor in my village. She died a long time ago. She was holding a woman's jacket in her hands. She saw me and kissed me and shook my hands. She was so sad. I asked her what was wrong with her. She said she visited her house and saw her son drunk. I accompanied her to the house and said good bye. I came to my house. I could not sleep. Early in the morning I prayed for *namaz* and went to the house of that old woman. Her son was my friend. When I entered his house, I saw my friend drunk. I shouted at him: Idiot, what are you doing? Will you let your mother be relaxed and satisfied, I saw her spirit and she was so sad because she saw you drunk. My friend asked me not to shout. I left him. How can I not believe in Allah if I see spirits?

I thought to write down all the things that I have seen, but later decided not to do that, because not everyone may know about things that I have seen. There is Soltonkel peak on the mountain Echkilüü Too in Manas ordo. In 1990 I saw a volcano on that peak. Other people did not see it. I tell people what I saw and if they do not believe, then I do not prove it. I am surprised at myself sometimes. I grew up without parents and that is why God gave me this ability, to see things that other do not see.

I do not get sick. I am now forty three years old. I think life just has started and I am going to experience more interesting phenomena in the future. Another example, my brother died fifty two days ago. I knew when he was going to die, but could not tell his family about it. I told only my wife. You see, the problem is that I see many things but I can not tell them to everybody. I can share only with my wife and those who believe in Allah.

There was a foreteller girl in Leninopol. Her father was also foreteller. I lived in that village for two years and helped them. An old man, Kambar, a healer, also lived in that village. Once I went to his house. He saw me and directly said: What are you doing here among people; you are the owner of the mill. I was surprised by what he was saying. I never worked in a mill. He also said that the spirit of mullah Smanaaly is always with me. When Smanaaly was alive, he had some issues with the militia. When the militia followed him, he hid himself on the way. He suddenly disappeared with the help of conjurations. The militia could not find him

Here is another story. Once, I left my village and went to Russia for work. My family stayed in the village. One day in Russia I could not fell asleep. I had a dream about my sheep back in my village being stolen. Later when I returned home, my wife said that our sheep were stolen. I remembered face of the thief in my dream. I went to his house and found my sheep among his herd.

***E. G.:***

***Spending the Night in a Mazar Has Helped Me***

I have gone often to mazars since I was young kid. I could not speak until I reached the age of three, and could not walk until six. My mother took me to mazars hoping that somehow they would help me. I started to speak at the age three and walk when I was six years old. When I was seven I went to school. I could speak, but with difficulty and others called me a boy with a speech defect. I knew everything; I just could not speak and explain well.

We have visited many mazars; I do not know which mazar helped me.

***Arykpaeva Kalia:***

***This is the Home of a Prophet***

We were young when we visited Kara Moyun mazar for the first time. I and another three young women worked in the tobacco plant. We were told in that area one can find a mazar. This place was a cave. There was a big stone in the entrance of the cave. One of us went in and the stone squeezed her. We were scared and pronounced conjurations. After some time the stone let the woman go. Later we were told that if you go through this cave one would come up in Mecca.

I went to Bostektir mazar. It was a home of a prophet. There were six of us. We prayed there and performed Quran. All of us fell asleep. I saw in my dream that someone was telling me that prophets are coming. Suddenly I saw from the distance camels. I was expecting to see prophets. Later I was told that camels were prophets according to Buddhism.

***Kubatbek:***

***If You Follow the Rules of Mazar Visiting You Will Not Get Hurt***

I did not think much about mazars when I was young. One day I fell sick. Doctors told me that I have high blood pressure. I did not pay attention to that and drank alcohol sometimes. Later I met a person, Unut. He said to me: You should purify yourself; you are young. He brought me to Kalpa Ata mazar; there was a spring. He said that I should drink water from the spring and it would help me. This water was helpful for people with high blood pressure.

At the age of thirty five I started to pray for *namaz*. Since then I have been visiting mazars. My master has taught me many things. Who knows, if I had not met him I might have died.

Each mazar has its own features. One does not feel power in all mazars. After marriage we could not have children due to my health problems. I used to drink alcohol alot. Since I started to pray for *namaz*, I took my wife to Kalpa Ata mazar. In the evening after finishing performing Quran we heard noises. I was scared. My wife said that she did not hear anything. Insh Allah now we have one son and one daughter.

My first master, Unut, took me with him to Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. I have visited the following mazars: Ydyrys, Ak Terek, Boz Tekir ata, Booterek ata, Kochkor Ata. Before going to Kochkor Ata mazar I had a dream. In my dream something punched my hands. Next morning I did not want to go to the mazar, but had promised people before and so I had to go. When we were sitting in the mazar along the spring, fire fell down into the spring. I do not know if others saw it. When we were returning home by car, something happened to the engine and we had to push the car. While pushing the car, I hurt my hands. I understood that what I saw in my dream was a warning.

One should follow the rules when visiting mazars. Let me tell you a story about this. This is about two neighbors. One neighbor accuses the other of stealing his things from the house. The other one questioned him back by saying Why are you accusing without facts? Then the first neighbor said: f you have not stolen, go to Kalpa Ata mazar and hit it They went; the second neighbor hit the mazar; right after that he died.

An old man said to some guys that they should not urinate in the direction of Kalpa Ata mazar. He told them that this is a sacred place. But the guys did not listen to him. One of them looked at the mazar and urinated. Later he died...

This story is about a guy who has a family and drank alcohol sometimes. He was drunk on his horse. When he approached, his horse stopped walking. He tied his horse on a big tree and fell asleep, when he woke up his horse was tied on a little tree.

**M.D:**

***The Owner of the Mazar is a Frog***

The son of my classmate used to urinate in his bed, even when he was grown up, about eight years old. Doctors could not help him and he brought his son to Jamilia, a person who regularly visits mazars living in Jayilgan village. Jamilia said that his son will not have problems, if he visits a mazar. My classmate did not believe in it at the beginning, but they went there later. On the way my classmate heard how Jamilia was speaking to someone, she spoke: We are coming with the child They sat along the spring and drank water. They spent a night there. His son was with Jamilia.

Jamilia's people came in the midnight. They observed the child. Next morning they checked the place where their son slept. It was dry. Since that time he has no problems. The owner of that mazar is a frog.

I visited a mazar with Ashymbek mullah. Once when we were on the way to Manas Ata mazar, it started to rain heavily and we did not reach the mazar. If people go to mazars without belief then the mazar does not accept people. Among us there were some Russian people, maybe because of them we could not reach our destination.

***Abylova Abdyjapar:***

***I Believe that Mazars are Sacred Places***

I know Kulkojokmamat Yasavin mazar. Before visiting this mazar one should visit its master. Its master is Arslanbab. Kulkojokmamat was built by Aksak Temirlan. During the construction Kulkojokmamat would fall down every morning. They could not understand the reason for that. They asked Eshen *oluya* about the reason for the collapse. He said that they should first build in Arslanbab and then they can build here. So they built first in Arslanbab and later they built Kulkojokmamat.

There is a world famous mosque in Iran, not in Mecca. The height of this mosque is seventy meters. The former chairman of Kazakhstan Mr. Kunaev visited that mosque twice. Iranian mullahs have asked Mr. Kunaev about Kulkojokmamat. They wanted to visit that place. And they asked the chairman to invite them to Kazakhstan. The chairman had no idea about this place. Mullahs were disappointed that the chairman did not know about this place in his own country. When the president returned home he asked about that place and found out there was an army barracks located there. The barracks were resettled and Kulkojokmamat mazar was renovated. The renovation lasted for twenty five years.

When Kulkojokmamat Yasavi reached the age of sixty three, (the age of Prophet) he did not want live further and went underground. The underground place consisted of many rooms. In one of the rooms there was always candle lit. Mr. Kunaev was curious about its magic and wanted to demolish the place in order to find out how that candle was always lit. They demolished it, but did not find the secret. They have rebuilt everything but that candle does not light anymore. Visitors take soil from that place. There are many visitors to this mazar. There are hotels near this mazar. In Kyrgyzstan there are no such conditions for mazar visitors.

Every time we visit mazars we see their owners. For example, when I was in Ak Terek mazar I saw a tall man with a white beard and a snake.

Here is another story. There was a girl. She believed in Allah. Her father was against her reading Islamic literature. He said to her that there is no God; do not read these things. The girl listened to her father and stopped learning about Allah. She starts to have health problems. Her father has taken her to many places but no one could help her. The girl's condition was deteriorating everyday. The father of the girl had a dream once. In his dream an old man with beard told him that he did allow his daughter to learn more about Allah and that he does not believe in Allah; that is why he will take this daughter. The father asks for forgiveness, but it did not help; the girl dies. Since then the father believes in God, in mazars and in *kyrgyzchylyk*. I believe in the power of mazars.

***Shayildaeva Aishabübü:  
I Was an Atheist Before***

I used to scream that there is no God. Because I was *vojatyi*, my boss at my work had taught me so. When my parents would hear about this, they would get angry at me. I used to tell them that if there is a God, please show him to me. I wanted to study in university but failed the entrance exams. The next year I failed the exams again. Then I started to work for the tobacco plant. Once, when we were driving from Kara Moyun, we had a car accident; all the passengers, except me, died. Since then, I started to have constant headaches. Doctors could not help me. Then I went to *bübüs* and *bakshys*; they said I should visit mazars. Since I have started to visit mazars, I have had no headaches. I tried to pass the exams for a university, this time I made it. Now I visit mazars regularly.

***Ybralieva Marita:  
Not All the Secrets of Mazars Must Be Known***

American astronauts have researched a black hole in the universe. This hole moves constantly. If this thing comes to the earth, it can destroy everything. We can be saved only with help of God.

Doomsdai' is written in Quran. That is why we follow all the rules in Islam.

Not all the secrets of mazars must be known to people, some must always stay secret and mysterious.

Our heroes were very smart. Their bodies were buried so that no one could find them. No one can find the bodies of those heroes. That is why our land is very sacred and mysterious.

***The Chapter was translated by Kanybek B. Konokbaev***

## **MAZARS AND PEOPLE.**





## Chapter Five

# RITUALS PRACTICED IN MAZARS

### Foreword

Rituals are one of the inseparable parts of the Kyrgyz culture. There are many types of rituals.

Every ritual has its own meaning which comes from century to century, to its place in Kyrgyz culture, to its wisdom. Those rituals can be strange for other nations but they are enigmatic and have qualities.

No one can say the exact number of rituals that the Kyrgyz have. Unconsciously one does not notice how many rituals he practices during the day. Rituals in Kyrgyz culture are divided by gender; the following ritual can be an example, “forty prohibitions for girls,” this saying is used towards females. By saying “I am telling to the door, listen to me my daughter-in-law,” our wise aged men teach their children and grand children the proper way of living, at the same time those men do not notice that they are using rituals. Ritual rules such as “Do not put a broom vertically,” “do not pour out water during the night,” “do not cut fingernails in the evening,” “do not leave food/meal uncovered during the night,” “do not piss in the direction of Mecca,” “do not do laundry on Fridays,” “when someone visits your home daub your child’s forehead with soot,” and “a sleeping place must be prepared so that a person’s feet are not in the direction of Mecca,” are all household rules considered to be rituals.

Rituals conducted in *mazars* (*q.v.*) help in establishing the relationship between supernatural forces and people.

Every ritual has its beginning and reason. For instance, old man Samankul relates mazar Ak Tai’lak with the ritual of sacrifice. According to his words: A long ago there was one prophet. God wanted to check him and ordered him to sacrifice his son. The prophet talked about this to his son and the son agreed with the will of God. The son said to his prophet father, “When killing me, I might resist and look in your eyes with anger, that’s why you should tie hands and cover my eyes.” After a moment the son said again “no, do not tie my hands and cover my eyes, God may think that you are killing me with force. “Let me be free, I will endure the pain.” The father and son said good bye to each other, then, a knife fell down from the sky. The father tried to kill his son but the knife could not cut because it was blunt. Then a white sheep fell down from the sky, so this sheep was sacrificed. From this time on, making sacrifice became a ritual.

One of the most practiced rituals in mazars is *tülöö* (*q.v.*). *Tülöö* in Kyrgyz culture means ‘*tilöö*’, which means wishing for something. There are many kinds of wishes, for instance: “wishing for prosperity,” “wishing for rain,” “wishing for health,” and “wishing for improvement after some kind of misfortune or disaster.” People think that a good wish is already half of happiness and its full realization depends on God.

‘*Tülöö*’ and ‘*tilöö*’ are different only in one letter but may have different meanings. ‘*Tülöö*’ means throwing away old things and coming to a new thing and new life. ‘*Tülöö*’ is responsible for the relationship between living people and dead (spirits), between normal life and supernatural forces, and between people and nature. ‘*Tülöö*’ helps to realize wishes. For

instance, peace for living people may be accomplished with the help of spirits and spirits are in need of living people's remembering. Mazars help to build these relations between dead and living people. There were 430 'tülöö' conducted in Manas Ordo mazar in Talas between April and October of 2004.

Omens accompany us from our early childhood until our adult life. For example, omens such as "if a cat crosses your road, then something bad will happen to you," is deeply believed by many. This and other omens are deeply integrated into Kyrgyz culture and it is hard to explain how it has happened. For example, two rituals, "*Kurmandyk chaluu*," (sacrificing) and "*Tülöö*," are considered non Islamic but every one who considers himself a Muslim in Kyrgyzstan for sure practices those rituals.

Basically, we are living under old rules, our lives look like an old road. This road may disappear if we do not keep our rituals. If this road of life disappears then people may die. Movement means life. To maintain this movement we should preserve our rituals. *Bübü* (q.v.) *Bübüshai*' Anarbekova thinks that the most important ritual is to get up early in the morning and pray to God.

Normal people are those who maintain and preserve rituals and our culture from century to century.

Speaking more about our given issue, we can take a close look at some rituals which are closely connected with mazars. One ritual, such as *dem saluu* (q.v.) can be conducted differently in one mazar. Two well experienced *bübüs* can practice this ritual differently with their groups. It is impossible to say which one is correct and which one is incorrect, because both *bübüs* are well experienced and have practiced this ritual for a long time and they are respected by people for their success. Thus both ways are correct and useful. People appeal to different *bübüs* depending on their needs.

One more thing to say is that there are combinations of rituals. The purpose and ways of conducting rituals are different but they all are interrelated with each other. Maybe, all of them when put together may mean something or have integrity. To understand something about these rituals we suggest considering materials and observations of the Aigine Foundation on rituals.

### **WHAT DOES *KURMANDYKKA CHALUU* MEAN?**

According to the first observation, one can say that there is no difference in definitions from soviet literature and from information collected in Talas. *Kurmandykka chaluu* means sacrificing livestock and dedicating them to God. The object of sacrifice is livestock.

The attitudes of old and modern generations toward rituals are different. Nowadays *kurmandykka chaluu* is one of most widely spread rituals. According to the words of *shai'yk* (q.v.) Asyrakunov, two Prophets bring livestock for sacrifice. One of them kills his favorite animal, the other one slaughters unloved animal. God accepts the sacrifice of the first prophet and denies the sacrifice of the second prophet. Do not bring your unloved livestock for sacrifice, it will not be accepted by God anyway. One should bring or give to God only his favorite things and livestock.

Nowadays, *kurmandykka chaluu* is considered as a ritual but very much interrelated with "*Tülöö*". These two rituals have different roots but are very close to each other, i.e., killing

livestock and dedicating it to God. Killing livestock is the main constituent of the “*Tülöö*” ritual. The difference between these two can be the ways of conducting the sacrifice. Bringing livestock to sacrifice can be done during certain times or days, for instance during Islamic holidays. “*Tülöö*” is done after some kind of occasion, be it bad or good. “*Tülöö*” is conducted in order to wish for something.

### **WHAT IS *TÜLÖÖ*?**

“*Tülöö*” means to wish for something and pray to God and gathering people and giving them food. Previously in history, conducting “*Tülöö*” basically meant asking for rain and life for livestock from God. Usually, people visit certain places for praying. People look in the direction of Mecca and bring sacrifices (kill livestock).

#### ***How Tülöö is Conducted?***

##### ***The Tülöö, Which Was Conducted in Zulpukor Mazar***

“*Tülöö*” was conducted in the house of the *shayikh*. Burul, who is a *bübü*, conducted *Tülöö* for her twin brothers. She gathered people, read the Quran and wished for prosperity for her brothers. Four women, the *shai'yk* and the driver participated in this event. All of them looked in the direction of Mecca, read the Quran and killed a sheep. They sang verses from the Quran with closed eyes and dedicated it to the spirits of dead parents and relatives. All women wore white headscarves and long skirts. They spoke to each other very respectfully. During this process no additional things were used.

##### ***The Tülöö, Which Was Conducted in Manas Ordo***

There are father, mother, daughters, sons and daughters in law, grandchildren and uncles in this event. Their ages range from 9 to 70 years. They are all happy and enjoying the purity and beauty of the nature in Manas Ordo. They are talking about Manas, about his greatness. They are modestly dressed. By profession, they are: teacher, doctor, driver, pensioner, school students, college student, and home workers. The total number of all people in this event is about 25. Dishes and plates are their main instruments. The event is taking place very smoothly. They drink tea at the beginning, and then they go outside, pray and kill a sheep dedicating it to God and spirits. Daughters in law help to wash and cut meat into pieces. Sons make a fire, put a pot with water on it and put meat into the water. All this procedure is managed by grandfather Asirally.

#### ***Why is Tülöö Conducted?***

The reason for *tülöö* according to Burul: “One of the twin sons of my mother died right after coming to this world; another one died after one year. I suffered from disease after disease and could not get healed; I did not know that I had *kyrgyzchylyk* (*q.v.*) qualities. Then in my dreams I was called to come to the mazar, I told my master about it. I told him that I practice *zikir* (*q.v.*). The Quran was never read for the children after their deaths. This was also a big burden for my mother; she had many kinds of illnesses. She is healthy now, this happened after her visit to the mazar and reading the Quran and dedicating this to the spirits of her dead children.

#### ***The Reason for Tülöö***

People who conducted the *tülöö* wished for prosperity and peace from God, and read the Quran for the spirit of Manas.

### WHAT IS ZIKIR?

According to the definition of *shai 'yk* Jengish Kudakeev, *zikir* is a process when one makes *kelme* (*q.v.*), praises God, visits mazars and wishes for something there from God.

According to *bübü* Chachykei' Chongmurunova, *zikir* means speaking and calling loudly to God and wishing for spiritual relief and the prosperity of a nation.

During the Soviet times, the official definition for *zikir* was: The gathering of *dubanas* (*q.v.*) and mullahs where they loudly praised God for a long time<sup>1</sup>.

#### *How is Zikir Conducted?*

##### *The Zikir, Which Was Conducted in Nyldy Ata Mazar*

Observations of Guljan Kudabaeva, the student of American University, Department of cultural anthropology: There are the following participants in the event: *shai 'yk* Jengish Kudakeev (the main participant), five people who came to the mazar (people of 24, 40, 44, 46 and 70 years of age), three women, one male mullah, one *bübü* and other ordinary people from the village. They are very happy. Their behavior is very smooth; they sit and do not move. Their appearance and dress are typical village style. During the whole process the *bübü* woman holds a rosary. Others do not have anything in their hands.

*Shai 'yk* Jengish stands on the stone Kóz Bulak, which is located near a spring, and asks politely for the mullah to sing. When he is singing in Arabic, *shai 'yk* Jengish speaks *kelme* wishing for peace and health for those who came to this event. During this moment *shai 'yk* Jengish starts crying. At the end of the event everyone washes their faces with water from the spring.

This event was conducted on the big flat stone that is located on the mountain.

#### *Discussion between Guljan and Jengish mullah:*

- Why when you practice *zikir* do you start crying?
- Because its Thursday today. In this day spirits come down to the earth. When we do *zikir*, they become happy because we recall them. When I started *zikir* so many spirits came, there was no space for them here. This means that the wishes of people who came to this event will be heard by the spirits. All of us came here with pure intentions, everyone is kind. Everybody thanked God. Everyone's wish will be realized. For the first time I saw so many spirits, when I saw them I cried.
- Others were whispering something, what did they speak about?
- They spoke their own *kelme* and wishes.
- One woman sat and held a rosary, what does that mean?
- The rosary helps to count the quantity of *kelme*. This is one of the ways of respecting God.
- Why do they cry?
- I cry so that Allah can hear me, I ask him to help these people.

#### *Zikir in Zulpukor Mazar*

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<sup>1</sup> Kyrgyz tilinin tushundurmo sozdugu. Book #1, Mektep. 1984. P. 389

From the observation of Nazgul Asanakunova, student of Talas university: “Old lady Toktosh and 3 other women went to a *qümböz*, they were a mother with two daughters who came to conduct *tülöö*.” The oldest daughter is Burul, who possesses *kyrgyzchylyk* and who has been visiting Zulpukor mazar for more than 30 years. An old woman Toktosh is her master.

At the entrance of the *qümböz*, Toktosh read the Quran, then she made a message for the mother and for the youngest daughter and they entered the *qümböz*. Inside of the *qümböz* they touched the wall on the right side with both hands and foreheads and wished things from God. They bowed three times in front of every door. Burul took soot from the hole and put it on the faces of her mother and sister. Then they sat in the middle of the building and looked in the direction of the building’s door. The door of this construction was put in the direction of Mecca. Old lady Toktosh and Burul sat with their whips. Their rosaries were on their necks. Toktosh read the Quran. Then they washed themselves and started doing *zikir*. Toktosh began first to do *zikir*. When they were singing *zikir* my body was excited and I wanted to sing too. Singing *zikir* was like the singing of musicians. During this singing it seemed that all animals in nature were listening to the song, this gave a great energy to the *zikir* singers. The *Zikir* singers were so excited.

*Zikir of Toktosh Apa [Apa means Mother]*

*Bismillah* (30 times)

*Alhamduallah* (5 times)

*Astafr Allah* (2 times)

*Subahan Allah* (16 times)

*Allahii'* (2 times)

Creator of all trees is Allah

He came to us

If you come, there is no harm from you, Allah

You are our luck, Allah

Let us be healthy, Allah

Your voice is like Azan, Allah

White master came to this place

Be on a white camel, Allah

Wear a white hat, Allah

Our dear Hadji

Make us prosperous

Our dear creator

Our gracious Allah

Please help us, Allah

There is only one Almighty

Welcome, Allah, Allah with heavy baggage

A white horse might come to you, Allah

Wise Allah

You are intelligent

You have a book on your hand

You have a bow on your neck

Mullah came to this place

Dear Mullah Allah

Please be patient, Allah

Let *Manas* (*q.v.*) protect us, Allah

Improve our work and life  
You have a sword on your hands  
I am screaming father  
Let *Bakai'* (q.v.) protect us, Allah  
Fix our failures, Allah  
Please keep safe our nation, Allah  
Be a shield for our nation  
You are wisdom  
What can I do?  
My nation is good, I am bad, Allah  
The nation which travels to other nations is safe, Allah  
If ducks leave, the lake will stay, Allah  
Who overcomes in this false life, Allah?  
Who remains in this little world?  
There will be blood, Allah  
There will be war, Allah  
I ask from you, Allah  
I am poor  
I do not have a mother  
I do not have a father  
There is no one who can protect me  
Allah is the one who can heat me  
Do not be angry, Allah, please be patient  
You are a mullah  
I ask from you, Allah  
Destroy our enemies now  
I came to Zulpukor  
Oh almighty, Allah  
I was blessed by my lord  
Oh almighty, Allah  
I was blessed by Mullah Burk  
Mullah gave me his rosary  
Last year angels came  
This year devils came  
There are many thefts  
There are many deaths  
There is a devil inside us  
I ask from you, Allah  
Show us the right direction  
Otherwise there are many deaths.  
I ask you from my heart  
You are many, I am alone, Allah  
Oh, dear almighty  
Please, do not hurt mere mortal, Allah  
If you want, take my soul  
Do not take the souls of my folk  
I called *Shei'its* (q.v.)  
Did you, *Shei'its* come?  
Parents came  
Children came  
Please bless them, Allah

Mother is crying  
Children are crying  
Dear Allah  
Please, bless them  
I do *zikir* always

Then she said: “*Bismillahi Rahmoni Rohiim*”, Burul stood up. Burul started singing:

Allah Iy (3 times)  
Allah (4 times)  
There is one Allah and one universe  
I wore a hat, Allah  
I have a grief, Allah  
I take a whip, Allah  
I take a rosary, Allah  
I am on your way, Allah  
Today is your day  
I ask from you a blessing  
The great creator, Allah  
Creator of 18 universes  
Please listen to the wishes of mere mortals  
Please give your blessing  
Spirits, please support us  
Please improve our lives  
Do not let someone die  
Make lives of relatives easy  
You have a bow on your neck, Allah  
You have a book on your hand, Allah  
Grandfather, please support us  
Please protect us from someone’s curse  
Please help us to get out of the hole, from where we cannot go out ourselves  
Please support spirits  
Your way is holy, Allah

Then Toktosh, the master stood up and said 3 times *Bismillahi rahmoonni rahiim*, 4 times Allahiy and started singing *zikir*:

Allahiy (2 times)  
Spirits and Allah teach us  
Improve our works  
Mother came here  
Children came here  
Angels bless us  
Put us on the right way  
We have done everything you have asked  
Please bless us  
Mother came here  
I am your slave  
Please bless  
Angels, I ask from you blessing  
Please destroy our enemies  
I am looking at Mecca  
Angels, be patient, please

White universe, White universe  
*Amen, Amen*  
Let my mullah grandfather protect me  
Let spirits of the dead protect us  
Let living people protect us  
Let the almighty protect us  
Let great giants protect us  
Let God improve your lives  
Oh, our Creator, Allah, please protect poor people  
*Amin, Allahu Akbar!*

After *zikir*, Toktosh read the Quran and everybody thanked God and went to the guardian's house. It was clear that more information was needed from master Toktosh, she had done the whole event herself.

- If you do not mind, could you please tell me what you did when doing *zikir*?
- I can not tell this, it should stay inside of me. If I tell I will be sick for ten days. I saw the spirit of the mazar, *ee*; I saw spirits of my own people. I called my mullah grandfather Jankoroz. When great people come I do not know what to do. All people know me. I have been *bübü* for more than 32 years. The mazar is very powerful. (She did not want to tell more).

### ***Zikir of Bübüs and Bakshys (q.v.) in Talas Region***

*Observation of Begaim Dooronbekova, senior student of Talas University:*

There were 16 people in this event (5 men and 11 women).

They tied up cotton on a wooden branch and lit 7 candles. They put four big shawls in front of them. They locked the doors and windows, and turned off all electric lights. The entrance space was free, no table-cloth. They did it for the spirits, so that when they came they could get through without any problems. Old men Jengish and Japarkul sang *zikir* until the candles burned to the end:

*Bismillahi rahmooni rohim*  
*Subhan Allah (q.v.) (33 times)*  
*Alhamdulillah Subhan Allah (33 times)*  
*Astatip Allah Subhan Allah (33 times)*  
*Allahu Akbar Subhan Allah (33 times)*  
*Laa Ilaho Illaloo (40 times)*  
*Ih Allah (55 times)*  
*(Bübüsada eje [sister])*  
Allah, Allah, Allah, protect us  
Oh Creator protect us (3 times)  
Friends of Manas  
I will stay in mazar  
I am crying staying on the way  
I am a traveler  
No one knows the length of his life  
I was wondering around for a long time  
I sweated much  
I saw white and black  
Now I ask treatment from God

May youth be faithful  
Give always justice to people in Cholponbai' village  
Please bless people in this village  
Dear angels, give me power  
Greet people a thousand times where you have spent a night  
Let you be healthy  
Get old together with your partner  
Be respected old man  
Hear what I said to you  
“Amen, Amen, Amen, give to our folk peace, take care of poor people, we thank you God,  
please hear our wishes”

Old lady Burul started singing *zikir*:  
*Laa illoho illollo*  
Allahi (3 times)  
I have been sick  
I can not get rid of this disease  
*Aldahi aldam (q.v)* (2 times)  
Place of birth of Chatkal, my father, is a good place  
I was born there  
My mother has died there  
This is my motherland and my folk  
My mother has died  
You have given a tool  
It's always with me  
Let my mother and father be around me  
I am a poor old person  
I have bad health.  
I trust my soul to the Creator  
If you give me prosperity, I will take it  
Let spirits of ancestors protect a place when I have spent a night  
When I was young  
Someone came to me  
He pronounced my name  
I was wondering in Mazars  
I was praying for spirits of the dead  
I was given eyes to see  
I was given words to say  
I was given power to learn about nature  
I was given consciousness  
Now we have difficult times  
Creator, help us to preserve our lives  
Help our folk to be safe  
I will be a slave for you  
I wish my children to be healthy and prosperous  
When we die  
We will pray in another world always

(Old Lady Burul stopped and Japarkul continued):  
*Laa illoho illollo* (3 times)  
There is only one creator Allah

We worship you  
 We wish from you only good  
 Adahi ((3 times)  
 There was a great night  
 We wish only good tonight in Talas, in this mazar  
 Spirits of all ancestors came  
 Adahi (3 times)  
 We wish only good wishes tonight  
 We ask only for good from all who came this night  
 Children, let the future be on your side  
*Amen*, oh Creator, we are staying in this great night in this sacred mazar in Talas. All people with supernatural powers are gathered here tonight. We are all doing *zikir* at brother Kemel's house. Let our roads always be prosperous.

*Bübüsada* asked Japarkul to read the Quran. Japarkul read the Quran.  
 "We turned on lights and prepared to leave, we could do *zikir* the whole night, but we need to go now" - said people.

### ***Zikir at Boztekir Mazar***

*Observation of Ai'dana Temirbekova, student of Talas University:*

*Bübüsada* prayed, sang *zikir*, she wished for health, prosperity and peace from God. She is 51 years old, next to her was her husband, he is 60 years old. *Bübüsada* has supernatural powers and can heal people. Her husband is on a pension. *Bübüsada* was walking around, and singing loudly. Her husband did not do anything, he just paid attention to his wife. *Bübüsada* was dressed in a white jacket; on her neck she had rosary, on one hand she had a whip. She prayed in front of a stone and touched her forehead to this stone 3 times. This place is located in a high mountainous region.

### ***Why is Zikir Done?***

*Discussion between bübü Chachykei' Chongmurunova and Nazira Jusupova, student of Talas university:*

- When I am in the Mazar, I sing *zikir* and read the Quran. For example, there is *zikir* in the Quran. *Zikir* is read with the help of the Quran, that's why people call it *zikir* of the Quran. For instance, when doing morning *namaz* I sing *zikir* of the Quran. I sit in the direction of Mecca, I hold a rosary and say the name of God. The purpose of *zikir* is to clean your spiritual life and your body. But making *zikir* is done for people.
- When do you practice this ritual?
- Early in the morning, during the first *namaz* time, sometimes at midnight when I visit the mazar. This is can be done at home or at the mazar.
- Who are the participants of this ritual?
- *Bübüs* and people who suffer from illnesses.
- Should your voice be loud?
- Yes, they must sing very loud.
- How long does it take to do this ritual?
- In mazars it starts around 2 in the morning and ends at 4 in the morning.
- How long have you been practicing this ritual?
- Since 1981.

### ***Zikir Is a Very Good Thing***

Discussion between traditional doctor Japarkul Rai'ymbkov and Damira Imanalieva: *Zikir* is a very good thing. The Quran says that *zikir* and reading the Quran can purify a person. We are Muslims and we must not stop *namaz* (*q.v.*). If there are 6 billion people on earth then there are 300 billion devils. Devils are everywhere, on earth and in the sky. We can be safe from them if we remember God and read the Quran. Some people say that they follow everything that the Quran dictates but they are not real Muslims, one should always remember Allah. It is written in the Quran that one should be away from evil actions. When we kill livestock, eat and do many other things we must always say "*Bismillah*". If one does evil things it will be kept for 40 days. When one visits, he should always remember God.

### WHAT IS JAR?

According to *bübü* Chachykei' Chongmurunova, *Jar* means saying words from the Quran and inviting spirits who support you. *Jar* is a force of God. One *jar* equals meeting with God 100 times. Every living thing is related to God. *Jar* is done only by people with supernatural forces.

#### *The Reason for Jar Jar Brings Relief*

*Discussion between Nazira Jusupova and Burul Kojobekova:*

*Jar* is a very good thing. *Jar* brings relief. I can not heal all people, for those who can not get healed I do *jar*. I think after *jar*, one's evil might go away and he can feel better.

Why *jar* is powerful; when we light candles the spirits come and we pray and worship Allah. The whole night I am with people who suffer from illnesses and in the morning they feel better. People with supernatural powers feel better too, if there are some among them. There are many cases when people were cured after *jar*. There was one case. Three years ago in Bishkek, I did not work, I was a housewife. One day one young lady came to me. She was sick. She had been in Moscow's hospitals. Doctors here in Kyrgyzstan checked her thoroughly but could not make a right diagnose for her illness. She had problems in the area of her brain, probably a tumor. She had to take much medicine but there was no effect. So for 6 years doctors could not make a right diagnosis for her. Then she came to the grave of the hero Manas. There one old lady said that this girl is sick and asked if she has visited mazars. She answered that she has visited mazars and visited many *bübüs*. Then the old lady recommended that she visit me. The ill girl came to me, she told all about her problems and asked me to help her. I tried to heal her but it did not help her, then I decided to make *jar* for her, this was the last chance. I made *jar* for her in the morning and again it did not help her. I decided to make it for the second time in the evening. I asked other people to hold her hands and make her jump when I did *jar*, so that I could drive away all evils from her body. She was heavily sick and I thought I might be unhelpful. I started *jar* for the second time, I started screaming "*Ai'lai', oi'loi', hai't, hai't'*"; people made the sick girl jump and I hit her with my whip. Her forehead was so red, I asked myself if it was real or it just seemed so to me. Then I saw on her head two dark men, these men had hats on their heads. This was the first time that I saw such kind of things. These men had tails. The men attacked me but I beat them with my whip and ran away. This was early in the morning. I drove away these devils. When these devils disappeared, the sick girl fell down on the floor. Then we had a rest. Five-six people made *jar* that day. I was thinking that if the girl will not get healed then I would do *jar* one more time. But the next day she opened her eyes. She asked: "Where am I? I am very hungry I want to eat." I healed her for 3-4 more days and she became healthy. I said to her parents that she must be careful because her illness might come again. They said they will

come to me often. But they never come. This means she is not sick anymore. I've heard that she studies in a university.

- Why do you do *zikir* first then *jar*?
- I light seven candles, I do *zikir* and after I do *jar*. I say to God that I am not powerful enough to heal people and I ask from him more power. I start *jar* when the candles are finished burning. All spirits come to me.  
During *zikir* we called Allah.
- At what time do you start *jar*?
- From midnight until 5 in the morning. At end of *jar* the ill person wishes for his health. When I do *jar* I do not make wishes for myself. Nowadays all *bübüs* make wishes for themselves. Only a really ill person should be present during *jar*. If healing does not help a person then *jar* is needed.

*Jar* of Burul:

*Laa illoha illallah* (4 times)

*Ak haldam, ak haldam*

*Ak haldam, ak haldam*

Creator Allah,

Help us

*Aldafu, Aldafu,*

Support us

*Aldafu, Aldafu*

Great Allah

*Aldafu, Aldafu,*

Give us your permission

*Aldafu, Aldafu*

*Laa illoha illallah* (3 times)

Dear Creator,

We lit 7 candles for you

*Aldafu, Aldafu*

I called the spirit of the hero Manas

*Aldafu, Aldafu*

Oh dear creator, Allah

*Aldafu, Aldafu*

Listen to us this day, make our wishes come true

*Aldafu, Aldafu*

I called the spirits of great people

Please, help us

*Aldafu, Aldafu*

Please help these mere mortals

If they have a curse

Please take it away

*Aldafu, Aldafu*

Make them prosperous and successful

*Aldafu, Aldafu*

Make their wishes come true

*Aldafu, Aldafu*

*Laa illoha illallah* (3 times)

## ***We Practice Jar Saluu for Relieving Pain***

*Discussion between Nazira Jusupova with bübü Atamkul:*

- We do *jar* for purifying our souls and relieving pain. Those who do it really from the depth of their hearts can really relieve pain. One should be very sincere in doing *jar*. Most people are not sincere in doing this. They just talk and talk.

*Jar* of Atamkul:

*Laa illoha illallah*

*Povedinim Kai 'rilloh*

There is one *bübü* out of a thousand

He came with his white horse

*Laa illoha illallah*

He sings very well

He has his power

He has his angel

He has house, mazar

His mazar is big

He executes the task of Allah

### ***What About What Is Said in Jar?***

#### ***I Sing About My Life in Jar***

*Discussion of Nazira Jusupova with bübü Burul Asyrankulova from Ak Tai 'lak mazar:*

- I sing about my life during *jar*. I sing about my past illnesses and problems. I sing about mazars that I visited and what I saw there. These things automatically come when I start singing *jar*. Some people sing memorized things.
- Must *jar* be sung only in a mazar?
- It can be sung at home as well. But it is better to do it in a mazar.

### ***When it is Better to Practice the Jar Saluu?***

On Tuesday, Thursday and Friday.

*Discussion between Nazira Jusupova and bübü Kyrkpai' kzy:*

*Jar* is sung when people go to bed to sleep. There can be a connection with Allah during the calm and quiet night. We wear only white clothes. We make wishes and invite spirits and forces, and then we sing *zikir*. Children can see invisible things and feel them and they may get scared by them. *Zikir* is sung on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. Tuesday is the day of *Umai' Ene* (q.v.), spirit of an old wise lady. People come usually in spring and autumn because during these seasons people are often sick. The majority of visitors are women.

First of all, the house where *jar* is sung must be cleaned. It should be cooked breads for spirits in this house. *Jar* singers sit facing in the direction of Mecca. First, the Quran is read; it is dedicated to the spirits. Then lights are turned off. There are 9 candles lit. If the home owners are sincere, candles will burn well, if they are insincere then candles burn badly. The Quran is read again. Every person sitting there stays in front of the candles and makes wishes and touches their faces with their hands 3 times. All should dress in white clothes. When the candles are finished and it is completely dark people start singing *jar*.

### ***Condition of a Person during Jar Saluu***

*Asylbü:* A person who does *jar saluu* cries. He invites sprits and supernatural forces and talks with them. After *jar saluu* this person feels relief. Many items are used for *jar*, for example, a knife, a whip or a rosary.

### WHAT IS SHAM JAGUU?

*Some bübüs in Talas gave some explanations:*

*Chachykei' Chongmurunova:* Candle lighting helps to invite angels, to worship Allah and to make a wish.

*Marita Ibralieva:* This means obedience to God, angels, sprits and supernatural forces.

*Büai'sha Anarbekova:* This means asking the future of sick people from angels and forces.

*Jumadin Kadyrov, head of the printing trades "Bii'iktik":* The candle lighting ritual has been used from ancient times. A candle is especially dedicated to the spirit of a certain dead person.

This ritual is widely spread among other nations but it does not exist among real Muslims. The Prophet Muhammed prohibited this ritual. Islam does not accept this ritual.

### *Why Is the Ritual of Sham Jaguu Done?*

*Discussion between bübü Burul Kojobekova and Nazira Jusupova:*

- I have dreamt something special, that's why I lit a candle. In my dreams I have been in the world of the dead. One person took me to a room, there were 3 boxes; in the first box there were the remains of seeds, in the second some other remains and in the third box the remains of bread. That person was compelling me to eat those things. I could not eat the remains of the seeds, they stuck in my throat. The compelling person said "all these are your sins." So I could not eat anything in those boxes. I did not see Allah. The person asked me "you do not see Allah?" I said, "show me." He said, "look at the sky." I looked at the sky, but there was nothing special, there were only clouds. He showed a second sky, I saw there the moon and the stars, then he showed me a third sky, I saw a huge burning fire. I screamed and the person closed the sky. This person said, you see, what you saw in the third sky was Allah. Since then I always sing *zikir* and *jar*, and I light candles for Allah. For example, I light 7 candles in someone's house and read the Quran and invite spirits and I ask them to purify the house's owners. I make all the possible good wishes for this house (health, prosperity, wealth). After this the house is cleaned. I ask Allah to support this house and those who live there. This house is clean for seven years. Everyone will be healthy.

### *Procedure of Sham Jaguu*

*Bübü Chachykei' Chongmurunova:*

I light 7 candles for women who can not get pregnant. In the evening I take those women to an ant's hive. Seven loaves of bread are brought, The Quran is read and then 7 candles are lit. While the candles burn the women make wishes. If the candles burn fully then the women's wishes will come true. If the candles do not burn fully, seven new candles must be lit.

This ritual helps women to have the ability to get pregnant. In this ritual angels are called, through them one can make a connection with God. They go to God and tell him about our wishes. This ritual lasts about 5 minutes. I make this ritual 3 times. I do it on Wednesdays in the evenings.

- Do you know any legends about this ritual?

- This ritual was done in the time Manas as well. This ritual is in Kyrgyz blood.
- How many candles must be in this ritual?
- Mainly 7 candles. Most people use 21 candles. For instance, if ten people make the same wish they all can use only 7 candles. If they make different wishes, then every one of them must use 7 candles.
- Do you use any tools for this ritual?
- No, I do not use anything. When we go to an ant's hive we take ant food. Food for them is given from seven loaves of bread. The seven loaves should not be made by women who make wishes.
- Who eats it?
- Other people around those women.

*Bübü Marita Ibralieva:*

- Lighting seven candles is an old ritual given to us by our ancestors. Their spirits want us to continue it. This ritual helps to build connections with the spirits and supernatural forces and through them to make connections with Allah. Candles must be made from culms. Some are made from other things and this is not correct. Culm must grow in sacred places. Then we need cotton. Cotton is a very sacred thing. We wrap cotton around the culm. Then we oil it with clean butter.
- Where should this ritual be done?
- Everywhere, in mosques, in mazars or in homes. "The house should be clean and respected. One should always thank God before eating or reading the Quran. Rituals must be practiced at home. If one does not use rituals it is bad. We can make this ritual at any time depending on our necessities. It is better to do this ritual after *namaz*. After *Namaz* one is less managed by devils. This ritual is done mainly by *bübüs*. Ordinary people can not make it. This ritual has its own signs. For example, I have done this ritual for a daughter of some relatives. She said to me that during this ritual she saw a dream how her father passed away. The next day her healthy father died. The ritual sometimes can show/predict someone's death.
- Do you know any legends about this ritual?
- *Bübüs* do this ritual. Mullahs do not do it, because they read in the Quran that the owner of fire is the devil. Mullahs think that we make fire and invite devils. We do not invite devils, we invite angels of Allah. Most people do not understand this. I heard once from one mullah that the Prophet practiced this ritual. Prophets have practiced this ritual in mosques. The ritual helps to build connections with angels and spirits. In this life we can have good things such as health, happiness, peace and many other good things; the next life is full of good white things. This kind of message brings this ritual.

*Bübü Büai 'sha Anarbekova:*

- I take seven candles when I visit a mazar. I light them and make wishes.
- What is the reason for this ritual?
- During this ritual angels and spirits come. This ritual helps diagnose the illnesses of people. Every candle can tell about a person's illness and about his guardian angel
- When should it be done?
- Friday is the best day for this. In this day spirits come. It can be done also on Thursday after ten o'clock.
- Can it be done during the day?
- Yes it can be done, but in a mazar
- Can it be less than 7 candles
- 7- 9 candles are fine
- Who are the participants of this ritual?

- Different people. The number of people does not matter.

### **WHAT IS THE MEANING OF MAKING SEVEN LOAVES OF BREAD?**

*Discussion between Chachykei' Chongmurunova and Nazira Jusupova, student of Talas University:*

- Making seven loaves of bread is an old thing, people make them wishing for health and prosperity for children and wishing for other good things.
- What is the purpose of this ritual?
- If one experiences an illness or misfortune then he makes seven loaves of bread so this misfortune turns into something good.
- Can you tell the procedure of this ritual?
- Seven loaves of bread are fried, then you take this bread outside and distribute it to seven people.
- Who does this ritual?
- A woman in the house of the person who experiences misfortune
- When should it be done?
- During the day time.

#### ***Discussion between Büai'sha and Begaim Dooronbekova:***

- When going to the mazar one should pray so that the mazar can accept him/her. One should also take seven loaves of bread.
- What is the reason for making seven loaves of bread?
- Thanking the mazar so that it can accept a visiting person. There are seven forces and every loaf is dedicated to a force. God is one of the forces, the second force is the owner of the mazar, the third is *Umai' Ene*, the fourth is the mazar that can heal illnesses. Every person visiting a mazar makes wishes, such as for health and prosperity.
- Who conducts this ritual?
- The person who visits a mazar, the sick women with illnesses that prevent them from becoming pregnant.

### **WHAT IS SADAGA?**

*Bübü Chachykei' Chongmurunova:*

Charity is when a sick person kills an animal and distributes its meat to people thus asking for health from these people and God.

#### ***What is the Reason for Sadaga?***

*Discussion between Chachykei' Chonmurunova, and Nazira Jusupova, student of Talas University:*

- This is done for a sick person in order to heal her/him.
- What are the special conditions for this ritual?
- When livestock is killed, it should not be eaten by the sick person. When killing livestock the sick person stands in the direction of Mecca and asks from people their blessing.
- Who brings that livestock?
- The family of the sick person.
- Can only sheep be killed? Or any livestock is ok?
- Birds are forbidden. The livestock must be more than six years old and it should not be sick.

- Who are the participants of this ritual?
- The sick person, the *bübü* and the one who kills the livestock.
- Is this ritual practiced nowadays?
- Yes.
- How long does it take to complete this ritual?
- It can be done in 5 minutes.
- Do you know the history of this ritual or legends about this ritual?
- It has developed among Kyrgyz. Kyrgyz in ancient times killed not only sheep but also other big animals.

### **WHAT IS DEM SALUU?**

*Bübü Toktosh Umutbaeva:*

This kind of healing means the healing of a sick person with the help of *koldoochu* (q.v.), *kai'yp* (q.v.), *pir* (q.v.) and *ajy*.

*Shai'yk Jengish Kudakeev:*

The healing of a sick person with the help of conjurations.

*Observation of Guljan Kudabaeva, student of the American University in Central Asia, department of cultural anthropology:*

Two people participate in this ritual: The healer- Jengish, 59 years old and a 19 years old sick girl. The healer is healing professionally, the sick girl is very sad. Their clothes are simple.

The healer is standing in front of the girl and asking some questions of her.

The girl has an old disease. The healer asks the following questions:

Did you talk bad things? Did you fall down? Do you have a fever?

After asking questions, the healer strokes the girl's back several times. Then he starts pronouncing conjurations and after every 2 minutes he says to the girl's face "suff, suff, suff". This is repeated 3 times. The healer pats the girl's shoulders 3 times at the end of the ritual

Nothing was used in this ritual. It was conducted in a house.

### ***How and Why Is Dem Saluu Conducted?***

*Discussion between Toktosh Apa and Nazgul Asanakunova:*

- How do you do this healing ritual?
- I take my whip and put it on my neck. Then I strike the sick person's back with a stick. Then I pat his shoulders and after this the person gets better.
- Where can this ritual be conducted?
- If people come to my house then I do it at home. Some want it in a mazar, I do it in mazars as well. In mazars it is better to do this ritual near springs because it is more efficient there. Most *bübüs* cheat people. I use forces of Allah in helping sick people.
- What is the purpose of this ritual?
- To heal a sick person with the help of *kai'yp* and *ajy*.
- Who are the participants of the ritual?
- Me and a sick person. My *koldoochu* (q.v.) also participate.
- Do you use any instruments during the ritual?
- A whip and a stick, sometimes spring water.
- If a person is seriously sick I do this ritual for seven days, if a person is lightly sick then I do this ritual for 3 days.

## WHAT IS EMDÖÖ?

According to mullah Jengish: Soul cleaning means cleaning a person from negative energy and negative forces.

### *Emdöö in Nyldy Ata Mazar*

*Observation of Guljan Kudabaeva, student of the American University-Central Asia, department of cultural anthropology:*

The ritual is conducted in the mountain, on a flat stone near a spring. Two people participate in the ritual: Jengish and a young 24 year old man. They are very concentrated.

Jengish is fully dressed in white clothes. The boy is dressed simply. Jengish washes the boy's face with spring water and pronounces something, then he looks at the sky and asks from Allah health and prosperity for the boy. Not far from them other visitors make their wishes. Jengish after finishing the ritual reads the Quran and all people thank God. One of the mazar visitors reads one more time from the Quran. Jengish says that it is very important to do this ritual in Kóz Bulak mazar, because this mazar is located high on the mountain. It is located closer to God. In this ritual only spring water is used.

## RITUALS SUCH AS *KÖCHÜRÜÜ*, *ESITKI* AND *TÜTÖTKÜ*. WHAT KIND RITUALS ARE THESE AND WHAT DO THEY MEAN?

*Bübü Toktosh Umetalieva:*

These rituals are done in order to drive away bad things with the help of conjurations.

- Can you tell about the *köchürüü* ritual?
- I do it with white, black and red threads for a paralyzed person. I make 21 knots on these threads and read conjurations, after this I touch the paralyzed parts of the person's body with these threads.
- How many times do you do this ritual for a paralyzed person?
- Only one time, this is a very strong ritual. I also do *esitki* and *tütötkü*. The ritual *esitki* I do mostly for women who can not get pregnant. I write conjurations on white paper. A sick person must put this paper in the water and wait until it dissolves, and then drink it.
- How many days must one drink this?
- If things are not too bad then one drinks for 7 days, if things are really bad then one drinks for 11 days.
- How many conjurations do you write on a paper?
- It depends on the person's disease, 3-5 pages are for 11 days, for fewer days only 1 paper is enough.
- What is the purpose of this ritual?
- To get away from bad things and energy. Women who can not bear children, after this ritual their disease is gone.  
The ritual *tütötkü* is for those who were cursed by somebody. I put a bit of conifer and a paper with conjurations on a plate, I burn it and let it smoke. This smoke must soak into the sick person's body.
- How many times should it be done?
- It depends on the disease. If the case is very serious then for 7-11 times, if the case is average, then for 1-3 times.
- Do you use any other things for this ritual?
- Only conjurations for *esitki* and for *tütötkü* conifer.

### ***What is the Reason for Emdöö?***

*Discussion between Marita Ybraliyeva and Nazira Jusupova:*

- Can you tell about this ritual? How do you do it?
- I read conjurations with a rosary and a whip. I use my bio energy. A whip is a very old thing in our culture. It has relations to universal forces and is very strong. I put the whip on the neck of a sick person and touch the person's shoulders with it. A person has two angels on his shoulders. When a person is sick I evoke those angels with the whip. When one does bad things and forgets about dead parents and God, his angels get tired. After this ritual those angels awake. Every disease has its angel and depending on the disease we make the appropriate ritual.
- How many times do you do this for a sick person?
- 7 times for heavily sick person.
- When do you do it?
- When people suffer they come themselves, so there is not time limitation.
- Who are the participants of the ritual?
- A sick person and his relatives who come with him.

### ***AK KII'ÜÜ- WEARING WHITE CLOTHES***

- S: Wearing white clothes means possessing *kyrgyzchylyk*. Not everyone can wear white clothes. We are different people. For instance, when somebody dies we put white clothes on his body, the same for living people. When we wear white clothes we see spirits of the dead in mazars, we communicate with them. Wearing white clothes is a good thing. For Kyrgyz, white is associated with wisdom.
- B: When I am on the right and white way and my life is supported by spirits I wear white clothes.
- I: There are two cases. First is when people go on a pilgrimage to Mecca they wear white clothes. Wearing white means going to the next world and connecting with spirits. People wear white clothes after they have communicated with great forces and spirits.
- K: I made the boy with the name of Kojokmat possess *kyrgyzchylyk*. When I was coming from the grave of the hero Manas, Kojakmat saw me differently. Before he saw the spirits of many people but he still was sick. I read conjurations and made many rituals for him. I allowed him to make rituals independently. His health is better now. He even heals other people.

### **SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT THE WORKSHOP ON “MAJOR CONTEMPORARY WAYS OF UNDERSTANDING RITUALS” (FUNCTIONS OF RITUALS, MAIN INTERPRETATION TECHNIQUES, RITUALS IN TRADITIONS), TALAS TOWN, JUNE 5-6, 2006**

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### ***Boundaries Negotiation: “For People” And “For Rituals” In Talas***

It's seems to be common words, but the creation and realization of any seminar depends on activities of both an organizational team and participants. Excellently

contemplated action will not be successful in cases of inappropriate staff, place and time. One of the most important features of interaction and teaching processes during such conferences is the creation of a mutual communicational space which is a kind of “Subjunctive Universe” for all the participants. This common communicational universe is characterized by understandable and accepted language and norms of behavior and, what is of major importance, delicate emotional connections, which are difficult to explain, but easy to feel and remember after an effective meeting.

Organized by the Aigine team, unusual in many respects, the meeting was designed with ritual and symbolic activities. Adam Seligman and Robert Weller, the authors of “For ritual,” who were invited to be coaches, had to face a rather mixed audience. There were so many different participants in the frameworks of their cognitive constructions, ideologies, and educational backgrounds that the creation of common language and group norms seemed to be a really venturesome task. The audience included a number of guardians of sacred sites, healers, students, academic fellows and teachers with different languages and experiences. A majority of participants had their own imperturbable representations of the nature of rituals and their own ideas about traditional ritual activity in Central Asia. All these components predicted a great number of communication difficulties and a number of severe discussions which could be insuperable. Even more precious is the experience of transforming this event into a delicate experiment of negotiation and preservation of boundaries among people in the framework of the subjunctive reality of Talas 2006. We are trying now to describe some expressions about those processes and those people who managed to change the event into a fascinating adventure full of pleasurable discoveries.

### **Some People in Talas**

The Talas seminar showed a unique possibility for observation under a variety of psychological conditions, the mixing, boiling and as a result – group creation. The parts of a whole are always of great interest, sometimes they are so different that one can be surprised with the mastery of a contriver who combines them into a Gestalt. This contriver seemed to enable the unique interpersonal interactions, which happened with the help of Gulnara, who perceived the company of participants as a complex and capricious but single, genius whole – *Adamzat* [Humanity].

The company of participants seemed to be a blasting gelatin of characters and varied gifts. One example is Mai’ra – a talented poet and composer, she does not know musical notes; this type of knowledge is not so important for her – she was able to create her own system of symbols in order to remember composed melodies. She is brilliant, observant, ironical and lyrical in her creativity, having a sharp tongue and is very touching at the same time. She has a unique speed of response and is able to compose flying, dancing and sometimes paradoxical rhythms. This rhythm with the bewitching deep voice and speaking mimicry make it possible for those who do not know Kyrgyz to understand Mai’ra – she is singing as Mai’ra, as a whole, loving her audience.

Ulan and Talantaaly are Manas-tellers, Ulan is extremely young. Their lives depend on their gifts, so they aren’t called independent persons. They accepted their destinies and were able to get such a responsibility. Talantaaly has so thin a borderline between rational and “epic” realities that sometimes it causes a kind of professional anxiety. Ulan is a very rational and practical young man, during the process of telling “Manas” he’s dramatically transformed into another person. Everything is changed – voice, mimic reactions, and the perceptible biological age of the teller. Probably it is because of the artistic gift of the young *manaschy* (*q.v.*) or because of the different states of consciousness, which make it possible to enliven the personages of his inner reality – it is not so important to find a cause of the unusual impressions during the process of epic telling.

Striking guardians of sacred sites composed a group with whom it was sometimes difficult to communicate. Some of them kept a thin balance between so called “normal” and “abnormal” reality. One of those who especially amazed my imagination personally was Jumadyl. He is the guard of the “Manas Ordo” architectural complex. At the first moment he seems to be a naïve person, but he is a philosopher with a really difficult fate. His deep judgments about the universe and people cause a great respect. He considers himself to be “a self-educated person” and it is so: he graduated elementary school, but he is a perpetual reader. He has positive philosophical attitudes towards people and a soft sense of humor. All these characteristics along with knowledge of historical, sociological, anthropological and some psychological topics make him an excellent story teller and guide in “Manas-Ordo”

### **Processes: Interpersonal Interaction. Part I**

Traditional rituals, for the majority of seminar participants, were full of deep symbolic meaning and weren't just the “the performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not entirely encoded by the performers.”<sup>1</sup> So, the representation of a ritual as “just doing” without deep symbolic meaning of what is done caused a complex of perplexities and objections. The contradiction between a traditional understanding of rituals and Adam's and Rob's explanations was an excellent catalyst for a group discussion. It was a great pleasure to realize that our coaches did not ever try to change something in traditional ways of thinking – they shared their intellectual experiences with the audience with the full respect for the opinions of everyone. Nevertheless, the first meeting with other representations about ritual activity divided our participants into two groups: “academicians” and “practitioners”. The last group included people doing traditional rituals as a necessary part of their daily activity and living within the special meaning of what they are doing and for what they are doing all these things. Is every ritual action symbolic and full of meaning? Or do we have to find the meaning in the ritual itself, which means that it means what it means?

The confrontation between the two groups, even though it was not planned, took place. One of the consequences of this process was undoubtedly positive. It helped to accept the fact that your own opinion is not absolutely correct just because it is your own. It's interesting, but it was exactly the rituals that played an important role in the process of the resulting group consolidation.

The behaviors of our trainers - Adam Seligman and Robert Weller - supplemented the process of a group interaction with additional ‘salt’ by their asking unexpected questions and, at the same time, giving sudden answers. Their behaviors seemed to be like two poles of one continuum – to some extent they are different in their external characteristics. It is not only my subjective impression that Adam is emotional and impetuous, easily getting carried away, speaking loudly and expressively, gesticulating in the most emotionally tense moments. He keeps contact with an interlocutor not only with his eyes but also, when a distance of interpersonal communication allows doing it, with a hand. During the process of a discussion he seems to be very intuitive and amazingly empathic, delicate and vulnerable, pushing and sentimental. Robert seems to be somewhat restrained, careful, calm and supple, melodious in speech and movements. He looks very logical, clearly reasoning each of his statements. The roles in the duet were distributed – one provoked and pestered the auditorium, attracting aggression, the other directed the emerging tension into the necessary course. A successful combination for a team of trainers in case the “freedom of each of them finishes on the edge of the other's nose” (paraphrased citation from Fritz Perls).

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<sup>1</sup> Citation from “For Rituals”, definition of Roy Rappaport in Rappaport R., *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, p.24.

Just in order to illustrate how the process of group interaction was going, decoded fragments of the discussion about sincerity<sup>1</sup> are presented below.

**Adam Seligman:**

Part of the healing process is the believing that I bring with it. The believing, the sincerity that I bring with me to the healer to effect the cure ...! So, this was interesting. *So, it becomes to be clear that in these types of acts I do not care now if they called it rituals or microphones.* I am leaving that aside at the moment that in these types of things it is necessary and important to bring my sincerity, to bring my believing with me or else the act is invalid. And then the question was raised, in circumcision, if you circumcise, and you are insincere, is it invalid. And everybody thought and said: “No, still valid!”

Well, that was a pretty interesting distinction that in certain types of events, like going to a healer, a traditional healer, you have to believe, and if you do not believe, the act is not valid. There are certain types of rituals and I am wondering, if those are obligatory where it is very wonderful and important to bring sincerity and believing to it, but even if you do not it is still efficacious and still works, it still enacts, right? ... Where is the traditional healer going if I do not bring my sincerity, it is not enacted, it does not work. But if I follow, if I observe the laws of the sunnas, I have to observe the laws, period, and if I could bring my whole self with me, that is excellent, but (at the same time) I have to. For instance, one of the pillars of Islam is “*Zakat*” [almsgiving]. If we talk about “*Zakat*” if I give “*Zakat*” and I am insincere, and I do not want to and I am angry I am still giving “*Zakat*”! ... Does this go with a voluntary act? ... Perhaps obligatory acts have something important to them and it may be that sincerity is not absolutely necessary for them. Maybe they act as whole acts, as complete acts? Maybe the act is, as we were saying, that it is efficacious. I hope that’s understood, it works, it is valid, it is correct, the act is correct, even if I do not bring belief. Those are obligatory acts ...

**Gulnara A. Aitpaeva:**

I tried not to stop the discussion; just to observe ... Exactly this distinction of rituals into voluntary and obligatory ones seems to be not very clear. Why? For example, somebody has to pray five times a day. It is an obligatory ritual because it is the demand of God. So, it is an obligatory ritual of praying. But we have some examples of, so to say, voluntary rituals. Imagine that a woman does not have a child and she is going to the sacred site in order to ask for a child. So, at first glance, it is a voluntary ritual. But if we try to look more deeply through this act, why she is going to the sacred site? She just has to do that because she has a problem and her family has a problem. Moreover, it is also a social problem ... So, this ritual

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<sup>1</sup> Adam B. Seligman, Robert P. Weller, Michael J. Puett, Bennett Simon (2006) *For Ritual:*

... This then, is our third substantive point: that ritual modes of behavior can be usefully contrasted with what we term sincere forms of being in the world. Sincere views are focused not on the creation of an “as if” or a shared subjunctive universe of human beings in the world. Instead they project an “as is” vision of what often becomes a totalistic, unambiguous vision of reality “as it *really* is.” The tropes of sincerity are pervasively with us, in both our personal as well as in our shared social world. They appear in the arrogance of science, as well as in the arrogance of what are termed fundamentalist religious beliefs. They are present in our overwhelming concern with “authenticity,” with individual choice, with the belief that if we can only get at the core, the fount, the unalterable and inimitable heart of what we “really” feel, or “really” think, then all will be well—if not with the world, then at least with ourselves...

The tension between ritual and sincerity is not new, but pervasive in human cultures. Different cultures deal with the tensions differently, find different accommodations and differentially value the one or the other orientation. These differences can be found in politics and in art, in music and architecture, as well as in people’s understanding of their own sacred traditions.

is not a voluntary act, it is a kind of pressure ... So, to my mind this distinction seems not to be convincing ...

One more example ... Why did Ulan begin to tell Manas at age of 17? There were no demands from anybody, there was no pressure from God, but he perceives his gift as a pressure of spirits. So, his rituals are not voluntary ones. This aspect of obligation and voluntariness of rituals is very disputable personally for me ... I do not see any productivity in such a distinction ... Even now.

**Adam Seligman:**

Well, actually I think something could be totally wrong and still very productive. So, wrong and productive at the same. I think this discussion is very productive even if ... but let me explain, I want to know two things in what you said, Gulnara. One is that what you say raises Rob's point. But I think that to continue this discussion, which I think is very, very useful, we have to unpack all the categories which are motivation, agency and the voluntary quality of actions, because the 18 year old who recites Manas, at least the way you're presenting it, is not acting voluntarily. It is that he has no choice that to me is analogous to the person who accepts on him more than Shariah Sunnah of the prophet, he has no choice. It is not that he has a choice and he does this, but he has no choice. These are absolute categories for the *manaschy* as I understand it, maybe I do not understand it at all. He cannot say: "I do not want to do this; I have got to go and have a hamburger." He cannot do this, all right? Choice is not part of the gestalt ... of this situation. The same thing exists for the person who follows the Shariah, who accepts the commandments of God. They – do – not – have a choice. That is different from your example about the woman.

**Gulnara A. Aitpaeva:**

No ...

**Adam Seligman:**

Yes! It is a different from, in my understanding which clearly could be ...

**GA:** This woman also does not have any choice ... OK, let's give a floor to Tatyana.

**Tatyana Bui'skih:**

Freedom is a realized necessity. This is how we were taught in terms of this issue. But what about the voluntary? Well, it seems for you, these are perceived as equal things? How come? I would like to make another comment as well. Do you think that I understand it in a right way? As I have understood, voluntariness and sincerity are necessary for those who are not a part of a certain religious institution. At the same time, acts are obligatory, and sincerity is not necessary for those who are within a certain religious institution. Is it right? Adam and Rob, does it work in this way? If I pray 5 times then it means that I am within a religious system in which I believe. But as for the voluntary it is what is outside of this system. Because the rituals were created in ancient times before Islam, Christianity or Judaism. Is it possible to be a real Muslim, Christian or Judaist if I pray 5 times, let's say, so it will be an obligatory action and not necessarily sincere and "the will of heart."

**Almajan Mambetova:**

I think that we are not talking about it right now, we are talking in general.

**Adam Seligman:**

No, we are ...

**Almajan Mambetova:**

We are talking about rituals in general and not about the Islamic rituals.

**Tatyana Bui'skih:**

I think that any religious system is accompanied by certain obligations. So, the question was whether or not the person who is outside of the religious system is sincere and an action is voluntary, but the one who is inside of the religious system, he is not sincere and actions are obligatory.

**Almajan Mambetova:** Why not if he is a Muslim and he wants to do this, than he just does it?

**Tatyana Bui'skih:**

I understand it, but is it obligatory or voluntary?

**Adam Seligman:**

Ok, I think that is actually a very important question and something we discussed in the group ... your question. And I have some idea about other traditions ... I do know this, I have and do study it and you certainly can practice because it's mandatory, without believing! Believing comes from God, if God chooses to give you belief, he gives you belief. If he does not choose you to give belief, you do not believe ... I am talking; I am making a general comment. A person cannot force himself or herself to believe. It is impossible to force yourself to believe. But you can force yourself to do something. You can force yourself to quit smoking cigarettes. You can force yourself to do all kinds of things you do not want to do. You can force yourself to fast. You can force yourself to pray 5 times a day. Your will and belief are two very, very different things. They are two very different things. And that is part of the whole thing that we are talking about. Because yes, it would be wonderful if you could believe every time you pray but sometimes you might be worried about the exams you have or that you do not have enough money to feed your children and you cannot devote yourself whole heartedly to your prayer to God in your morning prayer because you are worried about the fact that there is no food for breakfast to give to the family but you still pray and it still means something! And it's still the construction of the world that we were talking about yesterday morning, i.e, this believing or sincerity. You know if you are blessed by God you have it, if you are not, than this is not something we can control! But we can control, even in the worst circumstance, even when we are cold, hungry, tired, and this and that! Still make a self pray. So, yes! This is a very, very important distinction. And then if we were sociologists, and if we had the time and the interest we could start comparing systems that emphasize believing, and than how do you force yourself to believe, you have a lot of problems yet! And this you can see Protestantism deals with and is trying to deal with this. But I mean that it is a much broader comparative discussion than we have an interest in going into at this moment. But yes, I think your point is very important. And you can be within a system, and what makes you in a system, than is not that you believe but that you accept the obligations as mandatory.

**Tatyana Bui'skih:**

So, then it means that if I am within the system and fulfill it as mandatory, the believing creates all possible rituals. When I have a belief, it puts controls upon me. But as for the voluntary rituals, they are the micro rituals that I am doing right now and I believe in them. I mean the situational things. Right? So, in that case, the mandatory ones are those which you believe within the system, and everything you do is controlled by the belief that you have. And it is not necessary to be sincere; to a certain extent it is enough to be sincere that you have accepted a belief. As for the voluntary rituals, they are situational. If you accept a ritual

than you do it or not do it depends on the situation. In that case we have to call them as situational, right? In accordance with purpose or need. Thanks to the explanations that you gave me I have started to understand things that we were talking about within these two days, otherwise I would be confused.

**Chachykei' Chongmurunova:**

Adam mentioned that we can do prayer without a sincere belief. We perform *namaz* with a belief and sincerity. Adam said that we are forced to perform it and that we are not sincere. I do not agree with this since there is not a person who has no belief and will (“niet”-in Kyrgyz). A person can only do it with a belief.

**Adam Seligman:**

Okay. I do not think that we could ever know what anybody believes in. I also do not think that beliefs can be shared. In other words I cannot really tell you what I believe. And even if I could, you have no way of believing me. I also think that believing is the most intimate, private thing a human being has. Right? The prophet said we are closer to you than your jugular vein in your neck yes? That God is as close and intimate as a jugular vein in your neck. So, these are not public, these are not social. In fact my believing is not your business and your believing is not my business (laughing) ... this I think, but what there is between us and not between us is what we do. I may talk to my wife very rarely in our living together about my beliefs. It is that intimate, it is not something that I would talk to strangers about. And I would be very suspicious of strangers who after meeting me for 45 minutes tell me about their beliefs. Okay? I will not believe in their beliefs. What I see as a human being and what you see as a human being is what one another does. The believing, the aspect of believing, is so intimate, is so close to the person and I do not even know how social it can be.

**Samankul Asyrankulov:**

I do not agree with Adam's point. We pray *namaz* 5 times in a day. Or we worship at *mazars*. However some people even if they do not believe in it they still visit sacred sites. They keep visiting sacred sites without believing and during that process the illness becomes stronger and they go to the sacred site without a sincere belief when they are close to death. No matter what kind of animal they slaughter for the well being of that person, that person dies because he did not believe and passes away. I am not a mullah, what is the use of just praying *namaz* when you do not have a sincere belief. Anything should be accomplished with sincere belief ... Things will become true only if one has a sincere belief that it will become true.

**Mai'ra Kerim kyzy:**

Religion is a mandatory action and ritual, and as for *mazars*, it is a ritual done with pure intentions in it.

**Robert Weller:**

Can I answer?

**Gulnara A. Aitpaeva:**

Yes, Rob

**Robert Weller:**

I want to come back to the issue of believing. Adam was joking with me in the break that when the academics have a problem, they invent a category, he was teasing me because I like to do this (*Adam is laughing*) ... and so I have a new category for you (*Adam is laughing*) ... Adam,

is right that believing is extremely difficult. We talk about it all the time, but we never can see it. We never know what someone else believes and we never can know. There is another word I think might be more useful though, and that is – **Acceptance**. Does someone accept that they are Muslim and all the responsibilities that go with that? Now one of those responsibilities might be a responsibility to believe. In some traditions that is very important, Christianity for instance, in others that is not so important. The Jews are one, the Chinese one, they rarely talk about beliefs. We know that we do not know what someone believes, but we know what they accept. Because we see their behavior, because acceptance is a way of life, a way of behaving, a way of showing people that you accept. We never know what is in your deepest heart but know what you do. So, maybe acceptance for me as a scientist is a more useful category than believing.

**Gulnara A. Aitpaeva:**

We are in the process of a discussion about sincerity. We were talking about voluntary and obligatory rituals. We have also tried to create systematization, yes?

**Adam Seligman:**

Well, I do not know about systematization but I was talking to Rob and maybe because I am getting very tired I did not say what I wanted to say. I did not mean to say that healing is voluntary. I have no idea if all healing is voluntary, I know nothing about it. What I meant to say ... was that a voluntary ritual needs to be sincere. What I meant to raise as the question is whether there is a difference between obligatory and voluntary in terms of sincerity, i.e., that voluntary ritual in order to work needs to be sincere but obligatory ritual just needs to be done. Now let me go one step further, through the *manaschy* and the follower of the Shariah, their will is not in control. They are in the control of another will. The *manaschy* is under the control of whatever power that gives him the ability to recite, the follower of Shariah is under the power of the will of God. In a voluntary ritual, you are not under the control of any other will, it is your decision. Because you are not under another will, the will of God or the will of the power that comes down. And then the issue of sincerity becomes very, very, very important. Insincerity in voluntary ritual does not work, whereas when ritual is obligatory it does not need the sincerity to work.

## **Processes: Interpersonal Interaction. Part II**

Paraphrasing Roy Rapport's citation mentioned above, let me repeat that a succession of actions becomes a ritual only in the case when it is: (1) repeated many times in more or less the same way and (2) is not entirely encoded by the performers. The definition, “not entirely encoded by the performers,” when we transfer it into the system of psychological coordinates means the transformation of something, which was controlled and had sense for the majority of our participants into a series of automatic, not controlled actions. Having been transformed into an automatic process, some succession of actions is logically separated from its initial content (even in the case when a ritual is born, each of its actions was full of meaning). Remaining more or less an action without meaning, a ritual nevertheless does not lose its functionality, being a formation of an, “as if,” universe (the term was invented by Adam and Rob), which is much more safe, calm and clearly regulated, which has specifically to do with rituals. Continuing here with a free interpretation by me, of Adam’s and Rob's idea, let me risk adding that ritual activity becomes a most powerful psychological defense mechanism, which functions both at the level of a person and the level of a group.

Practiced in a certain place (*mazars*) and in a certain time, rituals for three short days of a conference became that instrument for formation of a common reality, which replaced all possible technologies of group consolidation. Whether those rituals were full of inmost,

intimate content for some people and were a necessary consequence of poorly comprehended actions for the others, was not of great importance. The rituals performed their functions and borders between people were established and overcome with their help, creating a safe, non-aggressive “conditional” universe, performing its consolidating functions not worse than a common communicative space, which I believed allowed for overcoming the most painful difficulties of a group interaction.

*Extremely brief conclusion*

The Talas workshop was not easy, both for participants and organizers. It could not be easy because the interaction of various models of reality is not always peaceful. And as it should, the workshop caused a lot of questions, the responses to which, possibly will serve an extremely useful source of information for further creative work in the most varied realities.

***Thoughts around the Workshop***  
***“Major Contemporary Ways of Understanding Rituals”***  
***(Functions of Rituals, Main Interpretation Techniques, Rituals in Traditions)***

*Almajan A. Mambetova*  
Director of the fund “Kyrgyz Heritage”

1. The seminar was quite representative, though the Kyrgyz representation lacked the same level of specialists in traditions and rituals, as Adam Seligman and Robert Weller.
2. It is notable that all nations at some definite stages of their development, especially in times of hard social or climate upheavals and cataclysms, when the nation experiences heavy losses in ideals, steady ties, properties and hopes for the future would stop and take a steadfast interest in their past and to some extent even relapse to their national identities, i.e., to their history, culture and traditions.  
But this high scale deliberate interest comes from the nation’s current stage of development, and it is not only the natural bating of one’s curiosity, but it has purely critical and practical components: study, understanding and the starting anew by means of careful selection of what is still important nowadays and deserves preservation and what is not but could be neglected.
3. This renewal process is typical for small Kyrgyzstan as well, which, in a historically short period of time (a bit more than one century) had to experience many shocks, not having time to adjust itself to one before already passing to the new:
  - Coming out from the Turkistan Khanate
  - Joining Tsarist Russia
  - Switching to a settled mode of life
  - The 1905 Russian revolution impact on the Kyrgyz when many of them escaped to the neighboring countries and further
  - The impact of the Great Socialist Revolution (mostly positive)
  - World War II
  - Approximately 20 year Restoration of the postwar ruin in the hardest conditions
  - The extremism and the Stalin repressions
  - The USSR fall
  - The post-Soviet situation: alone with all the fallen problems

- The choice of further development: luckily a democratic way of development was chosen by Mr. Askar Akaev. Due to the intelligence of the 1<sup>st</sup> Kyrgyz President, unlike our neighbors, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, which preferred to gamble on religious leaders and which finally led to religious terrorism and extremism problems which then have spread all over Central Asia.

All these processes, as we witnessed, were to lead to and bring the modern renewal identities. Traditions, rituals and customs in this way are the means of finding ways to the self-realization and self-identification of the nation, and to an attempt to harmonize with the surrounding world by means of following the ancient ways, or finding or creating new rituals, acceptable in new conditions. There is an interest in and even switching to the “*Tengrianstvo*” - an ancient nomadic philosophy which is grounded in Zoroastrism and Buddhism ..., the way of life teaching us to live in harmony with nature. The traditions and rituals are still prevailing (composing more than 80 %) in modern Kyrgyz and Kazakh societies despite the “islamization” of the nations by the Arabs in medieval ages. But the process of further “islamization” in post-soviet Kyrgyzstan is even more aggressive due to the poverty of 90 % of the Kyrgyz population and unemployment.

But the worst of all is that together with Islam itself, the intervention of Arabic ideals of life, Arabic philosophy, Arabic traditions and Arabic clothing have been taking place in modern Kyrgyzstan. Today we can see young women in white, black and grey (Pakistani, Iranian and Turkish traditionalists’) clothing. They already do not have any choice, they have to except this imposed style. The Kyrgyz are only 5.4 million, and these processes, being very rapid, in some 7-10 years may lead to Kyrgyzstan switching from a secular to an Islamic republic. But we are not Arabs! Are we not proud, being free offspring of ancient nomads? Where are our own ideals, philosophy, culture, traditions and Kyrgyz costumes? Yes, undoubtedly, western mass culture has come to us. But that culture is universal and not terrible at all. People are individuals and can choose out of this diversity, they are free and have a choice.

I would consider this interest in the ancient philosophy and mode of life as a protest against many negative, disappointing and radical trends of the Islam rushing into the peaceful moderate traditional Islamic Kyrgyz society, which had never known these problems and that is why we reject them as unacceptable.

For me the seminar was a revelation and a stimulus for thinking, which finally has brought me to the idea of the necessity to preserve the main integrating nation rituals. It is these traditions and rituals, through which we can define our role and the responsibility incumbent on every member of the society.

Do we not tremble during rituals that are very important for us, and do we not feel as members and a sense of belonging to this very nation and society? And this implication is something more than just following the rules, but a revelation and sincerity process. And what about the rewarding moral state, and the sense of a duty carried out, after the efforts when the ritual has been successfully performed? It is great!

**The resume:** we need rituals for uniting the nation, for harmonization and fusion with nature, for the organization and building our relationships with others, self-expression and understanding of our essence as a part of the world and society, and subordination to rules and self-discipline.

But we also know that all nations in order to find out where the universal truth is, have to inevitably pass through and experience all stages of their development. Unfortunately, this process is long and painful. And today we are witnesses to the fact that the majority of our “rationalized” population is negative towards ancient philosophies like

“*Tengrianstvo*” and neo-Pagan rituals, taking them as a call back and step back to a primitive society.

In general, the seminar in every respect was interesting, rich, and well organized. And in connection with this, let me once again express my gratitude to the organizers, sponsors and participants!

***The World of Mazars Unites Us***

Closing speech at the workshop

“Major Contemporary Ways of Understanding Rituals”

(functions of rituals, main interpretation techniques, rituals in traditions)

*Gulnara A. Aitpaeva*

Doctor of Philology,

Director of Aigine Research Centre

We have very different people gathered here.

On one hand we have participating in the workshop the people, who do not even have a basic education of the Soviet type secondary school, and on the other - we have people with Doctor's degrees of both Soviet and Western types.

You also noticed that here we have people, who represent quite different age groups: from the students' generation to the elderly.

We have completely different professions, including architects, artists, musicians, lecturers of higher educational establishments, and academicians, guardians of sacred places, and healers.

We live in different parts of the world and region but what is more serious – we live in completely different cultures and social conditions.

By all these formal indices we could not have gathered in one place at the same time. But there was one circumstance, which allowed the “Aigine Center” to unite such different people in one group. Your interest in rituals and your relationship to the world of rituals was that uniting circumstance.

At the beginning I could not explain to myself what I wanted from getting together such different people. It was much easier, more limpid and logical for the “Aigine” team, which in the majority consists of researchers and teachers, to sit together with scholars from different countries and discuss various issues related to rituals. It is easier, because the more limpid and more logical, probably could give more clear and logical results. Is not the world of rituals like that? It might have been an unconscious impulse to conduct an experimental workshop with an unusual composition of participants.

Though I was concerned with the unusual forethought whether we, being people from so different cultures, with such a different life experience, could speak to each other, and whether we could make efforts to understand one another. My concern was very strong. I again and again asked myself whether we could hear one another if the experiment was not productive due to our primary differences. Being organizers, we tried to ensure an initial basis for our joint work: there were certain texts translated and sent to participants for preliminary reading, a two-day working workshop agenda was developed, which included not only discussions of rituals and texts but also participation in rituals in sacred places.

You probably noticed that the workshop agenda was developed quite broadly. This is the first workshop of this kind and it was hardly reasonable to formulate the topic in a quite narrow way. Broad topic formulation made it possible for everybody to choose some convenient perspective though it might be the case that for someone such breadth was not convenient and the subject of conversation looked vague.

Robert and Adam said that it was necessary here to create some special language to make it possible for us to work together. Thus, I very much hope that remarks of some participants about us talking possibly about different things and that we failed initially to define some terminology and talked about “something unclear,” as Mai’ra said yesterday, and I believe that all that was a process of searching for and construction of our “common” language. As at the beginning of any business it was necessary to give a chance for participants to express their ideas, clarify their original positions, on which we stand with regard to rituals, and their functions in the modern world, irrespective of disconnectedness and difference of those statements. And if we have a second meeting, that meeting must be in the language, which we all tried to create here.

Let me stop at an example of “pure-impure,” which caused big discussions: whether to eat pork or not. The world becomes more pragmatic, and that influences all spheres of life. From the rational point of view pork is really rich in calories and has a lot of vitamins. But a person is not only rational; s/he consists, roughly speaking, of some other components. And the ban on pork lies in this irrational space. I cannot say that I am a deeply religious person or a strict Muslim. But I do not subsequently eat pork. It has poly vitamins, it is really nourishing meat but I do not eat it. This is an outcome not of my religious beliefs or my yearning for spiritual purity but of my irrational origin. And I believe the irrational human being’s displays must be respected. If someone does not do it and it is difficult for him/her to explain why – let him/her do or not do it. And in this sense it is very important not to impose your will on someone else. You see, Ulan and Bakhodir are people of the same generation, who received education in the similar ideological environment, live in neighboring countries of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, with a common past and common major religion, being Islam. But they expressed two opposite points of view. Ulan believes that the society must be modernized and in this sense rituals and attitudes toward them must change. Bakhodir objects to this, thinking that such a position represents a threat to fundamentals of the society, including religious and moral ones.

Ulan’s and Bakhodir’s approaches are not excluding one another. Living in a changing world we also have to change to some extent. The question is only, to what extent? To what extent do the renewed world and ancient rituals influence or must influence one another? How not to destroy the roots from which we grow, and be modern and correspond to the requirements of the rapidly changing century and the time? This is one of the questions, which became evident to me during the discussions.

And there was one more interesting workshop moment. There are ritual practices and ritual theories. It was interesting to watch people who practice rituals for their entire life and preserve and develop this sphere of culture and life, meeting with people who write about rituals and create theories. People who are practicing rituals and living in rituals are an object of research for those who study and describe rituals. Can a practitioner have a full-fledged discussion with a theorist? This is definitely in many ways a conventional question. But for me it became evident during the workshop that those who study and those who practice must not be only in a position of “being studied” and “studying” but in the situation of

interlocutors discussing common topics and ideas. It is evident that rituals and theories are established based on practices and in this sense their adequacy, convincingness and depth depend on the level of knowledge of the practices. Theorists can frequently explain what practitioners do not know. Practitioners practice rituals but sometimes cannot explain why they specifically do this or specifically do it in this way. And here we can see the importance and necessity of theorists' work with practitioners. They ensure preservation and succession of the rituals' semantic.

In conclusion, based on a two-day discussion I would like to highlight several ideas, which finally made, to a certain extent, our mutual understanding possible. Let me repeat once again that we talked about very different things and from very different positions. But there were some ideas with regard to rituals, with which we all agreed. **First of all**, we all acknowledged the necessity of rituals. This might not be quite a scission of trammels or the first putting of a baby into a cradle; it might be a ritual of young architects, who created it themselves. **Secondly**, we all admitted that a ritual is some sort of a system of meanings. And this system of meanings can be understood or not understood, accepted or not accepted, it can be inherited from someone (let us say from predecessors) or originated by ourselves. A **Third idea**, with which it looks like we all agreed, is that rituals are dynamic. Rituals are in the process of movement and change. A hundred years ago that scission of trammels looked differently than how we several times heard and now saw during the workshop. **Fourthly**, we all agreed with an idea of rituals' variations. One and the same ritual has many variants, which depend not only on the factor of time, but on many other circumstances. The common rituals' peculiarity is especially important for me. I want to focus on the fact that acknowledgement of variations means the existing of a common core. Through an analysis of ritual variants we can learn a lot from specific features about the practicing of this variant group. But what is more important for me here is the fact that variations also make it possible for us to seek for, recognize and see that common core as being a major component, which unites various groups (peoples and societies). Thus seeing a common basis of many rituals of the Kazakhs, Kyrgyz and Turkmen we start thinking about some common roots.

Our common interest in rituals made it possible for us to find ourselves in the same place at the same time. We actively shared our ideas, argued, did not understand and did not accept some points of view. Specifically within the regime of such a strange workshop we had to understand and acknowledge to what extent the world of rituals is diverse and polysemantic, and our connection to it. This diversity and polysemantic character restricts our freedom. Within the regime of such an unusual workshop we see that it does not seem like it is possible to create the single correct theory, shared by all rituals. We cannot ignore the possibility of "various truths". And we have to live with it and develop. It seems to me that we must also follow the advice of Adam, who asked us to acknowledge the boundaries of own ideas and also the boundaries of our interlocutors and opponents and respect those boundaries.

Let me express gratitude to all of you for accepting our invitation, which actually was a challenge, for your big emotional labor, respect for one another and input into the work of the workshop.

*The Chapter was translated by Kanybek B. Konokbaev*

## Chapter Six

# **MAZAR WORSHIP IN THE SOVIET TIME**

### **Foreword**

Nowadays most *mazar* (*q.v.*) visitors are older than 50 years, thus when they started visiting the mazar, it would have been in the Soviet time. If one compares their present way of life in every sphere, no matter how grateful they are for the benefits of their previous life, they cannot help showing their mixed feelings towards that period; they cannot hide their disappointment that in the Soviet period, they were separated from something that was crucial in their lives. Most of us do know of the attitude and the politics of the Soviet power towards religion. At that time mazar visiting was considered as a harmful religious prejudice and strong measures were taken against it. Speaking in general, many research works have been done on the Soviet politics against religion. The chapter you are reading is valuable in regards to the following: mazar visitors of the Talas region told of their own experiences in being treated badly during the Soviet time, of the attitude of the society, and of local people towards them. This is the history of our people in the recent time, of yesterday, history which has not been included in school and academic books yet.

As *bübü* (*q.v.*) Sonunbübü Sooronbaeva pointed out: “In every action the Soviet authorities used to look for negative steps against government and party, and would always repeat “God-Stalin, God-Lenin”; governors and their managing servants of those times, when what was called atheism used to be the fundamental orienting power, would try to influence even your thoughts by immoral and humiliating activities. Mazars, which we believe as sacred, would be humiliated in different ways, and *kyrgyzchylyk* (*q.v.*), they tried to put an end to”.

Everyone living under such difficult social conditions faced an extreme test in regard to the Soviet attitudes and rules about *kyrgyzchylyk*. Under pressure of hard times there were those who obeyed. Though they may have been crying within themselves, they obeyed the laws of those times and slowly changed their lives. But there were some people who could not live without mazars, and they went on visiting mazars. In spite of the power of those times, there were a few (who, like Turgun, the practitioner) strongly believed that “*kyrgyzchylyk* would not ever be lost”; that belief helped them oppose and overcome the obstacles. That a man would not forego visiting sacred sites in spite of being strongly persecuted and imprisoned provides historical evidence that visiting a mazar is a meaningful reality, not just a holdover from the past of an ancient Kyrgyz tradition.

Certainly, it is right that in those times believers did not even guess that there would come a time when persecution would stop, when they would easily visit mazars whenever they wanted, whoever they wanted to go with. They simply regarded those persecutions as a law of life, their visits to the mazars at night as one of the struggles for life, and their reaching the aimed-for mazar and praying there, with great feelings of gratitude to God, was finding the start of the way to God. Those dozens of years for mazar visitors today are lessons to memorize. Our knowledgeable fathers and mothers do not only remember but analyze even the little things from those days. Although before forwarding the questions about our deep concern that this chapter reports on, we tried to find some people who had suffered much of persecutions, and it turned out that most of our respected respondents appeared to have seen and suffered such humiliation themselves. Consequently, we must conclude that this is the tragic fate of several generations.

The answer to our question “Did you manage to prepare students of your own” appeared to be positive, suggesting that a spiritual mission continues between elders and youngsters, through the generations in spite of difficult conditions. Otherwise how could it happen now in the time of independence, that today’s spiritual masters would know how to prepare their own students unless they had had the experience of being taught in Soviet times?

It is said in the Kyrgyz proverb “The first virtue is health”, as pointed out in one of the previous chapters; therefore, it is only right that people visit the mazars first of all because of health problems. This is what we heard from the following woman. “The usefulness of the mazar for me was that I haven’t gone mad and that I have been able to remain as a mother for my kids at home”, - says Turgun Apa [*Apa* means Mother] who is 80 years old. Such spiritual activities as fasting (*orozo*), almsgiving (*bitir*), visiting close people and feasting during Islamic holy days – Ait (*aittoo*), and pray (*namaz okuu*) were also prohibited. But at the same time in spite of these prohibitions, mazar visitors did not obey them and went on with performing privately traditional activities. This testifies to their trying their best to keep safe what they understand as *kyrgyzchylyk*. “*Kyrgyzchylyk* never disappears” – this is the rule which they follow and it is their belief.

**A PRACTICIONER TURGUN (80 YEARS OLD):  
“IT IS NOT POSSIBLE FOR KYRGYZCHYLYK TO DISAPPEAR...”**

I started to visit mazars in the Soviet period, in the time of Russians. You are asking about barriers. Oh, they were indeed unbearable; militia men would be spying on us and being so bad to us. They questioned us severely. We could hardly visit the mazars, even doing it secretly, hiding ourselves in different holes and channels. It was not allowed to spend a night there. That was the reason they followed us: “during working days if you visit the mazars, who will work then?” they would say. And they accused us of taking other people with us. During those times we did not take people with us, we could not even find a place to be safe ourselves.

There were no mazars left in Talas. We visited all who called themselves either *moldo* (*q.v.*), *shai’yk* (*q.v.*), or mazar. The usefulness of the mazar for me was that I have not gone mad, that I have remained as mother for my kids at this home.

I was a young 30 years old woman then. The story of my visiting the mazars would circulate widely. Of many people who would come to me to be healed some were those who worked in the government, some who had simple jobs. There was always one among them who would inform on me by some means. There were cases when we were struggling with militia men while visiting the mazars, but in the mazars I never was caught into the hands of militia men. Once I visited Manas Ordo, we were sitting there up to midnight, and then when we left for Kanykei’ Apa spring, militia men came to our first place and could not find us. I was being persecuted for 5 years.

Now people visit the mazars as easily as streams of water run. As for those Soviet times people would visit the mazars secretly, hiding themselves, days and nights hiding themselves, and would visit not knowing each other. Even at those times we could not neglect mazars which were influential and which the Kyrgyz people loved. Wherever mazar visitors went they would not be back until they visited the mazar, though secretly. Even though militia men were following them they would spend the night among grass. We or, at least, I always spent the night while visiting the mazar. Whatever the place we visited, we would always spend a night hiding ourselves even though it was difficult. While we were persecuted here, yet just over the border in Uzbekistan, religious people were not being persecuted. Persecution also took place to some degree in Kazakhstan.

When we visited the mazar, we could not perform some essential rituals. In those times how was it possible to do them if we were so persecuted by militia men? I could not even perform *sham jaguu* (q.v.) ritual. It was especially difficult that among militia men there were also Kyrgyz ones – who both prayed and persecuted. What could the persecuted visitors do? Sheep for sacrifice were given as a bribe and visitors hiding themselves. Then only at home they would perform *tüölöö* (q.v.) reading Quran to the spirit of this or that Father. Because how could it be possible for *kyrgyzchylyk* to disappear? No, it never will disappear.

In 1948 it was prohibited to fast too. However people would not stop doing it. Also, almsgiving was prohibited, yet people did not stop that either. It was ordered not to pray in Islamic holy day- *Ait* but this is a traditional law for the Kyrgyz people, so how they could stop it. Early in the morning people would go to a special place to read morning praying (*bagymdat namaz*). Neither feasting during Islamic holy days nor fasting would stop then. It was only me who would stop when my *koldoochu* (q.v.) would not allow me and I would go once in 15-20 days. I had to visit the mazars; I could not help doing that because of my health.

I had considered the possibility of explaining to those militia men about my visiting the mazar, but I had to give up that idea. When I was ill we went to Boztektir and sacrificed a sheep. My husband was a teacher at school; he was also persecuted for doing it, being questioned why the sheep had been cut and led even to *rai'com* (q.v.). They made him suffer much, even threatening that he would have to resign from his job. They would tell him to remember that he was an atheist, and that they could deprive him of his work for this religious behaviour. So how could I explain to them about the mazars? In such a situation only a family member appears to be a supporter. I did have an opportunity to be a student (*shakirt*) of an old woman named Unut, but this was not for very long. When I was ill I followed her while visiting the mazars. Except for this I seem to have learnt everything myself. One needs great power to be a master (*ustat*). If one is strong by himself, other things will be helped by God.

*Based on the interview of Zarima Ibraimova, a student of the Talas State University,  
Department of History*

### **UNUT, A MAZAR WORSHIPPER: “IF WE WERE CHRISTIANS WE WOULD HAVE BEEN LIKED BY THEM”**

Now I am 75, I have taken the responsibility to follow *kyrgyzchylyk* since I was 27.

Great barriers for mazar visiting occurred in the Soviet epoch. The Russians persecuted *moldos* and *bübüs*, and we were called deceivers. They would say: “We have physicians, go to them; we do not need those who are called *moldo* and *bübüs*”. When we were young, *moldos* were sent to jail in Siberia and they were there for ten years. I was also questioned about this.

Thus they wanted to destroy our own religion and transfer our beliefs to that of the Russians. If we were Christians, we would have been liked by them. As for us we worshipped God and prayed five times a day.

Before Kyrgyzstan gained independence, I once was questioned. One day a militia man came and said that I was being called to Kirovka. I knew that they were not calling me for simple things. When I came there somebody's voice asked from inside: “Have you brought a *bübü*?” When I entered I saw a public prosecutor. When I took a seat he had a glance at me; to me he appeared to be a young boy. “I thought that you would be an old woman, God strike you, being young! How dare you fool people?” he asked me. I said: “Will God strike you or strike me? Why are you saying God strike you, He knows whom to strike and whom not to strike. Speak after thinking first!” He said: “See her how she is speaking.

She seems not to be frightened at all”. I said: “You are not God who created me. My soul will be taken only by God, I fear only God. For what crime have you called me here? I cannot help taking this sacred quality (*kasiyet*), which has been passed from seven fathers. In front of God I will tell of this”. He asked: “Are you a *bübü*?” “I am”, answered I. He said: “Take her to a jail and keep her there.” I was sitting in the prison for 3 days; on the fourth day my brother came and released me.

Once my own sister sent me a young man from KGB. We were going to visit Boztektir, and he offered to find a car. But I said that I myself could find a car. When we reached Boztektir he came after us. That time we started to perform *zikir chaluu* (*q.v.*) and when I was speaking of that young man, somebody from outside said something. As a result – *zikir chaluu* was broken. As soon as it is interrupted, you can see nothing. I took that young man by his head and just started to tell him: “You are young; yet even though you are young you have never done good things for anybody”. Everything could have been told, but I did not mention his other activities including those of spying on me.

At that time I had many *bübüs*. Once a militia man came and said that he would take these *bübüs* with him. I said: “Darling, son, do not touch them, they are praying to God because of their health. They also believe in only one God, what else they should do”. After a number of days another militia man’s son, who was 5 years old, became deadly ill; his tongue being curved, he was not able to speak. One of the militia man’s friends suggested that he take the boy to a woman healer and show his son to her. The boy recovered after performing *zikir chaluu* three times and was able again to speak.

Afterwards that militia man presented me with a kerchief. It was after that that the militia man I talked about before caught me. For that man no good should be done. That time when he opened the door and entered, my eyes opposed his eyes. I said to another boy: “That fellow, whom you have come with to me, persecuted me before” and apparently, he went and beat him severely, afterwards. He said to me then: “I told him when your son could not speak that my sister was good to you; because she had healed your son, you ought not to have done harm to her”. After that I really was disappointed with people.

Those times I stopped healing people. Before that, as many as seventy or eighty people would come to me each Thursday. Then I was disappointed with people. I thought it useless, so I began to heal only those close to me – relatives, siblings, those who were from my tribe.

Present *bübüs*’ *zikir chaluu* are not interrupted when a man is passing by, even when one cries or shouts. I am surprised with nowadays *bübüs*. Just in 2-3 years, their eyes appear to be clear and they start wearing white dresses. This work is very hard. It is necessary to pray five times a day, not to tell gossip, not to steal. If one does not understand it, even though you may explain it to him thousands of time, still he will not get it.

In the Soviet time mazars were visited only by sick people, never by healthy ones as happens now. Those who do not have headaches do not pay much attention to God. As for now if you visit the mazar, you may see different wonders. But I am grateful very much that we could preserve our own religion. At that time if we had gone on living together with Russians, and before dying, we might not have been able even to pronounce *kelme* (*q.v.*). I had assumed that old *moldos* would pass from life and new ones would not appear. In our religion it is said not to steal, not to do harm to anybody. If you have something in your hand give a part of it to those who are poor, as it is said. If you go to a Russian’s home you are never invited to come in. But they are as relatives of ours. However, they departed from their own God themselves and became non-believers. We are all born from Father Adam and Mother Eva (*Obo*). She gave birth to 24 twins. Marriage through exchange with each other has been done by the will of God. But Russians would marry only each other within their own group; that is why their eyes stayed blue.

In the time of persecution as soon as God sent me to the mazar I went there. But I would go at nights. Once when going to the mazar at night through the autumn wheat field, hiding ourselves, we heard the barking of a dog. After a while we heard a child's crying voice. When we reached Booterek, a car which was pursuing us reached us. I hid myself in an autumn wheat field and sat there for a time. They came to Booterek and searched for me with a car light in all the sides of Booterek. That time I could not reach Booterek. The dog's barking warned me. As for the cry of a child that meant that God received my prayers, and that I may be back. I had left home at night, at 10 o'clock. So I came back home early in the morning.

The fact that those people persecuted us had a bad impact upon them. The public prosecutor, a young man, with whom I had quarreled, telling each other God will strike you, died in a month after that. He died in his office. People never learned the secret of his death.

When I was visiting mazars in spite of all these barriers, my parents and children were not against it. They are all believers. Yet if independence had not been gained, if persecutions had intensified and prohibitions strengthened, *kyrgyzchylyk* would have disappeared. We would leave our own religion and enter that of Russian's one. Those who do not understand anything are converting to other religions now.

When I started to follow *kyrgyzchylyk*, there was a great *bübü* whose name was Kanykei'; she lived in the Lenin collective farm which is not far from ours. I fell sick and heard about her from people. She healed me. It was she who directed me the right way. That *bübü* died having not managed to fully open my eyes. So I became an orphan without the master. I visited all other *bübüs* and *bakhshys*. Then I went to Baba Ata mazar and learned my way.

It is necessary to have a master for those who follow *kyrgyzchylyk*. Master shows you the way to go. For this he makes me know my people<sup>1</sup>. Mastership (*ustattyk*) is inherited from our forefathers. It is said that even if you serve your master for forty years it is not enough to be free from moral debt to him.

I have many students throughout Talas.

*Based on the interview of Zarima Ibraimova, a student of the Talas State University,  
Department of History*

**KÜKÜN NAZBEKOVA (74 YEARS OLD):  
“KYRGYZCHYLYK IS FROM GOD...”**

During the Soviet time they were persecuting me strongly for three or four years. It was prohibited to treat people, to visit mazars, to all such things. People would come at nights to be treated. There are different people in holding *kyrgyzchylyk*; some of them keep those patients who could be healed by physicians, not letting them go to doctors, saying that they will recover, will get better. Then that person may die or worsen. If that happens, it would make matters worse as regards prohibitions from going to *bübüs*, to those who hold *kyrgyzchylyk*. That is why they did not allow us to treat people, accusing of not having knowledge, saying that there are doctors for healing, etc. They feared us helping females in childbirth, thinking that they would bleed. As for me, I helped about a hundred of women in their childbirth, May God save us; all of them are alive and have recovered. Actually there are also diseases that can be healed by doctors. If for a *bübü* it is impossible to heal sick persons, she should send them to a doctor or some other person.

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<sup>1</sup> In this case “my people” means spirits or supernatural forces, which support her in real life

In those times I would visit the mazars on Wednesdays and Thursdays. I would visit Manas Ata, Booterek, and a spring of Kanykei' Apa very much. We did not have much time to visit mazars, fearing that somebody would come but nevertheless we tried to worship.

Even if the Soviet time had been prolonged further, in spite of the fact that prohibitions to these actions went on, *kyrgyzchylyk* would not have been fully destroyed. No, it will not disappear; it would not have been stopped. This is the will of God and nobody can stop it. Now everybody heals themselves with herbs. Liquorices is good for skin diseases. Animals would eat liquorices in the case of being injured. This was noticed by people and then used by themselves to heal injures.

When I was persecuted and in spite of this, visiting the mazars, my parents would take care of me well; they were not against me but surrounding people were against me. I was not persecuted much. One or two men came to me and told me that I was said to be engaged with *kyrgyzchylyk*. But I said: "No, darling, I simply help people in taking off *kirne* (*q.v.*), nothing more I do". He insisted that people came to be treated. But I understood what he was doing and said: "No, I do not treat grown people, I treat only children". Even before that, militia men had come to me but that time I mention now, that person who came was not in his uniform. He had come to me with a special aim – to catch me. Of course, this was not their own idea; they were sent by the authorities, but some of them exaggerated their mission.

At that time I did not go outside of Kyrgyzstan to visit mazars. Once I visited one mazar in Jambyl. There was a mausoleum and a *shai'yk* inside it. I read Quran and came out. Judging by the presence of the *shai'yk* there, one can guess that in Kazakhstan it was not prohibited to perform such activities

My *master* was a young girl from Kirovka, whose name was Myskal. I would treat children from the beginning. When I was forty years old, I met Myskal, and she told me: "Wear white dresses, otherwise you will fall ill, treat any disease". My master put only once a white dress on me, only once took me to the mazar. I think that one should have only one master.

I do not have students, I feared to prepare students. It is dangerous to prepare students if they do not keep *kyrgyzchylyk* up to the end, if they do not go the right way, and if they do not practice it with pure heart. If one is a master s/he has to control him until her/his student becomes stronger than his master; and you should help him reach that honor. He himself also should improve himself, and have his own direction.

When one is on this way he should have a master. There are different ways of *kyrgyzchylyk*: one may become an *ai'tymchy* (*q.v.*), while others heal with herbs. For example, if one is *ai'tymchy*, he tells the future, he cannot help telling it. His master would remind him not to speak of the person loudly in the presence of other people, and to call that person of whom you are speaking and speak to him in a low voice. He will show by example. If one does not have a master, he could lose his way, what we call as *tabypchylyk* (*q.v.*) is of different kinds. There were those who told me to be their master. I tell them to follow the way of God; if I make them my students I would need to bring them to that level as well. If they manage with it, it will be good, but what if not?

*Based on the interview of Nazira Satisheva, a student of the Talas State University,  
Department of History*

**SONUNBÜBÜ SOORONBAEVA (85 YEARS OLD):**  
**“I SUFFERED ALL THE HUMILIATION. NO HUMILIATION LEFT FOR ME TO SUFFER”.**

I have been visiting mazars for 70 years. During the Soviet time we suffered deadly persecution, escaping from persecutors even without boots, barefoot. We would like to go to Arashan mazar, but we knew that militia men would have something there which could record what we say. But among us there would be militia men who were sick and were treated by us. They would warn us, saying not to go to the mazar and we would not go there on those occasions. So we suffered many such persecutions. At nights for performing *jar saluu* we would go to the mazar concealing ourselves. From Bakai’ Ata there was one woman, she worked in the regional committee of the communist party; her surname was Kumasheva. Oh, she did not give us any peace, at all. It was she who ordered that Booterek be destroyed. The tree of the mazar was cut also by that woman.

She would tell all the women who were sitting under that tree that she would cut it by its root. And she did so. After that she fell ill, her two legs were paralyzed. Then she sent a message to us that she was going to visit us. But we told her not to come, said angrily that she may continue cutting mazar trees, because we were so angry. I visited Booterek, Baba Ata, Bach Ata, Oi’sul Ata mazars. I was in the mazar Soot Bulan, it is in Osh. People say that it is being repairing now. Heads of one thousand and a half of Prophets remained in the mazar Soot Bulan. When we were going to the mazar Boz Baba, we were persecuted by militia men, and we stopped in the place named Ak Sai’ and hid ourselves among stones. We concealed ourselves there until militia men left and then we went to the mazar afoot. Oh, the way was so long, it took much time. We spent three days in Boz Baba. So it is the case I visited mazars, even when being persecuted. But now it is so nice, no prohibition, nevertheless practitioners do not share common identity.

Militia men would say that there was no religion, no God, they ordered people to not worship God. When we fasted they would push bread into our mouth so that we had to stop fasting. They would say that Stalin was God, Lenin was God. Once we visited Nyldy Ata. It was time of Ramadan. We were sitting in the home of one shepherd; there were twenty of us sitting there. We reached there by car that we caught just on the road. Then we finished performing *jar saluu* and having our meals. Then I said: “Hey, there are two or three cars following each other, inside there is an agent; let us leave one by one”. In response to my words, my master Unut said: “No, we will not leave. Where shall we go?” So while we were talking two cars came. Among us there was a young woman who appeared to be a betrayer; she went out to the street. Then those people got out of the car and came near the window. I guessed that they would take pictures and really they did so. Then one of them came in and started to question us, asking for our names. Those times we feared militia men as we feared God. Then changing their names, one said that her name was Sherbet, the other one – Bernet. When they came to me I called out my real name, Sooronbaeva Sonunbübü, and told the name of the village where I was from. He asked me why I had come. I answered in order to read Quran for our forefathers. I said that I was retired and that I was free. Unut Apa, who was leading us, told him to go to Sonunbübü Apa, that she only was following us. Then I said that they probably knew us all, for there was an agent among them. Then, it was the case that when we all came out, everybody’s name became clear, because of that betrayer agent.

A militia woman named Jeenalieva from Bakai’ Ata village would come to us and that made me suspicious of this militia and say that nobody should have anything to do with her. Her father was a man with master’s skills although he had a disease of *döpür* (*q.v.*); I would say that sometimes I hear that *döpür*, that by all means that militia would catch us and torture. And this happened. So we all were taken away in the car. A car in front of us went to

Alekseevka village, another car was behind us. Then Unut said to cross the river, and we crossed the river Talas. After having crossed the river all of us got out of the car; only Unut remained in the car. They took Unut and kept her in the prison for three days. In talking to Unut, Jeenalieva was facing her. When they were passing the mazar Booterek their car's engine stopped. When they looked for the problem, they could find nothing wrong in the car. They wondered. Then they went on their way. Then Jeenalieva fell asleep and as it happened, Unut was sitting near by. Jeenalieva having been awakened, exclaimed, "Why you are sitting here?" But it appeared that it was not Unut who was sitting near her, but rather an old man with white beard. After that, the militia woman, Jeenalieva felt horrible pain in her leg, and her legs had to be operated on three times; the third time, when her hip was operated on, she died. Afterwards it was said that her elder brother Nadyrbek had warned her not to fight us but she would not listen. Before death she apparently called her brother and told him that she was giving the power to him, that all her sufferings happened because she hadn't listen to him. Her two daughters were studying in Moscow, she requested him to take care of her daughters, told that she gave him the right on that. When she died we were also informed. Apparently she was our relative, but I did not know about that. And when we came to the funeral and saw her portrait of the walls of the yurt I unconsciously uttered: "Woe betide you!" That militia woman we all did not like - she had died persecuting us.

They imprisoned Unut Apa for three days, then she told them that all of us at the house had come by themselves. We were twenty, but the militia said that we were forty. They did not do anything with us; they simply came to us, to our homes, and questioned us. Then I said that we visited the place where our forefathers passed away and we went there to read Quran; that I did not take anybody with me and went there afoot. And each of us answered the same way.

In spite of this we would continue visiting mazars concealing ourselves. If they noticed us they would persecute us. And we suffered much from militia men. We even could not visit the mazar of Ormon Ata which is located not far from here, fearing militia men, because they would immediately catch us on our way to the mazar. We visited the Tomb of Jankoroz Aba located just near us, but only at nights. Actually we always went to the mazars at midnight, because after midnight all the militia men would leave their job. We would stay in the mazar up to the sunrise. We were in such a difficult condition. As for the present time, it is so good, because it is not like yesterday's practice. When such a good time has come, I am already old and cannot go outside, but sit at home.

After that I was not caught. There were those among our patients who were relatives of militia men and they would warn us of the day of their visit to us, so they could not manage to catch us. Nevertheless we visited the mazars concealing ourselves, never stopping from visiting the mazars. Once we were treating one militia man's younger sister and were taking her to the Manas Ordo. Suddenly a car of militia men reached us. Then I looked at Ai'dai'kan who was our master and asked what would happen when we got to that place. When we arrived we saw a samovar, a special pot for boiling tea; it was boiling, and she told us to take off its tube from a samovar so that all the water would pour down. I did it; put the tube into my pocket and all the water flew down on the ground. So, we were sitting there and while we were reading Quran, other militia men came. They may have heard of us from the previous militia men. A wife of Kürküröö used to come to us; she knew the address of militia men. She called to their office and said that we had been captured by militia men. Then the militia man whose younger sister we had been treating came himself to us and freed us. Thus there were those among militia men who persecuted us and others who helped us.

On our way to the mazars we would always take passing car on the road, fearing militia men. To the mazars located in Chatkal, we would go by tracks that were used by people carrying heavy loads. Once having reached Chatkal, we would take a taxi to reach mazars Baba Ata, Bach Ata, Oi'sul Ata. We did this to avoid being caught; for if we took a

taxi from where we lived, they would have immediately been informed of it. That is why we would make an agreement with shepherds living in Chatkal to get on their load-carrying carts. We would go to the mazar Korgon Ata located in Toktogul also by cars which we stopped on the road. We were deadly persecuted, but nevertheless we did not avoid mazars. When we were going to Boz Baba a driver who was carrying us made us get out of the car because of how the militia men were pursuing us. When he left us, we concealed ourselves among stones. Then as militia men could not find us, we continued on our way to the mazar afoot. We reached Boz Baba afoot, there we saw two different Tadjiks. Inside that mazar there is a place called Köshögö. We requested them to free that place for performing *zikir chaluu*. But Tadjiks did not give it to us. They said that they would perform *zikir chaluu* themselves. We were nineteen persons; I offered to perform *zikir chaluu* together for we were all Muslims. During the *zikir chaluu* one Tadjik woman sat against Unut and began to perform *zikir chaluu* with her. By her understanding one of them was to fight and win the other by *zikir chaluu*. The Tadjik woman fell down; we did not see how they were fighting. The next morning that woman appeared to have a coat on. When we asked what had happened one old woman answered that she fell sick, that it was you who made her sick. Of course guilty was the Tadjik woman herself who said this; she should not have fought with Unut. The mazar is the property of all, and she should have been cooperative, should not have disputed and fought in the mazar, said I. It appeared that they fight because they think that the mazar is theirs. They fight with each other in hope to show more strength among each other. Then the strongest raises the weakest one and makes him fall down.

So, since I was aged twenty-eight up to the start of independence, I had been suffering all these persecutions. Nothing of them remains. To the mazar I would go only at nights. I would visit Arashan at nights. If I had taken somebody with me, I might have been caught and nothing could have been done. I would visit the Manas Ata mazar also at nights.

I would often be visiting mazars at nights; I was not afraid. When I was young I feared nothing. When other people would not come with me, I would be only with my spirit supporters, so I relied upon them and would go myself. Until I reach the mazar and being back from it, I would be performing *zikir chaluu*. It was prohibited to spend nights at home; I had to go the mazar. Even now you may see *dubana (q.v.)*, how they live and how they perform their; we also had to walk everywhere. When we visited Ata Bei'it, that time I did not enter the museum and was sitting outside. Toktosh did not allow us to enter it for perhaps there were pictures in the museum.

As for militia men they would take our pictures and hang them on the walls underlining that this was this or that *bübü*. But they did not find any benefit of that. So, we were captured three times, in Booterek, Nyldy Ata, and then Manas Ordo mazars. In other places we were not caught. Even we could cross the waters of the Talas River. We were afraid of militia men as of God. As soon as we heard of militia we would have immediately run away.

I said earlier that we would leave for the Mazars located in Tajikistan because there were no persecutions there; they freely visited mazars. Only in our country, in Talas, they persecuted us. They visited Baba Ata, Bach Ata freely, where everybody can spend a night; they have two *shai'yks* there. They meet visitors, show the way, and tell what is necessary to do. It seems that only here, in Talas, persecution of *bübüs* took place. There were many spoiled militia men in Talas, many who wanted to be thought well of by their leaders and did everything in order to catch us. As if they wished us to be cut for being eaten.

I have already mentioned the case when not we, but only Unut, who was considered the most masterful person was imprisoned. They thought that it was she who gathered everybody and influenced them. But every man is an owner of his life. As for us we got out of the car, crossed the river and ran away. As for Unut, they caught her, thinking that she

was our master. Her sister worked in Kirovka at some office; she was a daughter-in-law of the Bei'shenaly *dubana*, and she helped us much, releasing Unut from the prison.

At first I had been a student of Unut Apa for 7 years. She was my master. But I had made no progress. Then I was told not to attend her. I stopped attending her, during one year. Then I was shown that from our three tribes there would be three persons, one after another. Then from our village, three persons came out, one after another. Me, Ai'dai'kan, then, Burush – these are three *bübiis* from one and the same village. Two of them have passed away.

Master is a person who tells you of your supporters, who shows you the way. When I was with Ai'dai'kan every sick person, dumb and blind, all would recover. Even mad persons, who would eat their own flesh, would recover. We performed *jar saluu* for them. I was with Ai'dai'kan for 25 years. She showed me the way I have. The quality of being a master my forefathers had also. My grandfather and my father also had. My grandfather was besides a *tabyp* (*q.v.*), *tamyrchy* (*q.v.*). He was a man who would heal many different diseases. His seven sons were *tükürükchü* (*q.v.*). Many of my own forefathers possessed this sacred quality. When we came to this place, my great grandmother-in-law was said to have this sacred quality, her husband to manage a mosque and be *kalpa* (*q.v.*). My own father-in-law is said to be also a *moldo*. So I came as a daughter-in-law to a complex family. How could I manage with sacred qualities of both sides? I had to fight within myself.

I was not a master to anybody, I cannot tell a lie. But persons whom I treated would recover. Master is a person who takes a responsibility to tell of your supporters, of what to do and not to do. Like *moldos* he takes that responsibility. It is not easy to take that responsibility. I could not even tell my patients about their diseases. I was sorry for them and did not want their hearts to suffer. I was a student of my master for twenty-five years, after twenty-five years she died. Burush, who had been with me, passed away too. I do not want to suffer having said different things behind a person. I do not need it. They also told what they knew and passed away.

*Based on the interview with Nazira Jusupova, a student of the Talas State University,  
Department of History*

**CHACHYKEI' CHONGMURUNOVA (68 YEARS OLD):  
“IN ORDER NOT TO BE NOTICED WE WOULD VISIT MAZARS ALONE”.**

During the Soviet time they would go to mazars, but not so often as nowadays. Because then, they were persecuted. When they went to mazars they were followed by militia men who were spying behind them. I have visited mazars since my youth when I was 21. Totally, I have visited mazars for 42 years.

The first mazar which I visited was Ak Terek. As I remember, I was seven or eight years old; having been frightened, I awoke in the midnight, and saw girls as angels around the fireplace, that was in the center of our yurt. They were cleaning wool. I screamed. After that my father and mother awoke and took me in their hands and calmed me until morning. My father was *kuuchu* (*q.v.*). Those who had difficulties in childbirth would cry, calling him as hero (*baatyr*). He was a strong man, working as a director of the farm, a farmer. When I was six, my legs became very weak; doctors did not know what happened. Doctors were, on the whole, not very capable. Now I have a spot on my leg.

It was in 1947-1948. My fathers did not let anybody beat me. They are said once to take me to one *bübü*. That healer said: “This is a saint girl. Something good will come out of this girl; do not beat her any more”. My mother did not allow anybody to touch me, to beat me. Unlike others, I do not know what it is to be beaten. I was born in the place called

Chachykei' that is in Manas Ata, in Keng Kol. That is why I was called Chachykei' - by tradition. I inherited my father's *kuuchuluk* (q.v.) mostly in prophetic dreams. I also met *albarsty* (q.v.) as my father. It changes and becomes either a girl, or a young dog, or a mouse. I remember how I once took her, when she became as a girl, by her hair in my dream. I appeared to be tightening her hair and beating, having something like whip in my hand. I was beating her and she was crying with tears: "You are torturing me so, what do you need?" In my dream I held her so strongly. I said: "Exchange your saliva with me". She would cry: "I will not walk along the places you walk, I promise." So, we exchanged our saliva. When I awoke, I was wet of sweat, I felt myself horrible. If a female who has difficulties with childbirth come to me once before their time, it will ease her childbirth. So I have a little bit from *kuuchu* quality of my father.

I started to visit mazars at the age of 21. When I was a child my mother took me to the mazar Manas Mausoleum. No doctor understood my leg disease. My father took my pulse; he ordered to pick up from the forest three baskets of berries. And only when I ate one basket of those berries, my leg normalized. Even now I have a spot on one of my legs, a remnant of that disease. My father treated not only men but animals as well. He would quickly heal broken legs or arms. Such a talented man he was. My father's uncle and grandfather from his mother's side had had strong *kyrgyzchylyk*. My grandfather from my mother's side whose name was Myrza Kalpash is said to have stopped the flow of the Talas River when he was moving from one place of Talas to its other place for green pasture to breed cattle and sheep. Once when they were crossing the river one naughty young woman said: "Our elder brother-in-law (that's my grandfather from mother's side) orders us not to look behind, what if I look behind just before having crossed the river". Having said these words she looked behind. But that time my grandfather had not managed to read all the *duba* (q.v.) and as soon she looked behind, the water of the river took her by the stream. Our grandfather uttered: "Do not try to search for her. It is useless. This is Sulai'man Ata's charge". From Talas there were in general four *kalpas*. We call them as Kalpa Ata, one could boil cold water in cauldron; the second – could stop the stream of water in the river, actually, four of them have four different mysterious powers. These four *kalpas* decided not to live in one place and moved to different places. One lived in the head of Talas, the second – in the middle, the third one – at the end of it.

Thus, my grandfather had mysterious power in reading *duba*, and my father seemed to have the same in *jai'chylyk* (q.v.). My father would know when there would be rain, and when - frost. I seem to have a power of my father in *jai'chylyk*, residing in my leg. In spite of the fact that it may be sunny in summer, if it gives a sign, my leg even jumps from pain. When I say of coming rain, people around would say: "No clouds on the sky, how could it rain". But in the afternoon it would always heavily rain. And they would say: "Our grandmother's leg knows". As for me I would say: "This is one leg of my father left for me".

As for interrelationships of master and student, I haven't paid attention to this issue. Before, I requested a daughter of Tinatin Eje, who was working as a secretary at Manas Ordo, to type texts from Quran. Before teaching Quran I would ask three times whether she would not say bad words behind me or to elder ones, and, only provided that she promised not to say these bad words, I would teach her Quran. Because a person who teaches Quran becomes a master. Then they say: "There is no a student without a master". One must not say bad words over a master. I am against those who say that they are masters, that they have opened the eyes of one hundred to one hundred and fifty persons. One's eyes can be opened only by Allah, nobody can do it; a man cannot open other man's eyes. For example, if you put a white dress on somebody, that person should know how to reveal one's disease, know Quran by heart, and know how to heal. And then only, after that, only then should one go and take a whip. What is happening now? There are a lot of those who have whips in their hand without

following the above rules. I am really worrying because of this. I am against those who simply visit mazars and have whip in their hands.

My master's name is Ümüt. I did not choose Ümüt Apa to be my master. I was visiting mazars for several years, but my spirits did not give way to a master. Only when you see *ayan* it will be possible, they said. In most cases I myself was visiting mazars. Once when I was sleeping I saw *ayan*: over there was walking an old woman *bübü*, on the top of the mountain, and behind her one little and thin old woman was walking. "Hey", was said to me from *ayan* dream, "that woman who is walking behind is your master". When I looked at her, she appeared to be Ümüt Apa. After that I went to Ümüt Apa and told her: "You will be my master". She said: No mazar left for you, you visited practically all by yourself. I will not be your master, you will leave me. I will not go away, said I. Then she did something that seemed troubling. She performed *dem saluu* (q.v.) for me only three times; I visited her five days, so having performed *dem saluu*, without performing *zikir chaluu*, she put white dress on me and left.

I have students, they are three. One of them is Bayan, her verses being published in the newspapers. She is from here, but lives in Bishkek. These lines are hers:

### ***Hey, Humankind***

Hey, imperfect humankind,  
He mockingly talks with no sign,  
Not ever showing his sins,  
He puts you into fire,  
Burns you without flame,  
Makes a man to suffer,  
Of his cheating gossips.  
Hey, imperfect humankind,  
We will pass away from this world,  
And we do feel that,  
Though we feel this,  
We become severe,  
I do not think that,  
Everyman is bad.

A good man's quality,  
Is not to mind gossips,  
And always tell the truth,  
Of what we call as curse and gossip,  
Not to have so much idea,  
To tell the truth to face  
And not to love a lie.

### ***I Do Respect Her***

*(Devoted to Chachykei' Apa)*

When I am being sad of Mother's death,  
When mood has fallen down and me so suffer much.  
They give me kind and wise advises,  
And pity me with all their heart.

Chachykei' Apa, you are my best beloved,

I became aware of your kind heart so much.  
You took me by your side,  
And walked along the sacred sites.

You rendered me your hopeful help,  
So that me have a stronger health.  
You would render me a help,  
Without pity of your mind.

You would take me by your side,  
And always make my mood arise.  
When I am home quite alone,  
You became my darling friend.

Thus giving me your kind support,  
That was time when I've become aware of your kind deeds.  
That help you did with my kin Shambet  
Never I will forget. Forever you, I will respect.

Bayan is now about fifty. The second student, Maken, lives in Kyzyl Oktyabr; she became old, now she is about seventy. She was so sick and could recover only having taken the whip in her hand. My third student – is a young girl. I have given her only rosary; have not taken her to the way. I brought her when she had been a student in 5th-6th form, since then I have been keeping her by my side for eight years when visiting mazars. When she finished school and entered a medical college she also would come to me. Afterwards she got married; I heard that she has a child. She sent a message of missing me. I cannot manage to visit her. She is about twenty or twenty-one. In general she has an inherited *kyrgyzchylyk*. Many people said to put her to the way of *kyrgyzchylyk*, to give a special tool to her hand. But I pitied her. If *moldos* read, it will be impossible for her to bear, because she is young, and many things she does not understand. I thought of her youth, her future, her fortune; that is why I gave her only rosary, other tools I did not want to give her. That girl when she was in the mazar could see everything very clearly and could tell who came from where, what kind of supporters one had; everything, she saw.

Once from the girl's house their mare was lost. Her mother sought for the lost horse. The girl said: "Apa, tomorrow get up early in the morning; the horse has not been stolen, today you will meet her face to face". But her mother would not listen her saying: "No, that is impossible, you cannot say that" and went searching. When she was passing by she suddenly saw her horse walking in front of the graves' hill.

When that girl came also to our home, somebody's young horse appeared to have been lost. She asked: "May I tell you now"? because at that time it was prohibited to say such things. After the Soviet Union, persecutions also happened to take place a little. Some people who knew of that girl would come and ask of their problems, but fearing that militia men would learn of it and make harm to the girl; or if the thieves learn of her telling the truth about them, they may even kill her in revenge, I would request her not to tell the truth of theft. She would ask me: "Eje, I see that the stolen horse or cow is bound to someone's blue gate. May I tell of it to them?" But I would object: "No, darling, you should not tell of it". I would feel worried about the girl.

During the Soviet time, I think, there were not so many masters and students. Masters did not prepare students much. That time real *bübüs* constituted a great majority. Their feelings were clean, souls pure, hearts pure; those *bübüs* would be so pure.

In the Soviet time we would visit mazars alone, we could not go there in groups. For it was easy to be noticed if you go in groups. That is why we feared being captured, and visited mazars alone, hiding ourselves. Let me tell you one story. I was about thirty. We came to the mazar Arashan Ata. There we were sitting in a circle. At that time I was not able to perform *jar saluu* yet, and I only followed closely to *bübüs*. Then somebody began to perform *zikir chaluu*, crying and shouting very loudly, legs of elderly women even not reaching the ground while jumping. One should not sit touching each other, while performing *zikir chaluu*, should sit in a distance from each other. Suddenly I saw a white hare. I stared at him. After a while that white hare started to move in my direction. Being frightened, I hid my head behind the back of my neighbors. Among us there was a great *bübü*, a mother of Esenbai', who said: "Hey *chunak* [little and unexperienced], you have seen something, ha?" As for me I was screaming: "Hide my head". That time I could not understand fully those sacred signs.

At that time, great mazars, of whom people would talk much, included the Manas Mausoleum, Ak Terek Ata, Sharkyratma, Arashan Ata, Kalpa Ata, Zulpukor Ata, Ak Bulak (inside Kalba), Bazar Balam, probably called as such, located in Kapka where two boiling springs are said to come out. There was also a spring in the bottom of Kirov water reservoir.

When I was 22 or 23, we went to the mazar Arashan Ata with a group of seven or eight people. During the Soviet time, when I was young, I took many people to the mazar with me, perhaps fifteen or sixteen. Then I visited Chatkal. Having visited that place twice, I stopped taking people with me. I do not know whether some sacred quality came to me, but I stopped taking people with me to the mazars. I started to take with me only five to seven visitors, not more, in order not to be pressed by their sins. I would do so. I visited Chatkal four times.

When I visited the Mazar Arashan Ata, after having prayed and practiced rituals a little, before having tea, some militia men came. It was a sunset time. They were three. They shouted at us, said bad words. We tried to explain, but they did not understand us. Then one of them asked me: "Who is your head?" Then he ordered me to get into the car. As for me, I got into their car for heavy loads. After a while a young woman who was near me said: "Hey, sister, where are you going? Why are you getting into the car as soon as militia men ordered?" After her words I came to my senses. "Indeed", I thought, I had actually got on the car having been so frightened. And I got off the car before the car moved. I said: "Why are you taking me? If you do not bring me before the judge now, then you may take me tomorrow." When all of us began to cry, the militia men left. They would frighten us this way. Once we were performing *jar saluu* at someone's home. Most of those who were near me were elderly men. That time I was young and was just learning to perform *jar saluu*. When elderly persons would start to perform *jar saluu* they always asked some young person to stand at the door and guard. Perhaps they paid that person for guarding, I do not know. They would start *jar saluu* after midnight. And always they put somebody at the door to guard, so that nobody could enter the room.

What would militia men have done? They would have charged, would have questioned. In general, the people's understanding of mazars was good. One of my aunts could not give birth to children, and after having her babies aborted before birth, she desired to visit the Manas Mausoleum. With tears in her eyes, she did visit it praying with all her heart.

During the Soviet time they educated people in atheism, cultivating the idea of the "absence of God". Some of teachers would have faith within, but would teach us saying: "There is no God", at the same time apologizing: "May you forgive me, God". Later they would tell of that themselves.

In the Soviet time, *moldos*, *tabyps* were treated very strictly, compared with nowadays. They would be caught, judged, and imprisoned. In those times we had our

grandfather Kurmanaaly from Joon Aryk, who was so profound in regards with *kyrgyzchylyk*. He said that when his wife was sewing a wool coat, there was no needle, because in the Soviet time needles were scarce. My grandfather is said to have uttered then: “Hey, rascal, bring me grass, bring me grass, and do know from where you have taken grass”. When the amount of grass brought was equal to the number of needles needed, my grandfather took the grass into his mouth and when he took them out, the grass turned to be needles. And when my grandmother finished sewing she wanted to keep two of the larger needles for herself. But grandfather was so angry saying: “Bring them here. In the judgment I will not have any power to pass through the eyes of needles. I have to put them again on their places and make them turn into grass again”. My grandmother would call my grandfather as “needles swallowing Ake”. This man was also being deadly persecuted in those times.

**ÜMÖTBAEVA TOKTOSH (75 YEARS OLD):  
“ONCE BEING PERSECUTED BY MILITIA MEN I EVEN CLIMBED UP TO THE  
TOP OF THE TREE”.**

I started to visit mazars when I was 13. It was in the time of war. Afterwards I began to do it openly. In those times people perceived mazars differently. It was not possible for great *kalpas* or *bübüs* to visit mazars in groups and perform *zikir chaluu* broadly as is possible now. The authorities would be against us very much. They were against us as knives. Grouped people would be just divided into two, three parts.

The reason they were against us was their fear that we would do prohibited things, and influence others to be rebellious. They saw that our gathering was not good for them. What we call as *kyrgyzchylyk* is a very good thing. There were *dubana* among us. When they performed *zikir chaluu* with their *shyldyrkan* (*q.v.*) it was so good for a street and home; it made sacred power enter inside. Thus being under different plants, concealing ourselves under different houses, we were able to continue. Then we would, in daytime, collect the remnants of wheat in the fields with our mothers, and at nights having worn our Kyrgyz traditional dress, we would visit mazars alone. In order not to be noticed by the authorities we would perform *zikir chaluu* inside the wild grass. If anyone was caught in the mazar they would have been imprisoned for several years by the judge. Local authorities would deadly persecute and spy in our homes. They considered us to be guilty, as they said “they are spoiling people”.

When I was 14, I was caught by a militia man in Ak Terek. He did not let me get away in spite of my mother’s pleading. They started to beat us. In spite of the fact that she cried he did not let me go and hit me several times. I had a brother, his name was Barakan, who took the whip from his hand and they began to fight. It was summer and the trees were full of leaves. He made me climb up to the top of the tree. I could not be seen then. Otherwise they might even have killed me.

Persecution mostly stopped after the war. In the Soviet time it also took place, but not much as before. Now it has eased very much. During the Soviet time it was somewhat dangerous to conduct *tüilöö*, sacrifice animals. I remember that there was a good young woman named Jamilya. After some time she was imprisoned by local authorities, being accused of having been involved in prohibited activities. She died in the prison. I do not remember when it happened. I was young and had to be concealed myself.

During the Soviet time a number of mazars, and historical monuments were destroyed. A yard of Kalpa mazar in Keng Kol was totally destroyed by authorities with the use of horses. Now nobody from their families remains. All died. It is prohibited to destroy mazars.

My master’s name was Moldo Ümötaaly from Kara Suu. Master is like your mother. He heals you and shows you the right way. My master was a very good man who greeted

*kojo* by giving his hand. Nobody could help me here; I fell down, with no tongue and speech, my legs being so terribly weak. My legs remained that way from that sickness. Nobody knew why. Then it was this *dubana* whom my father brought and who took me his home and I spent nights there. And when I threw two sticks and became recovered, he said: “I do not have enough power to overcome you. You appear to have a clever and a strong man within you, and you should be brought to Shamshykal Ata”. That man appeared to be himself opened at that place. And he brought me there. A young woman from Keng Aral also went with us.

We went by the narrow road inside Besh Tash. When we came there those who called themselves *kojo*, or *kalpa*, all appeared to be there. He appeared to have his own mosque. They made clothes for me, and after I had spent nights inside the mosque for four weeks, only then were those clothes put on me. Then *kojos* performed *jar saluu* for me. But they did not put white dress on me. My master had Kyrgyz clothes, black jacket and black trousers. How your master is dressed is the same way you should be dressed. My mother sewed for me a dress from mere fabric and a scarf, I put them on. At that place, a way was given to me. As for that young woman who had come with us, for her no way was allowed by Allah. That young woman’s name was Mei’ilkan from Keng Aral. After being back to Talas she died, a poor woman.

If a man is your master, he teaches you the ways of healing and other things. He teaches how to hold a sick person, perform *dem saluu* to children, to tell by intuition the diseases of a sick person and everything he knows. He is like your mother. A responsibility of a master, his deeds are very difficult. Now I am a master to many people. Though I have many students, I have only one who satisfies me, in whom I have much hope. She is now studying in Talas. I have been teaching her since she was seven years old. I helped her very well in opening her eyes; she sees with her senses. She has not learnt to tell much yet. All her secrets will be revealed when she is 25. Besides her, I have many other young women. I tell them to behave well, treat others well, not be greedy.

There is no difference between master and student. They all call me Apa. They have become as my own daughters. Actually, in spite of the fact that there might be difference between master and student, say, age differences, social status differences, if a master was to be younger than a student, the first one’s way is considered to be greater. It is said that the mother’s milk should be deserved. As for master, when may he be satisfied? Good masters are not greedy. They are able to see the eyes of two worlds. He never says to bring this or bring that. I do not know, perhaps there are those who say such words, but as for me myself, never did I so.

I follow the way of my master. She would teach me: “Do not take much. If a scarf or a dress is brought, first read Quran, and then take it”. My students I also taught this way. When it is time to “open their eyes” I take them to seven rocks and seven mazars. After that everything goes very quickly by itself. My master taught me how to perform *dem saluu*, to hold a sick person, and not to be influenced by *suk* (*q.v.*). I even check the food I eat. I do not eat turkey, hare, or eggs. These were my master’s rules, which I very strictly follow. She also did not eat all these food. My students do not eat them either.

*Based on the interview of Nazgiil Asanakunova, a student of the Talas State University,  
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*The chapter was translated by Dr. Ümüt A. Asanova*

# SECTION TWO

## Sacred Sites through Researcher's Perspective

### HEALING AT MAZARS: SOURCES OF HEALING, METHODS OF CURATIVE IMPACT, TYPES OF HEALERS AND THE CRITERIA OF HEALER'S PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATION

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#### **Abstract**

*The paper is based on the author's more than fifteen years of experience and observation of traditional Kyrgyz healers at sacred sites (mazars). The article describes and analyses the beginnings of this mazar-centered Kyrgyz healing practice, the mechanisms of effectiveness within a traditional framework, and the different variants of therapeutic techniques found in Kyrgyzstan. Based on surveys of 358 healers with different specializations, the author also attempts to scale the professional competencies of each healer, according to a variety of original criteria. One key criterion used to differentiate healers, is their ability to cooperate with other healers and/or with representatives of "official" western medicine in those cases where their traditional healing techniques prove ineffective. The "environmental approach" of the healers and their adapted use of natural resources for the healing process and other traditional Kyrgyz rituals, as well as the wide acceptance and appreciation for their therapy suggest that this healing tradition in mazars will continue in Kyrgyzstan.*

#### **Introduction: Phenomenon of Healing in Kyrgyzstan and Its Sources**

Predecessors of contemporary medicine, such as shamanic healing, totemic medicine and ancient anatomy (para-anatomy) originated on Earth around 10 thousand years ago during the Mesolithic period (Dixon, 2004). Evidence from the most significant migration routes indicates that at that time people might leave sick and wounded to their fate along the way. Some archaeological excavations show that cures were also enacted, at times quite successfully. Aspects of Weltanschauung (worldview) of ancient people allowed for shamanism to become a specialized profession. Ability to interact and be on good terms with spirits seems to have been an important skill, and people with these abilities were highly valued. Such skills were considered to be a gift from the spirits and an indication of their benevolence toward people (Basilov, 1984).

A unique combination of ancient beliefs and Islam is a characteristic feature of contemporary spiritual life of the population of Kyrgyzstan. In particular, burials of ancient predecessors are treated as sacred places – mazars. Spirits of predecessors, according to beliefs, protect the living (Kasiev and Risaliev, 2004). This is why from ancient times and until now healing sessions are conducted at mazars.

Explanation of causes of a disease by actions of supernatural forces or by intrusion of evil spirits into a human body was the result of helplessness in face of Acts of God

(Valihanov, 1961; Alimhanov, 1978). A need for miraculous healing, natural for a human being supports the existing myths (Losev, 1991). Rational thinking, free from any scientific concepts, forms a specific, mystical picture of the world (Schweitzer, 1949), which is favorable for the development of folk healing. A significant part of the population of Kyrgyzstan perceives methods of folk medicine as a natural process (Altynsarin, 1870), rehabilitating the integrity of the human-nature link. Folk healing is something so customary and so natural, that its effectiveness does not require any proof and explanations; people just *believe* the methods of folk healers. Belief is supported also by positive effects of therapy at mazars, which have been described frequently in histories about miraculous healing. Ideas about the world, based on myths, constitute a «filter» for perception of existing reality, structuring of one's own behaviors, and use of original terminology. Mystic representations about «health» and «disease» logically lead to forming a comprehensive system of protection from diseases. This system is partially based on pre-Islamic ideas, which often coincide with views of contemporary medicine concerning protection from disease.

Belief in miracles becomes particularly strong during times of social instability. No wonder that a surge of miraculous healing in Kyrgyzstan started after the collapse of the USSR. It is necessary to point out that that folk healing as an element of subculture also existed in Soviet times alongside official medicine but was considered as a kind of an antipode to the accepted, traditional methods of treatment. Increased interest in folk healing among the population resulted in predictable reactions on behalf of representatives of official medicine: denial of its effectiveness and strong criticism. Folk healing and traditional medicine are elements of two different subcultures, therefore expansion of methods of folk healing in early post-Soviet years caused a kind of “cultural shock” among representatives of official medicine. Dynamics of cultural shock are such that after a period of anxiety and helplessness there follows a period of adaptation to new cultural ideas and adoption of positive aspects of such ideas. At the present time those medical doctors, who discovered the rational in folk healing practice, adopt its elements in their work. Some of them are practicing even at mazars. This seems to be quite justified, because folk healing has many points of intersection with traditional medicine. Folk healing can add treatment with natural elements, culturally sensitive social and rehabilitation activities in therapeutic practices, and, most significantly, individual, psychotherapeutic aspects to each specific intervention.

Healing practices in Kyrgyzstan are quite heterogeneous. They include Ancient Turkic beliefs of shamanism with the cult of *Umai' Ene* (q.v.), *Khan Tengri* (q.v.), a daemonic being *albarsty* (q.v.), worshiping spirits of predecessors and their mazars, and fetishism (worshiping) of items of the environment (Israilova, 1998). According to Oriental geographers, historians, annalists and travelers, as well as research of outstanding and famous scientists, ancient Kyrgyz were heathens (Urmanov, 2000). Kyrgyz currently hold beliefs from their pre-Islamic past – the first system of beliefs of human beings and human society. Rites, rituals, and relics from primitive times, including elements of totemism and animism, and a cult of ancestors and their mazars, and shamanism are preserved.

Adoption of Islam as the main religion by the peoples of Kyrgyzstan did not displace early beliefs: fusion of the religious ideological system with the heathen religious and philosophical system of the local population took place. Religious ideas of the ancient Middle East penetrated deep into Central and Northern Asia and to a significant extent influenced Siberian and Central Asian shamanism, contributing to its contemporary outlook (Eliada, 1998). At the same time, new religious ideas transformed shamanism. Ancient Turkic healing beliefs have not remained homogeneous. Apparently they initially broke down into two streams. The first healing stream – “*kuuchu*” (q.v.) - is more like shamanism in its essence. The second is *bakshy* (q.v.). According to Uigur written sources of 10th century, a word “*bakshy*” was used to mean “literate person”. Valikhanov wrote, that “the Kyrgyz call a

shaman *bakshy*, which according to Mongolian notions means “a teacher” (Valikhanov, 1961).

Negative assessment of various aspects of healing is related primarily to an absence of a clear division of the religious-mystical concept of healing on one hand and effective practical techniques on the other hand. Religious-mystical techniques of healing and their popularity among the population attracted a range of healers, often charlatans. These «pseudo-healers», freely interpret the concept of folk healing and terminology and allowed for a negative image of healing in public opinion. Healing became a profitable activity. It is clear that it does not allow increasing confidence in folk medicine methods.

### *Methods and Participants*

During 15 years of studying Kyrgyz folk healing the author interviewed 358 people, who in one way or another claimed to be folk healers. The main methods were: (1) natural observation of the work of healers, practicing both individual and group therapy on visitors to mazars, (2) clinical observation, the necessity of which was dictated by specific psychological conditions of some respondents.

Two types of interviews were used in the process of carrying out this work: free (unstructured) and semi-structured interview both with healers and their assistants and with patients. During observation of the ritual of healing, a researcher functioned as an observer or participant in agreement with the healers.

### *Types of Healers, Practicing at Mazars*

**Kuuchu**, which literally means "the one, who chases away", has more likeness in ritual-magic actions with a shaman. Pre-conversion Kyrgyz were concerned more with forces of nature than God. The Kyrgyz in the past were pantheists, the same as the Kazakhs (Gabadullin, 1970). Ancient Kyrgyz *kuuchu* combined in one person a priest and a doctor. As opposed to a shaman, a *kuuchu* did not differ from others even with regard to clothing. He maintained the same life style as other people of the tribe. It is possible that before a ritual a costume was a mandatory attribute of professional activity of a *kuuchu*. Having put it on, he received full ability to communicate with spirits. Without the costume contemporary *kuuchus* try by one way or another to distinguish one's own ritual clothes from regular clothing. In our surveys among healers, there were only 9 *kuuchus*. They wore the same clothing as other village dwellers, and with them observed Islamic rites. At the same time they clearly distinguished themselves from *bakshy*. During the subsequent survey it was found out that they believe in “*kudai*” (ancient Turkic God), and not in Allah. When village dwellers called them a mullah, they could not respond, identifying themselves simply as “God's people”. They are keepers of a unique experience of the Kyrgyz shamanic traditions and are subdivided into “black” and “white” similarly to sorcerers. Symbolic attributes of *kuuchus* are considerable. Stripes and, less frequently, pendants symbolize an image of the spirit-the protector. Pendants in the form of tails (candlestick) symbolize a strong mythical beast, similar to a bear. Arms- more frequently a knife or a whip - are symbols of protection from evil spirits. A ritual *asa tayak* (*q.v.*) is a symbol of life. By using it a *kuuchu* sets a rhythm during collective magic. Various household items and foods symbolize a change of life style. One can less frequently meet followers of the *kuuchu* tradition, and there are practically none in towns.

**Bakshy** (40 people) consider healing to be their main profession. They are religious and observe all rites and instructions of Islam. In addition to attributes of *kuuchu*, *bakshy* must have beards. Grateful female patients frequently give presents to *bakshy* (especially to women). A headscarf is a symbol of their healing power. When carrying out healing

procedures, a *bakshy* must have white clothes in the national style. Men frequently add a white *tebetei*' (embroidered scull cap) even with day-to-day clothing, while women wear a white headscarf. Some *bakshy* put on medical robes. The style of clothing of a *bakshy* depends on who his mentor was. Wandering *bakshy* – dervish are dressed roughly, sometimes in rags.

Introduction of Islamic religious ideology into ancient Turkic beliefs allowed for centralization and structuring of local cults and beliefs on a higher level. At the present time *bakshy* are a product of this transformed system. It is necessary to say that Islamic healing tradition to a great extent assimilated (absorbed) outstanding achievements of medical doctors- philosophers of the Middle Ages: Avicenna, Al-Farabi, Al-Beruni, Balasagun, M. Kashgari and others. *Bakshy* understood folk medicine and were highly valued. Frequently such specialists provided assistance only to rich and influential people. However, such *bakshy*, following the Islamic, tradition could receive patients free of charge on Thursdays, prior to Friday, the Muslim holy day. *Bakshy* as well as *kuuchu*, while using all the wealth of folk verbal stories, messages or poetry, developed their own style of language, skillfully introducing unusual epithets and comparisons into their speech. These healers know what pleases the ears of not only people but also of spirits. «Spirits particularly like eloquent words, picturesque, well-rounded... rhythmic, harmonious», - wrote Ksenofontov (1930). This is why spirits endow the chosen ones with the skill of eloquence. Many healers considered that the first sign of occurrence of spirits is a person's gaining of a gift of poetic improvisation. Practically among all peoples of the world poetic talent is considered as a gift, received from above. By combining this poetic talent with the knowledge of myths and folklores of healing, *bakshy* and *kuuchu* have used it skillfully in their activity. Music and rhythm are of big importance in healing rites. While the rhythm is set by *asa tayak*, many healers, who adhere to the Kyrgyz healing tradition, play *komuz* (*q.v.*) well. The healing process starts with calling for spirits, beginning with motet (singing songs) and music. Many people accompany healing rites by beating a tambourine. We identified a few *bakshy* or *kuuchu*, who were using a tambourine in their practice--one of them brought a tambourine from the United States.

**Tabyps** (34 people). Oriental medical traditions, such as the Chinese, Korean, and Tibetan, strongly influenced healing practices and ideas of *tabyps* (*q.v.*). *Tabyp* (*tabyb, znahar'*) is a healer who uses medications along with traditional and Islamic beliefs. *Tabyps* are able to cure dislocations of parts (of the human body) and fractures. They use pulse to diagnose and have their own classification of diseases (cold and hot ones) and a set of medications to cure them. They also have a system of therapeutic non medication methods (such as acupuncture).

**Közü achyk** – is a clairvoyant (the one, who sees visions) (60 people), a man. He considers himself able to foresee the future, discern the past and diagnose diseases. He is approached by people unable to choose between alternatives, those who have been robbed, those with relationship problems, and those with diseases. Healing for him is only a part of his occupational activity. Healers of this group did not have a stable practice and a sufficient number off patients. They were only gaining a foothold in a new occupation and were expending considerable effort. For them it was characteristic to have "opening (disclosing)" by spirits during sleep or in a trance with a more experienced healer, keenness of interaction with spirits, insufficient knowledge of mythology and of the basics of pre-Islamic Turkic and Islamic traditions. Some of them continued searching for new forms of work or studied at courses conducted by other representatives of healing. Another part of the *közü achyk*, who were considered to have completed training, actively practiced healing without sufficient experience and knowledge. This is why we tend to consider those who consider themselves to be *közü achyk* in Kyrgyz healing as representing a group of people, who have not completely learned the path of this trade. These are persons who are at the stage of further (follow-up)

training, self-learning and accumulation of experience. According to an ancient Turkic belief, a spirit, when «opening somebody's eyes », gives a kind of third eye, which «sees» human diseases. The researcher was occasionally struck by high self-assurance of vision seers, who claimed having the third eye.

**Synchy** – are individuals with extrasensory abilities (48 people). They are healers who combine Kyrgyz healers' traditions with extra sensing practices. “Extra sensing can be due to a disposition of an expanded diapason of receptor reflection to feel the bio field of other organisms, reflected in heat, cold, pulsing, and other tactile feelings”, as Gosudarev (1991) writes. In our experiments diagnostic error among extra sensors was over 67%. Students of the medical academy, students of the faculty of upgrading qualifications of medical doctors and assistants of the psychiatry chair were attracted as volunteers (100 people).

11 people called themselves healers, but in major cases they were propagating various variants of a healthy life style (Ivanova, Amosova, Norbekova and others). Other 40 people were psychically sick and their activity was not studied due to such reasons.

### *Healing at Mazars: Specifics of the Style of Interaction with Patients*

Impact on a personality, polished by centuries of practice, is the most important integral part of any healing activity. Any reception is addressed to a specific patient and is necessarily accompanied by a psychotherapeutic intervention. An approach of contemporary medicine to «not cure a disease, but the sick person» loses its meaning in relation to methods of folk healing, because it does not make any sense to apply something which is customary and natural. Interestingly, that in folk healing it is possible to find sources of many contemporary psychotherapeutical methods. Forms of carrying out a number of methods remain unchanged for many centuries, only the content has changed. Experience of folk psychotherapy requires a comprehensive study. Western scientists are presently examining psychological and pharmacological interventions of current folk healers and emphasize their efficiency. Bearers of these ancient traditions do not discourage their patients from visiting doctors for qualified medical assistance.

Interactions of folk healers with patients combine elements of rationality and mystery. Use of elements of mystery in the work gives healers an opportunity to establish an image of mana, «associated with the spirit» of the mazar, who has special abilities. Behavior of healers as well as methods used by them, their judgments and grounding of their actions can vary, but most important for them is the transfer of particular information to a patient. This helps a healer to make an impact on a sick person and encourage him to act within the framework of the healer's worldview. Style of interaction of a healer to a significant extent depends also on available beliefs and on personal features, as well as on parameters of each situation. A necessary precondition of effectiveness of intervention is a favorable relation between two elements, between healer and client. If a patient does not achieve such a relation with a certain healer, he, as a rule, goes to somebody else. Thus, for successful activity within the framework of a certain style of interaction, not every client suits a healer.

The process of healing has two vectors – one is aimed at a patient, the second is aimed at the healer himself. It is not surprising that most frequently healers are the healthiest members of their community.

Mysteriousness is one of the obligatory elements of a healer's interaction style with one's own client. “Mysteriousness” of behavior of a healer is a complex and multi-factored characteristic, which combines several aspects.

1. First of all, the atmosphere of mysteriousness is determined by the venue of curative activities. Are mazars endowed with a specific force? The nature of such is mystic and little

understood by the majority of those who apply for assistance. The forces presence in the sacred place enhances the healing effect of healers' procedures.

2. Low informational content of messages of a healer and little understanding by a patient of his condition. In the unequal dyad "healer – patient," the first one is the main source of information, emotional support and explanation, while the second is unsure and anxious, hoping to reduce fear and suffering. Directive, "knowledgeable" behavior of a healer while carrying out little understood procedures at mazars enhances a patient's trust and at the same time encourages a patient to be active, independent, and engage in initiatives to interact with the disease. Reading of prayers is not understandable to a Kyrgyz patients, whose ethnic language is Kyrgyz. The mosaic of pre-Islamic, Islamic, Soviet, and extrasensory beliefs of the healer increase the mysteriousness of the intervention.

3. Use of methodologies and techniques having mythological content, application of various attributes, talismans, special equipment of a yurt near a mazar and special clothes of a healer. Special attributes allow for strengthening of the placebo effect of healing at mazars.

4. Availability in the world outlook of a healer of the phenomenon of "communicating with spirits", in particular, with spirits of mazars, also is believed to be something mysterious by the majority of patients.

5. In other cases – excessive normative attitudes and oddity of behavior of a healer.

### ***Healing at Mazars: Types of Impact on a Patient***

From a scientific point of view types of curative impact at mazars can be attributed to two main variants. The first one is the ecstatic condition of a healer himself and directing either one patient or what is more frequently observed, a group of patients into such a condition. The second type of impact on a patient at mazars can take place with the help of exorcisms, when support to a patient is provided through addressing spirits of mazars.

### ***Provoking Ecstasies in Healers' Practices***

Ecstasy is a strong and relatively short term emotional condition, caused by a powerful impact of any external or internal factor. Narrowing of conscience is specific for an ecstatic condition, and the attention of a subject is fully absorbed by circumstances, which produced the ecstasy and by actions, imposed by them. Narrowing of conscience can lead to inability subsequently to recollect some episodes of the event, which caused the ecstasy. Ecstasy can be accompanied by marked motility and, what is most important, by changes in internal organs.

Ecstasy for a healer is a controlled condition, caused on purpose by efforts of one's own will, and a healer must be able to achieve ecstasy at any time, when those, who are around, will need his services. Healing ecstasy is first of all a kind of specific ritual, an ancient, archaic form of psychotherapy. The ritual does not require a text, which was established once and forever. Numerous variants of the text are unavoidable, because each case of collective magic has its own peculiarities. The text is singular, because it is stipulated for by the needs of the ritual. If a healer in a condition of ecstasy is able to reproduce it, we can hardly agree with the fact that he absolutely has no control over himself and does not remember what he is doing. Ritual behavior of a healer must be expedient from the point of view of needs of the ritual. A healer is "insane (with diminished responsibility)" only to the extent, which is stipulated by objectives of the collective magic. Ecstasy is one of the most noticeable features of healers' activities. All healers (a brief description of whose activities is provided below) worked with groups of patients, who claimed a problem of alcohol dependency.

As opposed to a contemporary psycho-therapist, a healer acts not on behalf of one's own name. There are higher powers standing behind the healer- the spirits. Patients' faith in the ability of a healer to return health to them is enhanced by a rite (Basilov, 1984). All healers, whose work we observed, knew many melodies, *zikirs* and addresses to spirits and were able to effectively apply them. The environment of a rite itself helped provoke a state of ecstasy. Collective magic rites were carried out at night near a mazar or in a semi-dark room. Ecstasy, obviously, allows for excessive exacerbation of senses and allows for concentrating on one's own feelings.

A group process consisted of two stages. The first stage was conditionally called by us the stage of "collective magic". The second one included direct work in a group. Collective magic was frequently used by *kuuchus* and less frequently by *bakshy*. In case of necessity, which was identified by a healer himself, group work was finalized with the collective magic. Some healers were conducting only collective magic and were not engaged in a group therapy process impact in the generally accepted meaning of this word. Others considered collective magic as the first stage of a group process and were not satisfied only with it. Preliminary work on informing future group members consumed considerable time, because patients lived in various places of the republic and had to prepare for the therapy in advance. Expectations related to beginning group work and remoteness of location promoted a "ripening" of patients for inclusion into a group. A trip to a healer and participation in group activities most frequently was assessed by future group members as a vitally important event, an act, preceding healing and purification.

A healer set a certain day for the patients, usually Thursday (Friday in Islam is a special day). Meetings with patients were always set in the vicinity of a famous mazar. Sick persons, invited into the group came from various regions of the republic alongside with *shakirts* (*q.v.*) (disciples and followers of the healer). Patients were informed in advance that for two weeks and more prior to conducting healing procedures, they should not consume alcohol and that this precondition was obligatory. All patients who arrived were in a condition of anxious expectation in spite of appropriate behavior. *Shakirts* met arriving people, who were dressed in holiday clothing. After a ritual of welcoming, those arriving were invited to enter a dwelling.

People gathered in a spacious room or in a big yurt, sat around the table and drank tea. The *kuuchu* together with the *shakirts* after completing preparation for work, sat separately from them. All those present could see and hear both a healer and *shakirts*. A healer addressed patients one after another. Each patient told about his own problems with alcohol. *Kuuchu* induced a *shakirt* into trance, who communicated during this time with spirits and served as an "intermediary" between the spirits and *kuuchu*. Having heard the next patient and his relatives, *kuuchu* addressed the *shakirt*, who was in trance, with a request to tell about what he sees or what the spirits say. The answer of a *shakirt* was always unspecific and vague, his story resembling a recollection of a dream. Having heard the *shakirt*, a healer interpreted the words expressed by *shakirt* in regards to the patient. Complete silence followed during the interpretation and visitors listened to the words of the *kuuchu* with agitation. He would accompany his words with healers' melodies, or an address to more powerful spirits. The *kuuchu* continued to work during the whole day with short breaks. At the end of the stories told by all the patients, the *kuuchu* selected one of them for the session of collective magic near a mazar. All *shakirts* and the *kuuchu* carried out preparations prior to the collective magic: they performed collective ritual actions and meditated, while the believers performed ablution. Then a black rooster or a black sheep was sacrificed, accompanied by requests to god and to spirits to help those who were sick.

After that all went to a sacred place: the sick, the *shakirts*, the *kuuchu* and relatives of the sick persons. The latter were to take an active part in healing procedure. After sunset the group approached a mazar. Before reaching the mazar (by several hundred meters), the

*kuuchu* by himself made people stand in line: he placed his *shakirts* between several visitors. Observations showed that it is necessary for collective ecstasy. Because the action takes place in complete darkness or in the light of the moon, patients were not always able to see what the *kuuchu* was doing. At the same time, repetition of all actions of the *kuuchu* and words from *zikir* is obligatory. The line of people moved towards the mazar slowly, periodically standing still and falling on one knee. Near the mazar, *kuuchu* was asking for permission and blessing from "the Owner" of the mazar (spirit of the dead) for carrying out collective magic.

After that one of the *shakirts* took a special stick into his hands (sometimes with special bells) and an *astayak* and, hitting the soil set the rhythm of movement of the line around the mazar. The line moved slowly, occasionally stopping in certain places in order to touch a certain part of the mazar, indicated by the *kuuchu* or *bakshy* with a hand or a forehead. Then the rhythm increased its frequency, all patients following the *kuuchu* and crying out words from *zikir*. When all were driven into a condition of anxious expectation, the *kuuchu* started loudly proclaiming information about his visions. *Shakirts* confirmed the content of his message with exclamations. Preliminary mystical daily preparations and the peculiar environment, poor illumination, conditions of participants' consciences, rhythm and beating of *shakirts* with the *asa tayak*, and unfamiliar surroundings, allowed for mass illusions and hallucinations. People in the line soon started exclaiming about what they saw at that moment. Then all participants in the healing process stood in a circle, embraced each other's shoulders and danced in a circle to the rhythm of the *asa tayak*. One after another cried out what they saw and asked the spirit of the mazar and god to help resolve their alcohol problem. The process of collective ecstasy continued for over 2-3 hours. Usually a large number of people took part in it. In addition to those coming to participate in the session, others who happened to be at the mazar also participated. Characterization of a healer as head of the psychotherapeutic group requires describing his close link with the participants. People were not only observers of the healer's actions; they were involved in the process. Participants sincerely believed everything the healer was saying. Hallucinations had properties of actually existing objects. Thus, abruptly pointing at the hole in the (wall of a) mazar, the healer cried aloud: «What is it?» The first person, who responded, described his/her vision in detail. Then all the rest started to see similar phenomena, for instance, a large snake. Fear made all participants of the ritual quickly step back from the hole. At that moment the healer could cry out, pointing at one of the participants: «It is devouring your addiction to vodka! You are becoming a healthy man! A healthy man stops poisoning oneself with vodka! You feel it!» A participant quickly recounted his/her impressions with a grimace of fear in the face. He gave an oath that he would stop drinking alcohol. «Tell it to the owner of the mazar (to spirit)!» The participant addressed the spirit of the mazar, deeply shocked and promised to become a total abstainer. Thus, healing rites required continuous interaction of the main performer with those present, their active participation in the rite. The rhythm slowed down at the end of the procedure, participants gradually came out of trance. They experienced strong physical tiredness and a condition of "having been purified" – easiness and quietness. The *kuuchu* issued sick persons recommendations, thanked the spirit of the mazar and other protectors and god. Then each of them in solitude and silence read a prayer or addressed the spirit of the mazar, asking about something. Grateful patients tied ribbons, which strengthened the power of the sacred burial, to branches of trees, which grew in the vicinity. After that some chose to stay for the night and sleep near the mazar in order to be in solitude at night or speak with another *kuuchu* or *bakshy*, whom it is possible to meet near famous mazars. Some of them returned to the *kuuchu*'s home, where dinner was laid out for them: a national dish made from a sacrificed animal. The healer directed some of the patients to return to the settlement alone by foot.

Thus, collective magic in Kyrgyz society is seen in a healing process of collective ecstasy.

### *Exorcisms in Healers' Practice*

In individual work healers observed by us often used exorcisms. During exorcisms, a healer fixed his attention on a greater part of the patient's body. While addressing spirits, a healer psychologically readied a patient for future healing procedures. Undertaking an exorcism, he asked spirits to heal a sick part of the body of the sick person. The exorcism finished with words of support, addressing the future ("protect this man from now on"). Exorcisms usually included instructions to implement a number of actions, each of which had its own therapeutic content. Threads of various colors, which a patient was to throw into water at sunrise, could be used in these rituals, as a symbol of purification. Healers exorcised tea and water, bread, meat and other products, necessary (from his point of view) for diet therapy of the patient. Then a ritual of consumption of these food products was discussed; it was obligatory to describe feelings, which could arise during their correct consumption. Consumption of exorcised food served as an action possessing specific psychotherapeutical meaning.

Exorcisms take place with the use of various means of hypnotism. Thus, when carrying out healing, a healer can look closely only into the left eye of a patient. This practice is from long ago. It helps the healer to concentrate on the content of phrases, which he pronounces while watching the patient. Fixing a healer's gaze on the bridge of a nose of a patient produces the same effect. Experienced psychotherapists also use these techniques when provoking another into a trance. They are described in manuals on hypnosis. Suggestions of a healer to the patient to fix his gaze on a burning candle, on a sparkling item or on beads, or to concentrate on maintaining a certain pose serves as another way of hypnotizing. To enhance the hypnotic impact, a healer can apply tactile movements. Healers, using sensory techniques in their activities, applied tactile massage. They used smooth movements of hands in the vicinity of the head and neck as a massage. These movements create a feeling of warmth due to the movement of hair.

Exorcisms «protect» a man from evil forces (people and spirits) and, in case of deep belief in them, help patients to get rid of psychological problems. A man by his psychological nature always wants help from others, in particular from healers («to rest against a strong shoulder»). With the use of exorcisms healers help a patient to shift responsibility for psychological problems to something different. It is called extra punitive reaction in psychotherapy – an accusation of somebody or something for problems or disease. Exorcism realizes this desire of a patient as well. In cases of faith in exorcism a patient leaves a healer's place in tranquility and feels protected.

### *Criteria of Qualification of Healers*

On the basis of a long term study of healers and their occupational activity, the main criteria of professional suitability in the healer's practice are as follows (in our opinion):

1. A patient who is really in need of help of a medical doctor is referred by a healer to a particular medical institution.
2. If due to some reasons this healer is not able to help a specific patient, he refers the patient to another representative of the folk tradition. For instance, if a *kuuchu* considers, that acupuncture can help a patient, he refers him to a *tabyp*. Usually healers do not undertake to heal cancer, bleeding, psychotic conditions, infractions, strokes and some other diseases and refers patients with such pathologies to medical doctors. But such experience is gained with time, while at the beginning of healing career the majority of healers undertake to heal

everybody without discrimination, harming some patients in the process. Understanding comes with experience. A healer sees it is not possible to help all patients and recommends another doctor. The most experienced healers have a strict selection procedure, accepting a few as patients and recommending others to go to a medical doctor and less frequently a healer.

3. Accurate knowledge regarding to which group of folk healers an individual belongs to: *kuuchu*, *bakshy*, *tabyp*, *közü aчык*, *synchy*, or follower of one or other health improvement system.

4. The fourth criteria of professionalism is sufficient theoretical knowledge of the basics of the Kyrgyz and contemporary healing tradition.

5. The fifth criteria is availability among the surveyed healers of a sufficient quantity of techniques and methods of therapy, not inflicting harm on the health of patients. A healer must know well *zikir*, melodies, addresses, and prayers, be able to use symbols of healing, and understand the purposes of the symbols. He must possess a well-developed algorithm of interrogation, diagnostics, verified techniques and methods of therapy.

6. The sixth criteria - healers must not have psychotic forms of diseases. Severely psychically sick persons must be strictly debarred from this work. Absence of characterological deviations, which would interfere in the work are also included in the sixth criteria.

7. Among candidates to be healers there must not be persons with sadistic or masochistic inclinations.

8. Persons, claiming to be healers must be psychologically healthy to a sufficient degree in order to provide psychotherapeutical assistance to patients.

9. Usually the more a healer is advertising himself, the less healing experience he has, the less trust he deserves as a professional.

10. Higher or secondary medical education is desirable for a healer.

### ***Conclusion***

The basic principle of healing is an ecological approach to healing of a patient. It stipulates the expediency of applying natural means, as well as carefulness in use of artificial and chemical substances in therapy. Therapy at mazars corresponds to this principle. This principle indicates that any changes in a human body, including painful ones, are natural and have definitive goals. To avoid sickness a man must live in accord with one's own nature and not resort to behaviors that weaken a human organism. Another principle of healing is intermediation. Nature through a healer – the one selected by spirits, an intermediary- makes a curative impact on a patient. This is why healing at mazars serves as an intermediary between a spirit and a patient. External items can be attributes of ecology (foods, clothing, fire, amulets and mazars). Internal phenomena are also important (spirits, God, prophets, saints). The mysteriousness of the procedures and lack of knowledge of the healer's personality logically fit the role of intermediary. A healer, addressing spirits, is extraditing them from the personality of a patient. Communication of a patient with nature, including the mazar and the healer, as part of the wider ecological system is an important principle of healing. Interlinking aspects are demonstrated in association with rhythms of nature. Healers carry out certain procedures at mazars only at night or early in the morning, recommend taking medications in the indicated intervals of time, regulate the style of life by short fasts or diets, and carry out healing in accordance with the phases of the moon. A healer attributes more importance to the moment of communication with a patient than to collection of anamnesis and interrogation.

Use of temporary worsening of condition- a crisis- is also principally important in healing. Crisis as a natural reaction of a human body is one of the phases of recovery, which

generally is not taken into account by contemporary pharmacotherapy. Recovery takes place through worsening and ordeal- such is the principle of using a crisis in healing. Kamlaniye or group magic at mazars represents one of variants of such ordeal.

Healing at mazars is both a profession for the bearers of this tradition and a view of the world, as well as the source of their wellbeing and an opportunity for realization of one's own capacities and the source of creativity.

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## **KYRGYZ RELIGIOUS BELIEFS: POPULAR CONCEPTIONS OF MAZAR WORSHIPPING AND ISLAM**

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### **Abstract**

*In this article I consider the historical and contemporary perspectives of the spread of Islam in Kyrgyzstan, and look at the influence of Islam on traditional popular beliefs and practices of the Kyrgyz people. The unique mixture of Islamic and pagan beliefs in Kyrgyzstan has created an unusual religious culture and practice, which in some ways comes to contradict canonical Islam. Nevertheless, the Kyrgyz people consider themselves Muslims and continue to pray to Allah in sacred places. I argue that this unconscious and interiorized mixture of Islam and ancient pagan beliefs constitutes a fundamental part of Kyrgyz spiritual life.*

*The key importance of pilgrimage and visits to sacred sites holds a central place in the spiritual lives of the Kyrgyz. People not only pray to Allah in the mazars but also visit the holy sites for solace and aid in times of economic hardship, or if faced with health or family problems. Most people do not consider mazar worship as paganism, and despite increased access to canonical knowledge about Islam, people continue the practice today. Mazar worship, I argue is a cultural and spiritual reality that has existed for centuries and has been passed down from generation to generation.*

Pre-Islamic religious practices of the Kyrgyz people are many-sided. Their beliefs consist of many elements, such as visiting sacred places, and healing deceases with the supernatural powers of clairvoyants and sorceresses. The purpose of this article is to analyze the pre-Islamic religious practices of the Kyrgyz people and analyze why these practices have remained in Kyrgyz culture. Questions raised will include how the practices were integrated in the culture, and do they create negative or positive consequences? These questions and other points concerning this theme will be addressed.

The present work is based on the data from Russian scientists in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and information from recent research conducted by the Aigine foundation in Talas oblast of the Kyrgyz Republic. Information from these two resources gives us an opportunity to explore the theme appropriately.

Concerning the acceptance of Islam by the Kyrgyz people, S. M. Abramzon thought that preservation of stable patriarchal and feudal relations in Kyrgyz society led to the continuation of the primitive religious ideology and religious views of the Kyrgyz people. This religious ideology was not closely related to Islam but played a great role in the spiritual life of the Kyrgyz. Before the 16<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> centuries the Kyrgyz had different beliefs, such as totemism, fetishism, and shamanism. Some elements of these beliefs remained even after the acceptance of Islam (Abramzon 1999).

People have accepted Islam to some extent but their ancient religion has not disappeared from the lives of the Kyrgyz people.

Islam was spread in Kyrgyzstan approximately in the second half of 16<sup>th</sup> century and in the first half of 17<sup>th</sup> century. The takeover of Kyrgyz lands by Kokon Khaganate also promoted the spread of Islam among the Kyrgyz.

Different classes participated in spreading Islam, but wealthy Kyrgyz rulers also played an important role. According to Abramzon (1999), wealthy people accepted Islam first, and most of the times they compelled people in their estates to accept Islam. They invited Uzbek mullahs to teach basic rules and words for praying.

Wealthy rulers used Islam as one of the most effective instruments for controlling the people. The people's thinking and psychology could not accept Islam because they had other beliefs. Rulers had to convert them into Islam with force. What the rulers said was law. Almost all poor people at that time were converted to Islam against their will.

According to the Kyrgyz-Russian dictionary written by Yudahin and edited by Kagarov, the word, "*obo*," means a small group of stones, a stone and a hill. Among Altai' people the words, "*obogo*" and "*obo*," mean a group of stones dedicated to mountain spirits. These sacred places now are not called, "*obo*," they are also called "mazar". Close to these mazars there are many cemeteries.

Scientist Poyarkov has noted that in sacred places or cemeteries there are pillars decorated with buntings of different colors and people usually bring horns and other things there. During our field researches we have seen what Poyarkov has described about sacred places. Indeed, in mazars, branches of trees are tied with buntings, and throwing coins, buttons and beads into springs is a habitual activity of people who visit mazars.

Taji Seitatieva is a librarian but visits mazars and believes in their power. She said, "A mazar is a special sacred place for praying." Her words tell us again that mazars are sacred places for Kyrgyz people. Kenjekan Toktosunova, who was also asked what mazars means for her, said, "A mazar is a place for purification of hopes."

One can observe that there is a close connection between *bübüs* (*q.v.*) and mazars. Some of them say that they visit mazars in order to receive energy, thank God, read the Quran for the dead and clean up those places. Some say that they take psychologically ill people and women who can not get pregnant to mazars in order to go on pilgrimages. They spend a night there and if they do these activities several times, people get healed and women who could not get pregnant are able to get pregnant. They have witnessed many cases when people were healed.

Sai'maluu Tash, which is located in Kök Art Mountain of the well known Ferghana Valley, can be considered a sacred place. Women who can not get pregnant and ill people visit this sacred place. They take some kind of animal (a goat, sheep or cow) and bread (seven loaves) with them. They sacrifice the animal, boil its meat and eat it. They also read conjurations the from the Quran whole night.

It was discovered that in 172 mazars, in Talas oblast, people practice the same activities as in the Sai'maluu Tash mazar. People go on pilgrimages there, and bring 7 loaves of bread and an animal.

Sacred places in all regions of Kyrgyzstan originated from notions such as "*obo*," which means a group of stones. The culture of sacred places was an inseparable part of people's lives and of Islam, that's why active supporters of Islam have used sacred places for their goals.

The belief that groups of stones, e. g., Kyrgyz mazars, can be sacred, is typical as well for other cultures in Central Asia. Old religious practices and notions among Turkic nations must be considered thoroughly.

Most sacred site beliefs in Kyrgyzstan are connected with springs and healing waters. Valuable information about waters can be found in some writings from in the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The unknown author of these writings wrote, "Famous places or healing waters are respected and people make sacrifices there. Healing waters in Ysyk Ata, Juvan spring, and Kempir mazars in Berikme and Ketmen Töbö and others are considered sacred places. People sacrifice sheep there, boil the meat and eat it; they set out candles on stones, dedicated to the dead.

We have witnessed these kinds of practices in mazars located in our Talas oblast. For instance, a worker of the well known national property, “Manas Ordo,” Jancharbek Skakov said, “It is March now and it seems to be too cold. When it becomes warmer there will be many rituals in order to thank God and ask from him blessings if one has experienced bad times or decease. Some times there are 5-6 *tülöös* (q.v.) conducted per day. At this time, 25-30 *tülöös* are conducted per month. There were 430 *tülöös* conducted in 2004.” Spring mazars in Talas oblast are respected and considered as sacred places. For instance, Arashan mazar in mountain gorge Besh Tash, Booterek mazar in Booterek village, Nyldy Ata mazar in Tuyuk, and others are some of them.

We see that Kyrgyz people believe in mazars. Mazars have become an inseparable part of Kyrgyz culture; people respect them and go on pilgrimages there. The mazar is not a modern phenomenon. Wealthy people in past centuries (when Islam came) made sacrifices at mazars during Islamic holidays (Kurman Ai’t, Orozo Ai’t) or asked for help at mazars during bad times.

Scientist Amanaliev wrote, “In the Kyrgyz patriarchal society, idolatrous phenomena prevail over Islam, which is based on monotheism.” This is true, because people were used to those kinds of beliefs. Even now, different rituals such as *jar saluu*, *zikir chaluu* (q.v.), setting out a candle, conjuring for success, and other shamanistic practices are present in our life. The Kyrgyz have accepted Islam but have not destroyed other beliefs.

The great scientist of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Valihanov wrote, “Puritanism of Islam was not spread fully among this nation. The Kyrgyz call themselves Muslim, but they do not even know who Mohammed was. Funerals and weddings are accompanied by shamanistic rituals, but if there is a Central Asian literate man or a Tatar present, he then reads from the Quran for the people. This phenomenon happens sometimes in modern Kyrgyz society. There are people who try to pray 5 times a day but at the same time they eat food forbidden by Islam and drink alcoholic drinks.

We can not look at only one side. People had the above mentioned beliefs in 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries due to their illiteracy. Now, almost all people are literate and they read books about Islam and have their personal thoughts about religion.

Nowadays, there are many debates between mullahs who propagate Islam, and *bübü-bakshys* (q.v.) Mullahs say that *bübü-bakshys* are insane people and they practice idolatry (worshipping a tree or spring). Those things were created by Allah, and people do not have to go there, they can worship Allah at home. Mullahs are against *bübü-bakshys* by saying that they are simply charlatans. *Bübü-bakshys* say, “The mullah’s weapon is the Quran, but we do not have any weapon. Mullahs are always against us by using their weapon. We are not against them. They think that we worship trees or springs but we visit these places after taking ablution, we read the Quran for our dead relatives, and of course, we worship Allah. The mazar is clean and sacred, that’s why one can receive energy there.” They also say that they pray 5 times a day like the mullahs.

Here are some thoughts concerning the above mentioned debate. Mullahs go on pilgrimages to Mecca and pray in front of the Kaaba stone. This is one of the obligations in the religion of Islam. *Bübü* and *bakshys* go to sacred stones, springs and other mazars in order to worship Allah. These two groups have the same goals. Both groups go to a sacred place and worship one Allah. Mullah Azimbek says that this debate is incorrect; mullahs also visit sacred places and pray there. It is better to read the Quran for the dead and pray in places located in high mountains because these places are clean and sacred, if one prays there then his praying will be listened to by Allah. In this case there is no contradiction; the debate comes only from misunderstanding. We can confidently say that debates appear due to misunderstandings.

It can be observed that the belief in sacred sites such as mazars is mixed with the power of cemeteries for Muslims or people who had lived in pre-Islamic times and possessed magic and 'animistic' qualities.

Generally, visiting mazars is a heritage from our ancestors. This can be considered as one of the characteristics of Kyrgyz culture. In the Islamic religion, places which were visited by sacred people are called mazars. If we do not respect our historical places, and we destroy them, it means we forget our Kyrgyz culture and history.

Some mazars were under the strong influence of Islam. Mazars in Talas oblast are good examples of that. For instance, the place where sacred Ali left his sword is mazar Zulpukor (Talas rayon, Aral village), mazar Boztekter (Mountain Kümüshtak, Bakai' Ata rayon), mazar Booterek (village Boo Terek, Bakai' Ata rayon), mazar Nyldy Ata (village Özgörüş, Bakai' Ata rayon) and others.

It is impossible to say that all the above mentioned opinions are absolutely correct. Culture is a changing phenomenon and these beliefs change as well, after some period of time they can mean different things.

Concluding, one can say that phenomena such as mazar worshipping, reading the Quran in mazars, burning candles, and conducting rituals are mixed with Islam.

The Kyrgyz have had great difficulty accepting a new religion and new beliefs in 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries, whereas nowadays they do it easily. There were few Kyrgyz Muslims in 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries because they were lacking information, but in 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries they started paying great attention to Islam. First literate Kyrgyz men knew Arabic and they taught people different aspects of Islam. Later, when Soviet power was established, mazar visiting and practicing religion were forbidden. However, the culture of mazar visiting was not forgotten by people, and it still exists today. Now we witness a period when people believe both in mazars and in Islam.

Islam is one of the new religions in the world, and mazar visiting can be considered as one part of Kyrgyz culture.

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## THE ROLE OF INITIATION IN THE KYRGYZ WORLD

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### **Abstract**

*This article discusses contemporary ethnographic research on rituals. One particular ritual, defined by social scientist Arnold van Gennep as a "transitional ritual" will be discussed and compared to the manaschylyk (q.v.) ability of the Kyrgyz nation. Unlike other rituals which are devoted to and performed by people, the manaschylyk initiation ritual is performed by spirits. This differentiation, discussed below, was proven by the experience of young manaschy (q.v.) in the Kyrgyz world.*

The first observations about Kyrgyz rituals were written by Zibberstein in his diary from the first half of 19<sup>th</sup> century (1825). Zibberstein came to Kyrgyzia as a member of the official military diplomatic corps in which he was a military doctor. In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in 1856, Kyrgyz rituals were written about by Chokan Valikhanov, an ethnic Kazakh ethnographer trained in Russia.<sup>1</sup> He was also member of the Russian military expedition to Kyrgyzia. Some of Semenov Tyan-Shanskiy's works also contained observations about Kyrgyz culture and society, and were published in a collection in St. Petersburg in 1858. He was also member of the Russian military expedition<sup>2</sup>.

In addition to these materials, information about Kyrgyz rituals and rituals before the Russian Revolution of 1917 can be found in the works of the Russian ethnographers: Radlov, Severtsov, Venyukov, Zagrajskii<sup>3</sup>, Grodekov, Aristov, and Poyarkov. The materials of Russian scientists about Kyrgyz rituals provided a good base for the future development of Kyrgyz ethnography.

After the establishment of Soviet power, Fielstrup<sup>3</sup> and Direnkova<sup>4</sup> came from the Leningrad Ethnographic Research Center to Kyrgyzia in 1924-1925 with the task of collecting materials about Kyrgyz rituals and customs, and they collected considerable materials. Fielstrup divided Kyrgyz rituals into three main categories: 1. Life, 2. Agriculture, 3. Society.<sup>5</sup>

Rituals practiced in weddings, child birth, upbringing and funerals were included in the first category. Rituals in live stock breeding, agriculture and hunting were in the second category. Rituals of folk medicine, calendar and astronomical cycles, sacrifice, celebrations, magical activities, and national games were in the third category.

These studies were not scientifically analyzed by the authors but they provided a foundation for further scientific research works.

Among the Kyrgyz, Soltonoev was one of the first researchers in this field. He wrote works and observations about Kyrgyz rituals during the 1895-1934 years. His study on "oral history" preserved in the Kyrgyz Science Academy was only published in 1993. This work contains the history of Kyrgyz people from ancient times until 1916 and some information about rituals.

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<sup>1</sup> Valikhanov Ch.Ch. *Sobr.Soch. v pyati tomah*. Almaty, 1961-1968.

<sup>2</sup> P.P. Semyonov-Tyan-Shanskiy. *Pervaya poezdka na Tyan-Shan ili Nebesniy hrebet do verhovya r. Yaksarta ili Sirdaryi v 1857u*. *Vestn. RGO*. 1858, ch. XXIII.

<sup>3</sup> Fielstrup F.A. *Issledovanie sredi kara-kirgiz. Etnograficheskie ekspeditsii 1924-1925 gg*. L., 1926.

<sup>4</sup> Direnkova N.P. *Brak, termini rodstva i psihicheskie zapreti u kirgisov*. *Sb. Enogr. Mater. Po semei'no-rodovomu bitu narodov SSSR, #2, -L.*, 1938.

<sup>5</sup> Fielstrup F.A. *Is obradovoi jisni kyrgysov nachala XX veka*. –M.: Nauka, 2002.

In 1945 the work “Remains of Kyrgyz Shamanism” by Ilyasov was published.<sup>1</sup> In 1946 the famous Soviet scientist Abramzon organized an ethnographic expedition to collect information on various types of rituals. On the basis of this expedition was published the monumental scientific work named “Features of Kyrgyz culture.”<sup>2</sup> The author was one of the first scientists who attempted to give general information about the development of Kyrgyz culture from the 19<sup>th</sup> century through 1940.

In 1954 the Kyrgyz Academy of Sciences with its archeology and ethnography departments was established. They conducted ethnographical expeditions on a regular basis. Works based on these expeditions were published, by Abramzon, Burkovskii’, Jumagulov, Shinlov, Antipina, Mambetaliev, Amitin-Shapiro, Bayalinov, Aitbaev, and Alymbaev, including studies of Kyrgyz households, hunting, culture, art and religious remains.

On the basis of long research on Kyrgyz ethnography Abramzon’s monograph “Kyrgyz and their ethno-genetic and historical-cultural relations” was published in 1971.<sup>3</sup> The work thoroughly analyzes Kyrgyz household rituals and material culture in family and religious contexts.

It would be difficult to assert that Kyrgyz rituals have been fully researched. Even though customs of some nations have been well-researched, they still lack information about relationships with each other, meanings, causes, and distribution. Our main objects of analysis are Kyrgyz religious rituals.

One of the first scientists who wrote an important work on rituals was French scholar Arnold van Gennep. His work “Rites of Passage”<sup>4</sup> divided rituals into two contrasting types: 1. animistic and 2. dynamic. He also classified rituals according to the following types: a) sympathetic-contagious; b) direct-indirect; c) positive-negative.<sup>5</sup>

Van Gennep’s typology and classification were based on the influence of rituals on persons or things. At the same time he divided rituals into categories: 1. rituals of exclusion; 2. rituals of transition; and 3. rituals of inclusion.<sup>6</sup> Each category contains a variety of rituals. For instance, funeral rituals belong to the first category, marriage rituals belong to the second category and etc.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, one category can contain several other groups of rituals, for instance, rituals warding off evil can belong to funeral rituals and rituals seeking the birth of children can belong to marriage rituals.<sup>8</sup>

Of course, Arnold van Gennep’s perspective on rituals is general. Every ethnic group or even every tribe has its own rituals based on their traditions and their attitudes on them. That’s why not all rituals can be classified as van Gennep has done. But we still used van Gennep’s work as the basic material for this work, because no one has disagreed with his classification or given new classifications. On the contrary, the western academic-scientific environment has much criticized his work but still recognizes it as one of the most successful. According to van Gennep’s system, Kyrgyz inclusion rituals contain following types:

1. Declarations of friendship: inviting/gathering people, holding the Holy Quran, biting a bullet, swearing, offering a meal, sacrifice, praying and blessing;
2. Marriage: different kinds of matchmaking<sup>9</sup>, marrying children in order to become relatives, swearing, making sacrifices, inviting people and asking for

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<sup>1</sup> Ilyasov. S.I. Perezhitki shamanisma u kirgizov. TIYALI, vip.I.(1944), Frunze, 1945

<sup>2</sup> Abramzon. S.M. Ocherk kulturni kirgizskogo naroda. Frunze, 1946

<sup>3</sup> Abramzon. S.M. Kirgizi and their ethno-genetic and historical-cultural relations. – Frunze, 1971.

<sup>4</sup> Gennep, A., van. Obradi, perehoda: Sistematičeskoe isučenie obradov. –M.: Vost. Lit., 2002

<sup>5</sup> Gennep, A., van. Obradi, perehoda: Sistematičeskoe isučenie obradov. –M.: Vost. Lit., 2002, p.14.

<sup>6</sup> Gennep, A., van. Obradi, perehoda: Sistematičeskoe isučenie obradov. –M.: Vost. Lit., 2002, p.15

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Gennep, A., van. Obradi, perehoda: Sistematičeskoe isučenie obradov. –M.: Vost. Lit., 2002, p.16

<sup>9</sup> Matching making children as babies and when they grow up they marry

their blessing, shaking hands, putting headscarves on a girl, bringing into the separate room, designed specially for just married couple, dressing in new clothes, making sacrifices, name giving, conducting marriage celebrations, announcing good news, giving a gift for good news, asking for blessings and being blessed.

3. Child birth: inviting people and asking for blessings, telling good news and asking for a gift, cutting the umbilicus, feeding a baby colostrums, calling for an azan to name the child, making a sacrifice, conducting celebrations for the birth of child, asking for blessing, being blessed, laying baby into a hat and hanging it on the wall, washing the baby in salt water for forty days, conducting celebration after forty days, dressing in new clothes, the first hair cutting, and laying the baby into the cradle.
4. Inclusion into a group: inviting people, standing a treat, asking for blessing, asking for permission.
5. Name giving: making sacrifice, learning knowledge from master, asking for blessings, receiving blessings, visiting holy places, prevision, dream, dream interpreting, limiting food consumption, changing clothes, educating one's behavior, musical instruments, giving an object/item, clothes.

Above mentioned Kyrgyz inclusion rituals can be seen in other categories of rituals. For instance, inviting people and making sacrifices, asking for blessings, being blessed, biting a bullet, cutting oneself and showing blood, swearing, name giving, asking for permission, types of marriage arrangements, visiting holy places, interpreting dreams, and changing clothes. Some of these belong to transition rituals and others belong to inclusive rituals. This cannot be said not to belong to the above mentioned system. They can be explained according to their meaning, aim and method. In this case it is important to make a clear division between the primary and supplemental rituals. Concerning this issue, Lich said: "When conducting field works several rituals can be noticed. All rituals contain visual, verbal, spatial or temporal measures". On top of all, every ritual can be supported by special sounds, smells and tastes which have important meanings. They can be repeated several times. Each repetition can create difficulties for scientist, that's why it is necessary to define their level of importance<sup>1</sup>.

The ritual of naming a child is one of the most important events and plays a major role in people's lives. That's why Kyrgyz people pay much attention to this ritual and try to conduct it properly and on time.

"Name giving" (initiation) according to books on psychology means creating a model for behavior or activity. This activity is done through ritual. Through this activity, a person receives a social position within the society. Through this position this person gains access to the society, group or tribe. Customs and rituals are initial phases for : a) different tests on person's breeding; b) funeral rituals; c) gaining familiarity with esoteric knowledge and cult-magical rituals; d) rituals with holy water, blood; e) giving name and status to people; f) granting symbols that help recognize and differentiate people's identities in the society<sup>2</sup>.

In order to understand clearly let us divide rituals in the name giving procedures:

1. physiological or social development;
2. conversion to Islam;
3. becoming an artist or performer;
4. obtaining a professional role in the society;

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<sup>1</sup> Lich, E. Kultura i kommunikatsiya: Logika vzaimosvyazi simvolov. "Vostochnaya literature" RAN, 2000, p. 99

<sup>2</sup> Yurchuk, V.V. Sovremenniy slovar po psihologii. –Mn.: Elaida, 2000, pp. 197-198

5. reaching the level/status of a priest;
6. reaching a high status in political-military sphere.

The above mentioned rituals are conducted at certain times. In order to better understand these rituals, and when, how and why they are conducted, let's take some small examples. Example:

1. Physiological or social development: when: a) child comes of age (boy 12-13, girl 9 years old); b) reaching a birthday divisible by twelve years (12, 24, 48, etc.); c) reaching the age of the prophet at death.
2. Conversion to Islam: when: a) son reaches certain age (3-4, 5-6, 7-8 sometimes 9-10).
3. Forming a professional or performer, such as, a) healer; b) *Manaschy*; c) master smith.
4. Obtaining a professional position in the society: a) when graduating and receiving profession; b) receiving a certain status in a profession.
5. Reaching the status of priest: a) becoming recognized as a clairvoyant; b) having the ability to foresee the future; c) gaining influence on people and nature with the help of supernatural forces.
6. Reaching high status in the political-military sphere: when: a) receiving a rank from the government or people; b) performing heroism; c) starting to serve in the government or military.

Among these, let's concentrate on "formation of a performer or artist" such as obtaining the ability to sing the *Manas* epic (*manaschylyk*). Nowadays people have started paying much attention to these activities.

To be a *manaschy* one must go through several spiritual experiences and processes. He has to be chosen by the spirits of dead people and be inspired by them (talking with them). He has to learn from the most experienced *manaschy* (master) in his region. During this time he goes away from home, society and lives under the influence of mythological and religious forces. At this point teaching is done not by a master but by the spirits of dead people. Learning from a master at this level is a formality. That's why learning from the spirits of dead people is considered more sacred than from a master. From this time on, young *manaschys* (beginner) start sacrifice rituals not only when the master requires it but also when the spirits of the dead wish it. Sacrifices should be carried out not only to satisfy the spirits of dead but also to thank them for choosing and teaching him. Spirits bless young *manaschys*. Almost all *manaschys* go through these procedures.

Giving the status of "*manaschy*" to a young *manaschy* is done through sacrifice rituals. The Kyrgyz traditional saying "no sacrifice, no blessing" comes from such practices. A young *manaschy* chooses a young animal to sacrifice (male lamb, sometimes male goat) and kills it for God or invites people and feeds them. The young *manaschy* should get rid of all meat by distributing it to each guest. In Kyrgyz folk rituals, "asking for blessing" and "being blessed" are similar to rituals of "asking for permission" and "receiving permission". After sacrificing an animal to the spirits of the dead they wait for their blessing. The Kyrgyz saying "people grow with the help of blessings and the ground becomes green with the help of rain" is known to every Kyrgyz person.

Among Kyrgyz rituals such as "being blessed" and "sacrifice" are done by master *manaschy* (*chong manaschy*). Only after these procedures can a young *manaschy* receive the honorable title of "*manaschy*". The master gives some kind of gift (belt, whip, clothes) to his student (beginner/young *manaschy*) in his dreams, which means that the young *manaschy* was accepted as a *manaschy* by the master *manaschy* and that he will continue the works of the master.

The ritual “assigning rank to person” is generally conducted in front of many people (relatives, close friends), and ends with the people giving their blessings. Before being blessed the young *manaschy* and his master must make ablutions because one should be clean before the spirits of the dead not only spiritually but also physically. In Kyrgyz folk tradition the ability to be a *manaschy* is considered to be given by holy spirits. So, asking for blessing and being blessed by the people and a *manaschy* means that the young *manaschy* has done it in front of holy spirits. The people and master are bridges for young *manaschy* between this world and that of the spirits who pray for the young *manaschy*.

During the ritual of assigning the rank, the master, people and young *manaschy* pray and ask for blessing from spirits of dead people, from *manaschys*, from the heroes of the Manas epic (which is considered a historical work by Kyrgyz), from God, and from the spirits of the earth, water and animals. Among Kyrgyz people the spirits of dead are the second most important forces after God, which they respect and fear their anger. Kyrgyz consider the spirits of dead people those who have passed away. Offending spirits or making them angry is considered a big sin. That’s why there is the saying: “God forgives but not spirits”. Concerning the above-mentioned things Lich has stated the following opinion: “There are helpless and weak people in this world. They get older and die as time goes by. In another world there are Gods who possess unlimited power and do not have the sense of sequential time passing from yesterday, through today to tomorrow. For them time is eternal”<sup>1</sup>.

These rituals are conducted not only by people but also by spirits. If we would consider the symbols in rituals, then we can consider the symbolic aspects in rituals such as giving a name to a young *manaschy*. Symbols are taken from things that come from the outside world but there are some which come from people and are designed for them. They can be met in pictures, texts, music, colors, numbers, cloths, food, architecture and serve for different occasions.

Symbols in the rituals of name giving to beginner *manaschy* are: dreams (religious, mythological, epic and historical heroes); blessings (text symbols); animals for sacrifice (male lamb or goat); belt, whip, clothing and other things; ablution (water). All these can be considered in detail but when it is understood that every *manaschy* has different symbols it would take deeper analysis and research. Let’s analyze the case of Ulan Ismailov a young *manaschy*. He had a dream about talking to Sayakbai’ Karalaev, one of the greatest *manaschys* in Kyrgyz history: “Once when I was sleeping, one swarthy full-bodied, mustached man gave me a bridle and a whip and said:

- Once you heard me, you prayed and wished to be a *manaschy*. You fell in love with my art, is not that right? Now run, run, you are a fast horse.

I said: How can I run, I can not even get up from my place?

Sayakbai’: Run not with your legs, I meant move fast with your tongue, sing!

Me: Sing what?

Sayakbai’: Generous Manas.

I started singing, when I stopped he whipped me softly and said: “Do not quit!” The whole night I sang”<sup>2</sup>.

Sayakbai’ giving the bridle and whip to Ulan show his supernatural qualities. Ulan did not make special attempts to memorize the epic Manas but sings it well. When following spirits or giving something to spirits in dreams Kyrgyz interpret these as bad omens. However, when taking something from them is seen as good. The bridle and whip are special things with many symbolic meanings. Giving the bridle can mean giving power (in our case

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<sup>1</sup> Lich. E. p. 100

<sup>2</sup> Abirasakov T. Kyrgyzga Sayakbai’ kaitip keldibi? Kyrgyz Tuusu. 3-6 sentabr, 2004. p. 6

Sayakbai' gave the power of the Manas world to Ulan). The whip may mean equipment that fasten and makes beginnings successful<sup>1</sup>.

This example is only one among many. Much work must be done to discover more about these rituals and symbols. There is not much Kyrgyz literature on the above mentioned issues. Additional research and publishing should be accomplished expeditiously.

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<sup>1</sup> Egemberdieva A. Manaschy jana mezigil. B.: 2005, p. 41

## ECOLOGICAL CONDITIONS OF SACRED PLACES IN TALAS OBLAST

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### ***Abstract***

*Many academic and historical sources on the ancient culture, traditions and ceremonies of the Kyrgyz people have already established that during the pre-revolutionary period, before 1917, the cult and pilgrimage to sacred sites (mazars) was widespread throughout the Kyrgyz population.*

*The main objective of the following research was to study the natural features of mazars by conducting a methodological investigation into their soil and water ecology. Water from the investigated sources had good organoleptic properties, and proved to have a safe chemical composition. In terms of the epidemiological safety of the water, we suggest as for all potentially dangerous open water sources with free access for both humans and animals, that the water be heat-treated. A comparison of the chemical composition parameters of the mazar soils indicated that for practically all chemical elements the difference between samples was not greater than 10 times. From this data we can infer that the soils are relatively "clean". All values of gamma radiation exposure in mazars did not exceed 57 micro roentgen/h; the safety limit for humans including natural and cosmic radiation, set according to standards established by Radiation Standards 76/87.*

### ***Introduction***

In general a sacred place in Kyrgyzstan is called mazar. The word mazar has an Arabian origin which initially meant a construction above the tombs of holy persons [1]. Over time, this word began to be used to designate places having a sacral character in the national consciousness. According to G.A. Aitpaeva (2005), two types of sacred places can be distinguished in Kyrgyzstan now:

1. natural: springs, groves, mountains, gorges, caves, stones, trees, lakes, etc;
2. human constructions: tombs of outstanding persons, ancient constructions, places of death or a burial place of innocent dead people.

From sources about Kyrgyz culture, tradition and rituals it is known that during the pre-revolutionary period the cult of mazars was widespread. On the one hand the creation of man-made mazars was the consequence of ancestor worship; on the other hand, worship at sacred natural places has been connected with nature cults [Abramzon S.M., 1990].

At present there is a revival of traditions and religions in Kyrgyzstan and in all post Soviet republics. In Kyrgyz Republic the revival of religious feelings has involved, first of all, worship and the creation of mazars [Aitpaeva G.A., 2005]. However, the author stresses that

mazars as social, cultural and religious phenomenon were not only not researched, but were not even considered by the State commission on religious affairs under the government of the KR. However, this commission possesses detailed information on temples, the arrival of Russian Orthodox Church, Catholics, Buddhists and other communities [3].

The principal reasons for visiting mazars are [G.A. Aitpaeva, 2005]:

1. Health problems, including health problems of reproductive character;
2. Family problems, including addiction to alcohol and drugs;
3. Inner, spiritual needs for visiting mazars.

These reasons show that for many people it is important to visit mazars in order to stabilize their physical and spiritual lives.

The researches conducted by the cultural research foundation Aigine have shown that mazars are special energy zones in people's consciousness where people find vital conditions and achieve important goals by trying to contact supernatural powers directly.

In this connection the goals of the present researches were to identify natural features of chosen mazars by analyzing their ecological conditions.

### ***1. Research Goals:***

1. Carrying out ecological, sanitary-and-hygienic and radiological research around selected mazars.
2. Giving comparative characteristics of mazars on the basis of research results.

### ***2. Materials and Methods.***

In order to achieve the above mentioned goals, research was conducted in May-July 2006. Methods of research included: ecological-hygienic, radiological, toxicological, microbiological, and statistical. Research objects were the territories of mazars, spring waters and soil.

The research focused on the following mazars areas in Talas oblast: 1) Nyldy Ata, Echgili Too, Özgörüş village, Bakai' Ata rayon; 2) Arashan, Besh Tash village, Talas rayon; 3) Kochkor Ata, Kök Sai village, Kara Buura rayon; 4) Ak Tailak, Bakayyr village, Kara Buura rayon; 6) Boz Tektir, Namatbek village, Bakai' Ata rayon; 7) Booterek; 8) Sasyk Bulak, 9) Kyzyl Choku, Üch Emchek village, Talas rayon.

All geographical positions of chosen mazars were established by the device GPS GEKO 201 (Taiwan).

#### **I. Ecological-hygienic researches**

Samples of the water according to the requirements of state standard 4979-49 were selected for carrying out physical and chemical analyses of natural water, springs, in the areas of the selected mazars. Samples of water according to the requirements of state standard 18968-73

were selected for microbiological analysis. The following important conditions were maintained:

1. The place and time of selection excludes random events (disturbed water, accidental pollution of the water, etc.);
2. The time between taking water samples and analyzing them was minimized to avoid changes of the water. Elements of the selected water were conserved by suitable reagents for finding out certain chemical characteristics.

Physical-chemical and microbiological analyses of the water were carried out in the laboratories of the Limited Company «Alex Stewart Assay and Environmental Laboratories» and the Joint-Stock Company “Shoro”.

Chemical analyses of soils were conducted in compliance with the state standards 17.4.4.02-84 in the laboratory of «Alex Stewart Assay and Environmental Laboratories».

The selected soil samples were processed in laboratory conditions to exclude organic substances, stones, glass, etc. and to receive a homogeneous mass which was pounded in a mortar and sifted through a sieve with openings 1 mm in diameter.

The multi-element analysis of water and soil were carried out with the help of a spectrometer, using the ICP-AES (Model - IRIS 6969 Thermo Jarrel Ash). The atomic-emissive method with the inductive-connected plasma based on excitation of atoms in inductive high-frequency plasma and measurement of the intensity of spectral lines of defined elements by dispersing the analyzed sample in plasma. Relation between intensity line and concentration of the element in a standard is established with a calibration graph [8].

The analysis and interpretation of the received results were made on the basis of:

- 1) State standard 27384-2002. Water, Norms of measurement errors of structure and properties, Intergovernmental council on standardization, metrology and certification, Minsk, 2002;
- 2) Manual on potable water quality, WHO, Geneva, 1994;
- 3) Manual for laboratory activities on communal hygiene, Medicine, Moscow, 1982;
- 4) Reference book on admissible concentrations and effect levels, Bishkek, 1997.

## **2.2. Radiometric researches**

The capacity measurement of an exposure dose on a radiation scale was carried out by radiometer SRP-68-01, tested in the field using a sample scale of radiation source-226 on the device UPGD-1 in the department of geology KR. The measurement error did not exceed  $\pm 15\%$ .

For receiving statistically significant results, 10 measurements were taken at each point at a height of 1 m from the measured surface. The dose level of exposure was measured in the areas of 8 mazars of Talas oblast. (Table # 4). The total quantity of surveyed points is 80.

## **2.3. Statistical data processing**

The received data after the work was processed by computer with the Microsoft Excel software package.

### ***3. Results and Discussion***

#### **3.1. Water**

Almost all of the selected mazars have natural water springs. It should be noted that the water from these sources is used by mazar keepers for medical purposes. According to healers each source has a medical effect on certain illnesses and diseases and some water is used for external and another for internal usage (drinking). In this connection it was important to analyze characteristics and quality of the given natural springs, as the water intended for household uses and drinking must be safe in epidemic and radiation terms, it must be chemically harmless and have favorable organoleptic qualities.

The results of physical, chemical and microbiological analyses of the water carried out in the laboratories of the Joint Stock Company “Shoro” and Limited Co. “Alex Stewart Assay and Environmental Laboratories” are presented in tables 1 and 2.

The received results were compared with maximum permissible concentration (MPC) and recommended amounts according to sanitary standards 2.1.4.559-96 for potable water, as the given sources are widely used by local population basically for the drinking purposes.

The analysis of parameters (table 1) characterizing organoleptic qualities of the water testify that water almost from all the sources is transparent, without smell or taste, with chromaticity and natural precipitation of the mineral salts which is admissible for natural springs.

In the water sample # 2, from the spring Nyldy Ata “Köz Bulak”, living organism such as worms were found. This means that near this spring there are domestic animals, and moreover, the slow flow and scyphiform (cup-shape) of the spring, which comes from the stone, promote accumulation of various sorts of inclusions, substances and living organisms. It is necessary to note, that according to recommendations of the State Standard (1994), there must be no living organisms in potable water, because even small number of them can cause infection among people.

In the water sample # 5, from Kochkor Ata, insignificant dose of mechanical inclusions and significant dose of precipitation of greenish mineral salts were found. The possible reason for that is the spring has a slow stream and located in the marshland where intensive livestock pasture is practiced. In this sample of water microorganisms (70 colonies) and coliform bacteria were found.

Microbiologically unsuitable waters were found in the springs #4 (Nyldy Ata, “Köz Bulak”) and #6 (Booterek), they contained microorganisms up to 100 colonies and coliform bacteria.

As is well known, the water intended for drinking and household needs must not contain pathogenic agents that can be transferred through the water. E. coli from people and animals are the main bacterial indicators of fecal pollution. These bacteria and thermostable coliform organisms must not be in any (volume 100 ml) of the water intended for drinking. [Manual on the water quality control, WHO, 1994].

The analysis of the water for chemical harmlessness and chemical compound (table 1 and 2), testifies that water from all sources should adversely influence a person's organism. Characteristics of these samples allow us to conclude that the water samples are of average or moderate hardness and optimal mineralization (except the sample # 4 (Nyldy Ata, "Köz Bulak", which is more mineralized but still within the limits of the established standards), with iron and other element contents not forbidden for household and drinking purposes. The level of nitrate concentration is considerably lower than that which might have a toxic effect.

The comparative chemical compound characteristics and other characteristics of waters in mazars are shown in the table 1. The water with high concentration of salt and chemicals comes from the spring Nyldy Ata, "Köz Bulak", for instance, the level of magnesium is higher, from 2 - 11 times, than in other waters, the level of sulfates from 3 - 37, sodium from 2.5 - 55, iron from 1.3 - 16 and the level of nitrates from 2 - 24 times. Less mineralized waters come from the springs Boz Tektir, "Shyraljyn" and Kochkor Ata. The reason for that may be that their locations are in high mountainous areas close to glaciers.

Relatively high concentrations of fluorine were found in the springs Nyldy Ata, "Köz Bulak" (0.847 mg/l), Booterek (0.805 mg/l) and Kochkor Ata (0.769 mg/l). The results of chemical analyses have confirmed once again that natural waters of Kyrgyzstan contain low concentrations of fluorine: from 0.143 mg/l up to 0.847 mg/l (maximum concentration limit – 1.2-1.5 mg/l) [Kuldanbaev N.K., etc., 2000]. As is known, fluorine plays an important role in a metabolism of bone, including teeth. Low concentrations of fluorine in potable water promote dental caries while high concentrations of this element (more than 1.5 mg/l) leads to the development of dental and skeleton fluorosis.

### Conclusion

According to the organoleptic study of the water from the natural springs, the quality of the water is good. The water is chemically safe. In terms of epidemiological safety, the water from these springs must be thermally processed before consumption, because access to these waters is open for people and animals which make water potentially unsafe.

Table 1

#### Results of laboratory tests: Natural waters selected from the areas of 8 mazars in Talas oblast. (Firm "Shoro")

No n/n	Index name	Standards	Results of analyses
	Appearance, organoleptic	State Standard 23268.1-91	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Arashan:</b> <u>appearance:</u> transparent liquid with insignificant me sediments of mineral salts; <u>color:</u> colorless liquid; <u>taste, smell:</u> smell;</li> <li>2. <b>Nyldy Ata, „Köz Bulak“:</b> <u>appearance:</u> transparent liquid with n natural sediment of mineral salts;; <u>color:</u> colorless liquid; <u>taste</u> and smell;</li> <li>3. <b>Nyldy Ata, „Tamchy Bulak“:</b> <u>appearance:</u> transparent liquid w natural sediments of mineral salts; <u>color:</u> colorless liquid; <u>taste</u> and smell;</li> <li>4. <b>Nyldy Ata, „Kyz Bulak“:</b> <u>appearance:</u> transparent liquid with n</li> </ol>

			<p>sediments of mineral salts; <i>color</i>: colorless liquid; <i>taste, smell</i>: smell;</p> <p>5. <b>Kochkor Ata</b>: <i>appearance</i>: transparent liquid with insignificant natural sediments of mineral salts with greenish color; <i>color</i>: without extraneous taste and smell;</p> <p>6. <b>Booterek</b>: <i>appearance</i>: transparent liquid with insignificant m sediments of mineral salts; <i>color</i>: colorless liquid; <i>taste, smell</i>: smell;</p> <p>7. <b>Boztekir, "Shyraljyn"</b> <i>appearance</i>: transparent liquid with ins and natural sediments of mineral salts; <i>color</i>: colorless liquid; taste and smell;</p> <p>8. <b>Kyzyl Tash</b>: <i>appearance</i>: transparent liquid without inclusions <i>smell</i>: without extraneous taste and smell.</p>
total rigidity, molality /M <sup>3</sup>	<p>&lt;4 molality /M<sup>3</sup> – soft;</p> <p>4-8 molality /M<sup>3</sup> average;</p> <p>8-12 molality /M<sup>3</sup> – hard</p> <p>&gt;12 molality /M<sup>3</sup> – very hard</p>		<p>1. <b>Arashan</b> – 3,46 (soft);</p> <p>2. <b>Nyldy Ata, „Köz Bulak“</b> – 2,84 (soft);</p> <p>3. <b>Nyldy Ata, „Tamchy Bulak“</b> – 6,27 (average);</p> <p>4. <b>Nyldy Ata, „Kyz Bulak“</b> – 7,33 (average);</p> <p>5. <b>Kochkor Ata</b> – 2,57 (soft);</p> <p>6. <b>Booterek</b> – 7,02 (average);</p> <p>7. <b>Boztekir, „Shyraljyn“</b> – 2,57 (soft);</p> <p>8. <b>Kyzyl Tash</b> – 3,04 (soft)</p>
Hydrogen indicator, pH	State Standard P51232 (6,5-8,5)		<p>1. <b>Arashan</b> – 7,31;</p> <p>2. <b>Nyldy Ata, „Köz Bulak“</b> – 7,57;</p> <p>3. <b>Nyldy Ata, „Tamchy Bulak“</b> – 7,97;</p> <p>4. <b>Nyldy Ata, „Kyz Bulak“</b> – 7,93;</p> <p>5. <b>Kochkor</b> ;</p> <p>6. <b>Booterek</b> ;</p> <p>7. <b>Boztekir,</b> ;</p> <p>8. <b>Kyzyl Tas</b> ;</p>

Table 1, Continuation

Chemical composition, anion, mg/l	HCO <sub>3</sub> <sup>-</sup>	<p>1. <b>Arashan</b> – 262,30;</p> <p>2. <b>Nyldy Ata, „Köz Bulak“</b> – 305,00;</p> <p>3. <b>Nyldy Ata, „Tamchy Bulak“</b> – 317,20;</p> <p>4. <b>Nyldy Ata, „Kyz Bulak“</b> – 244,00;</p>	<p>5. <b>Kochkor</b> ;</p> <p>6. <b>Booterek</b> ;</p> <p>7. <b>Boz Tek</b> ;</p> <p>8. <b>Kyzyl Ta</b> ;</p>
Chemical composition, anion, mg/l	Cl <sup>-</sup> , 200 (B)	<p>1. <b>Arashan</b> – 29,75;</p> <p>2. <b>Nyldy Ata, „Köz Bulak“</b> – 29,75;</p> <p>3. <b>Nyldy Ata, „Tamchy Bulak“</b> – 71,13;</p> <p>4. <b>Nyldy Ata, „Kyz Bulak“</b> – 194,00;</p>	<p>5. <b>Kochkor</b> ;</p> <p>6. <b>Booterek</b> ;</p> <p>7. <b>Boz Tek</b> ;</p> <p>8. <b>Kyzyl Ta</b> ;</p>
Chemical composition, cation, mg/l	Ca <sup>+</sup>	<p>1. <b>Arashan</b> – 50,61;</p> <p>2. <b>Nyldy Ata, „Köz Bulak“</b> – 66,38;</p> <p>3. <b>Nyldy Ata, „Tamchy Bulak“</b> – 79,24;</p> <p>4. <b>Nyldy Ata, „Kyz Bulak“</b> – 66,38;</p>	<p>5. <b>Kochkor</b> ;</p> <p>6. <b>Booterek</b> ;</p> <p>7. <b>Boz Tek</b> ;</p> <p>8. <b>Kyzyl Ta</b> ;</p>
Chemical composition, cation, mg/l	Mg <sup>2+</sup>	<p>1. <b>Arashan</b> – 11,33;</p> <p>2. <b>Nyldy Ata, „Köz Bulak“</b> – 18,63;</p>	<p>5. <b>Kochkor</b> ;</p> <p>6. <b>Booterek</b> ;</p>

			3. Nyldy Ata, „Tamchy Bulak“ – 28,20; 4. Nyldy Ata, „Kyz Bulak“ – 48,84;	7. Boz Tek 8. Kyzyl Ta
solid residue, mg/l	State Standard 18164-72, 1000-1500		1. Arashan – 292; 2. Nyldy Ata, „Köz Bulak“ – 460; 3. Nyldy Ata, „Tamchy Bulak“ – 626; 4. Nyldy Ata, „Kyz Bulak“ – 1054;	5. Kochkor 6. Bootere 7. Boz Tek 8. Kyzyl Ta
Mineralization, mg/l	State Standard 18164-72, 1000-1500 (design method)		1. Arashan – 423,15; 2. Nyldy Ata, „Köz Bulak“ – 612,50; 3. Nyldy Ata, „Tamchy Bulak“ – 784,00; 4. Nyldy Ata, „Kyz Bulak“ – 1298,00;	5. Kochkor 6. Bootere 7. Boz Tek 8. Kyzyl Ta
Permanent oxidability	State Standard 23268.12, 0,5-5,0 mg/l		1. Arashan – 3,14; 2. Nyldy Ata, „Köz Bulak“ – 1,54; 3. Nyldy Ata, „Tamchy Bulak“ – 1,22; 4. Nyldy Ata, „Kyz Bulak“ – 0,58;	5. Kochkor 6. Bootere 7. Boz Tek 8. Kyzyl Ta
Total number of microorganisms, KOE/centimeter <sup>2</sup>	100		1. Arashan – more than 20 colonies; 2. Nyldy Ata, „Köz Bulak“ – more than 28 colonies 3. Nyldy Ata, „Tamchy Bulak“ – not found; 4. Nyldy Ata, „Kyz Bulak“ – 100 colonies;	5. Kochkor 6. Bootere 7. Boz Tek 8. Kyzyl Ta
Total coliform bacteria in 100 centimeter <sup>3</sup>	Not admitted		1. Arashan – not found; 2. Nyldy Ata, „Köz Bulak“ – not found; 3. Nyldy Ata, „Tamchy Bulak“ – not found;; 4. Nyldy Ata, „Kyz Bulak“ – found;	5. Kochkor 6. Bootere 7. Boz Tek 8. Kyzyl Ta

(B) – temporarily recommended amount

Table 2

Results of laboratory researches. Natural waters selected from the areas of 8 mazars in Talas oblast. (ASAEL)

Name of springs	Characteristics MPC*	1. Arashan	2. Nyldy Ata, „Köz Bulak“	3. Nyldy Ata, „Tamchy Bulak“	4. Nyldy Ata, „Kyz Bulak“	5. Kochkor Ata	6. Booterek Te	7. „S
F, mg/l	1,2-1,5	0,143	0,315	0,454	0,847	0,769	0,805	0,
SO <sub>4</sub> , mg/l	500	13	63	124	405	20	99	11
NO <sub>3</sub> , mg/l	45	0,9	5,5	6,3	12	0,5	1,7	1
Ag, mg/l	-	<0.003	<0.003	<0.003	<0.003	<0.003	<0.003	<0
Al, mg/l	0,5	<0.03	0,08	0,03	0,1	0,05	<0.03	<0

As, mg/l	<b>0,05</b>	0,012	0,012	0,007	0,005	<0.005	<0.005	0,
Ba, mg/l	<b>0,1</b>	0,046	0,086	0,05	0,019	0,116	0,067	0,
Be, mg/l	<b>0,0002</b>	<0.0002	<0.0002	<0.0002	<0.0002	<0.0002	<0.0002	<0,
Ca, mg/l	-	59,4	68,8	75,8	75,7	50,2	78,2	39,
Cd, mg/l	<b>0,001</b>	<0.002	<0.002	<0.002	<0.002	<0.002	<0.002	<0,
Co, mg/l	<b>0,003**</b>	<0.004	<0.004	<0.004	<0.004	<0.004	<0.004	<0,
Cr, mg/l	<b>0,05</b>	<0.008	<0.008	<0.008	<0.008	<0.008	<0.008	<0,
Cu, mg/l	<b>1,0</b>	<0.005	<0.005	<0.005	<0.005	<0.005	<0.005	<0,
Fe, mg/l	<b>0,3</b>	<0.003	0,038	0,015	0,049	0,025	<0.003	<0,
Hg, mg/l	<b>0,0005</b>	<0.0005	<0.0005	<0.0005	<0.0005	<0.0005	<0.0005	<0,
K, mg/l	-	1,29	13,9	3,9	2,34	1,56	2,31	1,
Mg, mg/l	-	14,2	19,8	25,9	53,8	5,17	34,7	7,
Mn, mg/l	<b>0,1</b>	<0.001	0,001	<0.001	0,003	<0.001	<0.001	<0,
Mo, mg/l	<b>0,25</b>	0,004	0,007	0,006	0,008	0,005	<0.004	0,
Na, mg/l	-	9,47	34,9	86,5	219	3,96	25,5	5,
Ni, mg/l	<b>0,1</b>	<0.005	<0.005	<0.005	<0.005	<0.005	<0.005	<0,
Pb, mg/l	<b>0,03</b>	<0.02	<0.02	<0.02	<0.02	<0.02	<0.02	<0,
Sb, mg/l	-	<0.02	<0.02	<0.02	<0.02	<0.02	<0.02	<0,
Se, mg/l	<b>0,01</b>	<0.02	<0.02	<0.02	<0.02	<0.02	<0.02	<0,
Si, mg/l	-	4,53	5,64	5,69	5,7	3,2	6,76	4,
V, mg/l	-	<0.006	<0.006	<0.006	<0.006	<0.006	<0.006	<0,
Zn, mg/l	<b>5,0</b>	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	0,001	<0.001	0,005	<0,

\* - standards for potable water; \*\* - recommended amount

**Picture 1:** Presence of elements, concentration of selected indicators in natural waters of 8 mazars in Talas oblast. (mg/l).

### 3.2. Soil

The results of chemical analyses of the soil selected in the area of mazars in Talas oblast are presented in the table #3. It is necessary to note, that many characteristics of soil are absent: there is no MPC, and moreover even established MPC have a big difference depending on the soil type, its acidities, and also depending on methods of decomposition of the soil with the aim to define elements and conjunctions. It is necessary to indicate, that with the absence of MPC of chemical substances, the evaluation of the soil condition must be carried out with the consideration of the following conditions:

1. Concentration of chemical substance in the researched and control samples of soil. If, concentration of chemical substance in the analyzed sample of soil corresponds those of the control sample then this soil considered "clean"; if, in the analyzed sample of soil, concentration of harmful substance is less than 10 times the estimated figure then the soil is considered weakly polluted. When concentration of harmful substance is between 10-100 times that of the control sample then the soil considered as a polluted soil, when it exceeds 100 times then the soil is strongly polluted.
2. Diseases among the population, animals and plants.
3. Degree of toxicity of the harmful substance in the soil.
4. Penetration of the substance into the subsoil waters, air, plants, meat and milk of animals.

5. Ability of the substance to accumulate in the soil and contacting sphere.
6. The general sanitary evaluation of the soil.

Relatively high levels of the most toxic elements were found in the samples of soil in the following mazars: lead in the sample soil of Boz Tektir and Booterek mazars (40 mg/l and 29 mg/l - exceeds MPC by 2 and 1.5 times), arsenic in the sample soil of mazar Boz Tektir (38 mg/l - exceeds maximum concentration limit by 2.5 times). Concentrations greater than MPC were also found in mazar Booterek (14 mg/l). Mercury exceeded the MPC by 1.4 times in the area of Arashan mazar (3 mg/l). Figure 2 shows that the level of concentration of many elements in the samples of soil selected in mazars Booterek and Boz Tektir exceeded the concentration of elements found at other mazars of Talas oblast.

By analyzing these results, it is necessary to note, that presence of relatively high concentration of potentially toxic elements in the samples of soil in the researched territories does not mean that these places are ecologically and sanitarly hazardous. These concentrations reflect natural levels of element concentration in the soil of these places. Moreover, due to their geographic location and environmental conditions these territories are not attractive for agricultural development or other activities by people living nearby.

**Conclusion:** Comparison of the chemical characteristics of the soils in the researched areas show that the concentrations of all elements in the samples exceed the MPC by less than 10 times, which means that soil is relatively clean.

**Table 3**

**Results of laboratory analyses of soil samples selected in the areas of 8 mazars in Talas oblast. (ASAEL)**

Sample Name	Ag, ppm	Al, ppm	As, ppm	Ba, ppm	Be, ppm	Bi, ppm	Cd, ppm
<b>MPC</b>	-	-	15	-	-	-	-
1. Arashan	<1.0	4935	3	84	0,3	<3.5	>5
2. Nyldy Ata, „Köz Bulak“	<1.0	12130	10	169	0,5	<3.5	>5
3. Nyldy Ata, „Tamchy Bulak“	<1.0	6675	3	102	0,4	<3.5	>5
4. Nyldy Ata, „Kyz Bulak“	<1.0	7650	9	270	0,4	<3.5	>5
5. Kochkor Ata	<1.0	9256	6	300	1	<3.5	17
6. Booterek	<1.0	15930	14	115	1	<3.5	42
7. Boz Tektir, “Shyraljyn”	<1.0	21830	38	116	1	<3.5	81
8. Kyzyl Tash	<1.0	7059	4	111	1	<3.5	>5

**Table 3. Continuation**

Sample Name	Sb, ppm	Sc, ppm	Se, ppm	Sn, ppm	Sr, ppm	Te, ppm	Ti, ppm	V, ppm	Cr, ppm	Cu, ppm
<b>MPC</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0,05	-
1. Arashan	<2.5	1	<1.5	<2.5	121	<5	218	15	14	8
2. Nyldy Ata, „Köz Bulak“	<2.5	2	<1.5	<2.5	143	<5	253	26	24	2
3. Nyldy Ata, „Tamchy Bulak“	<2.5	1	<1.5	<2.5	313	<5	76	10	10	9

4. Nyldy Ata, „Kyz Bulak“	<2.5	1	<1.5	<2.5	212	<5	83	20	15
5. Kochkor Ata	<2.5	4	<1.5	<2.5	39	<5	729	25	15
6. Booterek	<2.5	5	<1.5	<2.5	154	<5	561	36	40
7. Boz Tektir, „Shyraljyn“	<2.5	7	<1.5	<2.5	39	<5	998	54	49
8. Kyzyl Tash	<2.5	4	<1.5	<2.5	321	<5	245	44	128

**Table 3 Continuation**

Sample name	W, ppm	Y, ppm	Zn, ppm	Zr, ppm	Mg, ppm	Mn, ppm	Mo, ppm	Na, ppm
<b>ПДК</b>	-	-	<b>55-220</b>	-	-	-	-	-
1. Arashan	<5	3	57	1	20920	344	<0.5	318
2. Nyldy Ata, „Köz Bulak“	<5	6	43	2	12590	488	<0.5	368
3. Nyldy Ata, „Tamchy Bulak“	<5	3	18	1	44510	202	<0.5	435
4. Nyldy Ata, „Kyz Bulak“	<5	5	13	<0.5	24620	190	<0.5	1238
5. Kochkor Ata	<5	15	27	3	6563	454	1	201
6. Booterek	<5	9	75	3	14240	826	<0.5	350
7. Boz Tektir, „Shyraljyn“	<5	8	108	4	11930	765	<0.5	969
8. Kyzyl Tash	<5	6	35	2	18390	549	1	518

**Picture 2.** Concentration of chemical elements in the soil of 8 mazars in Talas oblast (ppm).

### 3.3. Radioactive background

As mentioned earlier, the local population considers mazars to be zones that have extraordinary energy. Therefore, it was interesting to conduct different kinds of biophysical research in order to find out differences from other territories and to measure the current conditions of these sacred places. However, it is impossible presently to conduct such research using the facilities of local research centers in Kyrgyzstan. To get minimal information about this theme it was decided to measure radioactive conditions in the areas of mazars.

It is well-known that one of the main sources for irradiation of the population is natural background radiation. Depending on geographical and environmental conditions, levels of natural background radiation can vary substantially. The earth's background radiation comprises three components:

- Radiation caused by space radiation;
- Radiation diffused in the earth's crust, soil, air, water and in other objects of natural radioactive nuclide environment where main radiation caused by potassium-40, uranium-238, thorium-232 with the products of decaying uranium and thorium.;
- Radiation from artificial radioactive nuclide (radioactive substances from atomic industries, nuclear, radioactive substances used in medicine, etc.).

The results of radiometric measurement in the area of 8 mazars in Talas oblast are shown in table #4. The figure shows that minimal intensity of CED radiation is found in the mazars: Arashan, Nyldy Ata and Kyzyl Tash: from 4-9 micro roentgen/h; and higher doses were found in mazars: Ak Tai'lak, Booterek, Kyzyl Choku, Kochkor Ata, and Boz Tektir: from 12-54 micro roentgen/h.

**Table 4**

**Name of places, geographic location, capacity of exposure dose (CED) scale of radiation micro-roentgen/h, dates of measurements**

Name of places	Data	Latitude (°N)	Longitude(°D)	Altitude (m. Above sea level)	CED, min-max (мкР/ч)
1. Kyzyl Choku	01.05.05	42°35.6602	72°36.5572	1975	26-44
2. Arashan	02.05.05	42°22.2402	72°16.4782	1612	4-9
3. Nyldy Ata, Ünkür	03.05.05	42°34.4882	72°03.0662	1399	5-8
4. Nyldy Ata, „Köz Bulak“	03.05.05	42°34.5052	72°02.9972	1409	4-9
5. Nyldy Ata, „Kyz Bulak“	03.05.05	42°34.2032	72°04.3812	1253	6-8
6. Kochkor Ata	05.05.06	42°23.7452	71°02.7122	1888	23-27
7. Ak Tai'lak	06.05.06	42°27.6652	71°20.7822	1514	12-16
8. Booterek	06.05.06	42°35.2392	71°45.9662	928	12-25
9. Boz Tektir	07.05.06	42°22.9812	71°48.8752	1625	28-54
10. Boz Tektir, “Shyraljyn”	07.05.06	42°21.3082	71°46.4132	1869	21-27
11. Kyzyl Tash	08.05.06	42°28.1072	72°41.0672	1634	5-8

The relatively high radiation in the Boz Tektir area can be explained by the fact that this place has intrusive rocks such as granite and granosyenite which have the highest radiation, from 20-120 micro roentgen/h.

These results are verified by chemical analyses of the soil. So the concentration of lead, the final product of decayed uranium, in the soil exceeds that of other areas by 2-5 times, attaining 40 mg/l. (table 3, picture 2).

These abnormal levels were observed in the area of Boz Tektir mazar, where granite rocks caused the radiation to reach 54 micro roentgen/h, while the larger area averaged 28-32 micro roentgen/h. In the area in Booterek mazar, where the prayer house is located, the radiation ranged from 20-25 micro roentgen/h while on all adjoining territories the average scale was 12-15 micro roentgen/h. Imported materials that were used for building the house can be the reason for high scale radiation around the house.

### *Conclusion*

Thus, scale of radiation on the researched territories did not exceed 57 micro roentgen/h P/ч (0, 5 roentgen-equivalent-man/per year), i.e. the maximum admissible dose for the population, taken into account natural radiation and cosmic rays established by radiation standards 76/87. On the basis of the received analyses it is possible to conclude that radiation scale in the areas of all 8 mazars is normal.

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**‘KEEPING THE SACRED A SECRET’  
VOICES OF PEOPLE WHO WORSHIP AT THE NYLDY ATA COMPLEX  
OF SACRED SITES IN TALAS DISTRICT (KYRGYZSTAN)**

(WHAT ARE THE ‘WRONGS’ AND ‘RIGHTS’ OF PRESENTING KNOWLEDGE OF SACRED SITES ON  
MAPS TO PILGRIMS?)

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**Abstract**

*Sacred sites and the experiences, hopes and fears that practitioners have about sacred sites in relation to changing economic and social organization will be a main focus of this article. Specifically, in article will be raised the question of knowledge and control over knowledge of sacred sites. The hypothesis of this article is that-every community has its local ethics and certain claims in accordance with it. I will also dwell on issues of how people think about the sites and what kind of respect people show, and how they maintain control over these sites. In the article I will be discussing questions of cultural property rights, one of the main concerns of local practitioners who argue that sacred sites have to belong to all people who live in Kyrgyzstan and not to certain private owners.*

*This article will present the concerns of research respondents and will describe the uses of the sites in direct relationship to the kinds of rights that people feel they should have, along with any challenges or limits to those rights that people have experienced.*

*The local practitioners have extensive knowledge about the sites and were put in the center of the mapping project that was conducted in one of villages in Northern part of Kyrgyzstan. Project was carried out by members of Aigine Research Center in Kyrgyzstan. In this case the mapping work was a way to find out about knowledge that discussed how practitioners feel about the idea of mapping sacred sites and how do they think that their knowledge should be used. Hence, the article will be organized around people who are experts, and then talk about the mapping project as another tool that was used for my research. It also helped to reveal knowledge of cultural practitioners and expanded the conversation with the local experts, rather than the goal of the project.*

**Introduction**

Worshipping at sacred sites is a well-known cultural behavior all over the world and in Kyrgyzstan, worshipping at sacred sites is a wide spread phenomenon as well. In the Kyrgyz language sacred sites are called ‘mazars.’ ‘Mazar’ is a word from the Arabic language it means “a place which is visited.” It is an object of pilgrimage, usually the grave of a Muslim saint. Over time the word came to be used to designate any place with a sacred character (Aitpaeva, p.118, 2006). Further, in the article sacred sites will be referred to as mazars.

The site of this study is the Nyldy *ata* (Nyldy *father*) complex of mazars in the village of Özgörüş, which is located in the northern part of Kyrgyzstan, in the Talas district. As key figures of research project were chosen predominantly *shaykhs* (guardians of mazars) and *ziyaratchys* (pilgrims). *Shaykh* is Arabic word and means “elder person” but also a *guardian*. *Shaykhs* of Muslim mausoleums, mazars and other sacred sites. During medieval times in Muslim countries ‘shaykh-ul-muslim,’ had interpretation of a leader and a head of Muslims. The word *ziyaratchy* comes from the word *ziyarat*. *Ziyarat* (*ziyara*- Ar. *pilgrimage*) in the understanding of Kyrgyz Muslims nowadays means visiting local mazars, rocks and mountains that are connected to the names of prophets, *mashaykhs* (saints or pious monks)

and *kojo shaykhs* (*kojo* – Pers. *khoja*, master) with a goal to make certain wishes, to ask for salvation from sins and to pray (Kyrgyz Ethnographic Dictionary, p. 506-187, 2005); (Privratsky, p. 1; 32, 2001); (The Encyclopaedia of Islam, p.379-98, 1997);

*Shaykhs* and *ziyaratshys* were involved in research project as cultural practitioners who have been worshipping and visiting mazars and who possess traditional knowledge of mazars. The concepts of rights and responsibilities related to mazars are related to ethical ideas of local community members.

In the preamble of AAA ethics, in the first sentence it states that anthropological researchers, teachers and practitioners are members of many different communities, each with its own moral rules or codes of ethics. I assume that if not necessarily with its own code of ethics but certainly with own understanding of ethics or moral expectations. That anthropologist can find themselves in complex situations and subject to more than one code of ethics; The AAA Code of Ethics provides a framework, not an ironclad formula, for making decisions.” (AAA Code of Ethics, 1998).

Alexandra Bobrestova in her, “Special Ethical Code of the Researcher-Propogator: ‘Emotional Contact’ and ‘Impassive Observation,’” made a very important statement that confirms my thesis. She said, “Until the present time, no common ethical rules for cultural fieldwork have been formulated, and the existing viewpoints concerning this range from ethical absolutism to ethical relativism. At the period of ‘post-modern’ science, the most widely spread opinion was that, in each case or in a concrete situation, it is the scientists themselves who are to solve the ethical issues brought into question. The existence of any common standards or rules was considered to be absolutely impossible.”

Thus, this article will present ‘rights’ and ‘wrongs’ of making a map of the mazars at Nyldy ata, and worshipping and behaving at mazars since *ziyaratshys* are strongly recommended to follow certain strong social expectations while they visit mazars. Since I mentioned, the *ziyaratshys*, the visitors to the Nyldy ata complex, I would like to tell briefly about the stories of *ziyaratshys* and the usual or most common reasons why people visit the Nyldy ata complex. What are the possible reasons that provide a conducive condition that makes people visit mazars at Nyldy ata? When I went to the Nyldy ata complex of mazars with the *shaykh* of the complex to talk to *ziyaratshys*, I met there two men who stayed there for one night to pray for their own well being and that of their relatives. To my question, “why do you spent a night at the mazar?” one of them replied that he wanted to find the truth of this life. They were recommended to do so by the guardian of the mazar. A guardian of Nyldy ata not only looks after the mazars and keeps the springs clean but also heals people by using traditional methods of healing. Both of the *ziyaratshys* that were staying for one night at one of the mazars called *Ordo* at the Nyldy ata complex did not want to share the real reason of their visit to Nyldy ata, and also they were receiving the ‘*dem saluu*’ treatment. ‘*Dem saluu*,’ is a spiritual and physical empowerment of the person. Specifically, the power of the individual is stimulated by performing the ritual of *dem saluu*. Moreover, they had decided to spend a night at the *Ordo* mazar.. As they also mentioned the process of purification could be aided by spending a night at a mazar where everything is clean including the water, the air, environment and thoughts of the person as well. They believe in the power of the mazar that has the ability to purify and to give energy to *ziyaratshys*. The ages of the visitors to mazars vary from young to very old visitors. As long as the person needs help related to her/his health than s/he visits mazars.

### ***Expected Behavior When Visiting the Mazars at the Nyldy Ata Complex***

According to the traditional understanding, the visitor should come to the sacred and holy place being physically and morally clean. Specifically, a visitor should be respectful towards other visitors and realize that s/he is at the mazar and comply in accordance with the situation.

The majority of the experienced *ziyarat*chys that I have interviewed were concerned with regards to people visiting Nyldy ata and whether or not they will fulfill the rules of visiting the mazars, if they do not, it will ‘disappoint’ the spirits of the mazars. Since a drunken person coming to such a place might scare the spirits of the mazars, most of my informants believe that the existence of such useful and medically healthy springs is part of the special feature or peculiarity of the mazars.

Also it is not encouraged to shout at each other while visiting the mazars in the Nyldy ata complex. According to the words of my informants, it is considered as disrespect towards the spirits of the mazars. It is necessary to be clean before visiting the mazar, not only physically but also spiritually as well. Those who will go to mazars clean, will be blessed by the *pirs* of mazars.

### **General suggestions of the *shaiykhs* and *ziyarat*chys of Nyldy ata for visitors of mazars**

- Visit the sacred sites with the understanding and realization of the fact that one is visiting the place where traditional worshipping is performed;
- Respect the sacredness of the mazar and the feelings of *ziyarat*chys;
- Keep the mazar and its surroundings very clean and behave in proper ways that prohibit (smoking, consuming alcohol, shouting or using foul language);
- Visit the mazar with a covered head and body (the body should be covered in a maximum way);
- Follow the suggestions or regulations of the *shaykh* if there is one;
- Leave the things that could destroy or disturb worshipping process in general (including loud music, alcoholic drinks, and guns for hunting);
- During menstruation period women are not recommended to visit mazars;

### **The mapping project as a tool for expanding the conversation with *shaykhs* and *ziyarat*chys**

‘Mapping’ -Experts from many fields gather the information that cartographers need. The cartographer then transforms this information into a meaningful visual representation. In general, mapmaking follows these steps: (1) observation and measurement, (2) planning and design, (3) drawing and reproduction, and (4) revision (World Book Encyclopaedia, p.182-183, 1994).

Aigine representatives used low-cost global positioning systems (GPS) to collect spatial data. On the basis of the GPS data, a sketch map of the mazars located in Nyldy ata was made. According to the article, “Resource Use, Development Planning, And Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage: Lessons From Fiji Islands,” “Mapping is a fundamental way for displaying spatial human cognition and for communicating on issues related to territory” (Rambaldi, Tuivanuavou, Namata, Vanualailai, Rupeni and Rupeni, 2006).

The idea of mapping mazars at the Nyldy ata complex, was perceived and responded to in varies ways. Some of the *shaykhs* and *ziyarat*chys were reluctant to the idea of mapping mazars at Nyldy ata. Some were completely supporting this particular idea. Interviews revealed two types of attitudes and various concerns towards the idea of creating a map of the mazars at Nyldy ata.

Moreover the dilemma of mapping project is that *shaiykhs* and *ziyarat*chys agreed to develop a map but to publish it. There is no legal basis for that so far.

*(Part of a dialogue between cultural practitioners )...*

- What kind of information a map of sacred site has to include in itself?

- Information of sacred sites has to be kept secret! Kyrgyz people have been living without maps for ages. We do not need such maps!
- No, in order to pass information about sacred sites to the next generation we need a map of sacred sites...

*Participants of the round table*

### ***Arguments Supporting the Idea of Making***

#### ***A Map of the Mazars at Nyldy Ata Complex***

This subsection will talk about positive feedback and thoughts towards the idea of making a map of mazars in Nyldy ata located in Northern part of the country and guard by a sixty two year old male *shaykh*. *Shaykh* of Nyldy ata receive and guides visitors to mazars who visit a sacred site due to social and health problems. Usually, he leads visiting *ziyaratchys* to mazars at the complex and gives them certain directions, for example, on how to take part in fixed rituals. He also heal some *ziyaratchys* who are ill or addicted to alcoholism and drugs by using traditional ways of curing (*dem saluu*). *Ziyaratchys* believe that this guidance would precipitate the process of getting better and healthy. Usually pilgrims to Nyldy ata ask a guardian of the complex to accompany them to the mazars. However, when the guardian is out of the village, visitors have difficulty in finding places and performing certain rituals. A number of informants claim that the maps would be useful for *ziyaratchy* who come from different parts of Kyrgyzstan since they are not aware about all of the mazars that are located at Nyldy ata.

The strength of a map is that it can ease the process of visiting mazars by people who do not know the road but at the same time it can weaken the ‘social validity’ of a *shaykh* who is a leader in this regard, since the knowledge of a *shaykh* on how to perform a certain ritual, what incantations to use while praying, and how to worship in general is a social power that he has. Thus, making a map that describes the healing purposes or special prescriptions of a mazar’s features will lead to dissemination of the information which is equal to making him less powerful in society. Thus, taking into account the responses and expressed wishes on all these aspects, I should state that presented idea of making a map of mazars at Nyldy ata was not supported by all *ziyaratchys* of research area.

For my question what would be an advantage of a map my informant stated the following: “If we come to worship at a mazar at a certain time with certain intentions and expectations, we have to realize our wishes on a planned day since our wishes are stronger and more sincere, because we were prepared for this trip.” *Ziyaratchys* who worship at mazars in Nyldy ata have a strong belief that if any of the *ziyaratchy* will come to a mazar with bad intentions or with an ironic sceptical approach, such as testing the powers of the mazars without having any sincere belief in the visit itself, the spirits of the sacred site will not help them to recover or even might hurt them.

Sincere believe in power and spirits of mazars is one of the strongest expectations from a *ziyaratchy* who visit sacred site and belief itself helps them to recover. Specifically, I think that sincerity causes belief in the healing power of the mazar and its features which is equal to the belief in recovery. The expressed idea of informants that they were prepared for a trip to a mazar shows their foreordained positive beliefs.

According to the Kyrgyz doctor Adylov Düi’shon who specialized in psychiatry and psychotherapy claimed that directive in other words “informed” behavior of a healer while conducting procedures at mazars which are hard to understand, enigmatic from one side increase trust of a patient, and from the other side it induce patient to activity, independence and zeal in terms of illness coordination. (Adylov, p. 352, 2007).

My youngest informant who is a student has expressed her willingness to use a map of the Nyldy ata complex. She said, "If I had a map of every mazar in Nyldy ata than I would visit all existing mazars at the complex. Because the more mazars I will visit, the more blessings of the spirits I will receive." According to Emil Shükürov's article, "Sacred Places Our Priceless Heritage," in the book, "The Call of Our Ancestors," it is important that objects which have common significance are accepted by everyone on a profoundly individual basis (Shükürov, p.7, 2004).

One response to the idea of making a map of mazars at Nyldy ata was that mazars are very powerful and pure places that should be preserved for the present and future generations as a cultural practice.

Specifically, the knowledge about the location of mazars would ease the process of visiting mazars and receiving treatment from traditional healers who practice healing especially at sacred sites. Local practitioners and pilgrims think that mazars have a positive influence on *ziyaratshys* therefore sites that are useful for health should be preserved by creating a map. Specifically, the legal validity could be acquired only by creating a map of mazars, which marks the borders of the territories of the private owners and mazars. Practitioners fear that some private owners might buy big territories that include mazars for use as a pasture, cultivation or for other ways of exploitation of the land. For instance, according to Anthony Stocks, maps are not just a graphic way to present what was then taken to be the ordinary palpable realities of land use. Maps could also be pure ideological products (Anthony Stocks, p.344-354).

According to the idea of local *ziyaratshys*, Nyldy ata does not belong to any private owner or government but to all citizens of Kyrgyzstan. However the government is privatizing most of the pasture lands and without having a legally powerful document, such as a map, *ziyaratshys* will not be able to protect their rights from private owners of the pasture lands. If *ziyaratshys* would have a map, they could show to the representatives of the government or private owners of the pasture lands that the mazar belongs not to them, but to all citizens of Kyrgyzstan.

### ***Arguments against the Idea of Making A Map of the Mazars at the Nyldy Ata Complex***

This section will focus on critical thoughts and responses that were expressed towards the proposed idea of making a map of mazars at Nyldy ata. On the basis of the interview results it was revealed that some of the *ziyaratshys* do not prefer the map to be made. They believe that when the map is created there will be a lot more people wanting to visit Nyldy ata than before the map was made. They explain it with the fact that people will have access to a map. Eventually, an increase in the number of *ziyaratshys* would possibly bring the idea to construct a road for transportation. For the visitors to mazars at the Nyldy ata complex, bringing transportation implies moving a lot of stones and making changes. As one of my informants noted, "At this particular complex all material and natural things have their 'own' locations and places and there is no need to remove or to add other things to here. This place should be as natural as it is now. Also, each stone has its own power that I cannot explain."

Man fears from unknown and uncertain things and start feeling powerless if man cannot interpret it in certain way. It is one of the cultural and social taboos about leaving things as it is that my informant derived from her collective memory. Taboos is an integral part of holiness. By observing certain taboos one accepts a "power" or "sacredness" of a place. Place might not be sacred but knowledge makes it as sacred and knowledge about certain taboos and strong expectations in regard to place make visitors to behave in expected way. For instance, mazar and mosque are places where people perform worshipping at spirits

and Allah in one case and at only Allah in another case. But at both places irrespective of believe and Allah or spirit, they observe and follow certain rules and behavioral expectations. At mazars most of the visitors perform *zikir chaluu* ritual accompanied with praying, according to them, in order to bring wishes closer to God or to “owner” of mazar. *Zikir* (Ar.dhikr, remembrance) ceremony of the Sufis. At mosques worshippers at Allah perform *namaz* (Ar. *as-sala*; Kgz. *namaz*, from Pers. *Namaz*); also accompanied by certain praying. Although, destruction of nature will not be justified not only by current ecological projects but also by our “common sense”. (Privratsky, p.32;82; 2001);

Moreover, my informants believe that a road that will be constructed, inevitably will provide easy access to all kinds of visitors including tourists as well.

According to the words of *ziyaratshys*, there are certain number of visitors to mazars, who come to the mazars in order to take tests for the consistency of the springs and the research interest is what could make them medically useful. Specifically, their goal was to define what the organic part of the springs is and why they are useful for certain diseases and not useful for other diseases. “If the purpose of the tourists’ visits will be research that might be useful for us, then I do not mind them coming to here and testing our water, since some of the non local visitors of Nyldy ata would take water with them for testing, I guess”-said one of my respondents.

Some of the *ziyaratshys* were concerned that more people from other places of Kyrgyzstan will gain access to a map of the Nyldy ata complex of mazars, then more maps could be used by different individuals for different purposes. One of my informants claimed, “You never know how many “*buzuk oi’luu*” (evil minded) people with suspicious intentions can visit mazars if they will have a map in their hands.” Another respondent adding to the same idea of people having access to a map stated the following, “Some of the visitors come with their beliefs in *Kudai*’ (Pers. *Khoda*) and others come here with negative moods and try to test the real power of the mazar (Privratsky, p.77, 2001). Such kind of negative intentions might scare the powerful *pirs* (spirits) of mazars and they might leave the mazars for good.” In other words, they believe that the spirits of the mazars reflect any negative approach or intentions and they might desert such places, if people do not believe in them. According to Anthony Stocks, “Land is often the home of spirits, it is not just spirit owners of the various ‘natural’ elements that enter into production, but also human-like societies of spirits that interact with the living and, of course, the spirits of the dead, especially ancestors.” The consequences of the spirits leaving the mazars would be the deprivation of the opportunity to receive cheap treatment for *ziyaratshy* who cannot afford to see a doctor and stay in hospital. My respondents believe that spirits make mazars powerful, since they possess special healing abilities when visitors ask them for help. In other words, without spirits mazars will resemble other ordinary places. In this regard my informants stated the following, “One of the exceptional powers of the *pirs* (guardian spirits, as a guardian-angel) of the mazars is that through worshipping at them, traditional healers can cure the pilgrim who is experiencing the process of *kyrgyzchylyk*. Because the doctors cannot heal such a patient who is diagnosed with *kyrgyzchylyk*. According to the definition of a clairvoyant informant in Talas, “*Kyrgyzchylyk* is an inherited strong capacity which is not visual. Such a strong capacity could be inherited only by a spiritually clean person who has a ‘clean’ mind and soul too. All kinds of strong capacities, such as an extrasensory perception, the abilities of clairvoyants, traditional healers, forecasters and *manaschy* (person who have ability to recite *Manas* epic) are considered as the main types of *kyrgyzchylyk*.”

According to Gulnara A. Aitpaeva, “In a broad sense, *kyrgyzchylyk* means the totality of traditions and customs inherent in the Kyrgyz people since early times. In relation to mazars, *kyrgyzchylyk* is usually understood as a diverse spectrum of extrasensory abilities, which a person receives congenitally and which help him or her to heal and help people” (Aitpaeva, p.121, 2006).

Based on my research results, illness related to *kyrgyzchylyk* is a pre-initiation process before accepting the duties of a certain type of *kyrgyzchylyk* that were mentioned above. Usually as a sign of coming capacities those comply with certain type of *kyrgyzchylyk*. For example, coming capacity of a traditional healer, *manaschy*, clairvoyant, etc. People who inherit *kyrgyzchylyk* go through an illness and this illness could be healed only by another clairvoyant or traditional healer. Medical doctors cannot help them at all in this case. As for the traditional healers they cure such people usually at mazars and they have a strong belief that the spirits of sacred sites will help to heal the person who is being initiated into *kyrgyzchylyk*. One of the advantages of mazars is that they are pure places where *pirs* inhabit and help to cure the *ziyaratchy* who has the ‘diagnosis’ of *kyrgyzchylyk*. Also it is important for the *ziyaratchy*, because doctors cannot treat by using modern methods the patients who have *kyrgyzchylyk*. According to the words of my respondent, even if they go to see doctors, usually they are not able to diagnose the illness and therefore are not able to treat them. As for the traditional healers they can recognize ‘symptoms’ of *kyrgyzchylyk* and they also know how to treat them, since it was part of their own experiences.

### ***To Construct or Not To Construct***

#### ***A Road to the Nyldy Ata Complex?***

One result of the interviews has that people perceive of the road construction is a negative way.

In the Kyrgyz language the practice of worshipping at mazars is called “*mazar basuu*.” This literally means, “walking to the mazar.” It is not called, “*mazarga baruu*,” which literally means, “going to the mazar.” Thus a pilgrim is expected to walk to a mazar but not drive by a certain type of transportation. It is important, to take into consideration that the cultural practice of worshipping at mazars has remained since ancient times when there was no transportation. However, Kyrgyz people have used horses as one type of transportation for ages, especially when they had a nomadic mode of life. In other words, going to a mazar by horse would be also, “*mazarga at menen baruu*,” one cannot say, “*mazarga at menen basuu*,” “walking to a mazar by horse,” which logically, contextually and grammatically would be wrong to say in Kyrgyz language. In this case respondents mean walking a distance from the main road to the mazar itself since it would be physically impossible to walk to a mazar from far places of Kyrgyzstan.

Moreover, *ziyaratchys* strongly believe that if one walks to a mazar by foot, he will receive more blessings from the spirits of the mazars.

To my question as to what would be the consequences of building a road, I have received the following answer from several respondents, “Building a road would basically mean that a very holy place as the Nyldy ata complex will be spoiled in the same way as the Manas Ordo (one of the biggest complexes of sacred sites in Kyrgyzstan) was spiritually spoiled. It was spoiled by drunken and unclean visitors that were not in the mood for visiting the mazars but who were taking part in wedding parties.”

In most parts of Kyrgyzstan, the wedding ceremony is accompanied by the ritual of visiting a mazar. For instance, in Talas district young couples visit the Manas Ordo, in Karakol, which is in the northern part of Kyrgyzstan, couples visit monuments or burial places of famous people. In Bishkek some of the couples visit the mausoleum of Bai'tik baatyr (hero). The guardians of mazars and *ziyaratchys* of sacred sites were not only upset but even disgusted by some participants of weddings. Since most of the drunk people behave in a way that does not comply with the expected way of visiting mazars, guardians and *ziyaratchys* feel insulted. One of my respondents said, “The more ‘dirty’ (*bulganych*) and prayerless people visit mazars the higher our fear that spirits that inhabit these places will

leave them.” By saying ‘dirty,’ respondents mean a person who is drunk, without ritual ablution and expectations that a visit to a mazar requires. Socially, the guardians of mazars have a right, to suggest to a drunken person or anyone whose behavior does not comply with the social expectation, to visit the mazar at another time when s/he will be ready. They might be asked to do it for the courtesy of other pilgrims since it might destroy the mazar as well. But on a legal basis, any person who can afford to buy a ticket may enter the territory of a mazar. These people can disturb worshipping process of other pilgrims as well. Certainly not all, but some can.

During the interviews, a mazar guardian mentioned that concerning the initiative to construct a road to the mazars in Nyldy ata he had seen an *ayan*. An *ayan* (*ar. Ayn, eye*) is a sign that allows knowing about things that will happen in the future (Kyrgyz Explanatory Dictionary, p.107, Vol.1, 1984); The acting and the effect of the acting-can also denote the effect of the function of sight, the aspect, the thing viewed, and especially in the plural, *ayan*, the particular things that are perceived in the exterior world. (The Encyclopaedia of Islam, p.784–85, 1979). *Ayan* is a dream which serves as a sign to do specific action based on vision that man saw in his dream.

According to the *ayan* that he had, it was not good to construct a road to Nyldy ata. According to his words, it was a sign that spirits of the Nyldy ata complex do not allow him to build a road. A guardian had an idea to build a house in Nyldy ata and heal people there. However concerning such intentions he had seen the *ayan* again. According to *ayan* it was not allowed to build any construction at the Nyldy ata complex of mazars.

According to research in Nyldy ata, some of the pilgrims spend a night at one of the mazars. Some times they stay for one, two or more days. Usually guardians of Nyldy ata recommend that pilgrims pray to Allah and make wishes during the night and spend a night at the mazar. Such type of asceticism, as spending a night in a drafty place without good conditions, increases their belief in recovery. Since, according to their explanations, Allah will bless them for their sacrifices of all kinds. In this case, particularly if they are by themselves.

Thus, based on the interviews, I have noticed that among *ziyaratshys* there is a fear that if a road is constructed, there will be access for large numbers of people visiting Nyldy ata. The fear is that Nyldy ata will be the same as the Manas Ordo, where people come for weddings, consume alcohol, swear, throw up and smoke. *Ziyaratchy*, prefer strict observation of strong socially expected rules when visiting the mazars at Nyldy ata.

### ***‘Pros’ And ‘Cons’ Towards the Idea of Tourists Visiting the Nyldy Ata Complex of Mazars***

The distribution of a map might attract not only *ziyaratshys* but also tourists who are interested in culture and would like to gain more knowledge about the mazars in Kyrgyzstan. According to results of the interviews, respondents express their preference towards tourists (non local visitors) who come with good intentions and with at least small beliefs in the special qualities of mazars or with certain positive wishes. However, *ziyaratshys* were concerned about tourists who do not believe in the spirits and power of mazars and still visit a mazar as if it is a place of entertainment. As one of my informants thinks, the visitors who do not have a sincere belief in the power of spirits and mazars are considered as unbelievers and s/he does not want such visitors to come to the sacred sites if they do not have sincere attitudes towards the idea of visiting the mazars. Hence, most of the visitors to mazars at the Nyldy ata complex feel very comfortable with the idea of tourists visiting the mazars as long as they follow and fulfill the rules of visiting the mazars.

Some of the *ziyaratshys* were against the idea of tourists visiting the sacred sites, specifically Nyldy ata, since they do not acquire the knowledge of the rules as to how to visit

the sacred sites and the violation of the rules could be perceived by the spirits of the mazars as non-respect.

According to informants mazars should not be privatized by government or by certain private land owners in Kyrgyzstan. However there is no legal base for that. Aigine conducted a seminar with administrative workers of the state on the district level in Talas and presented them a draft of a project on the “Preservation and Protection of Mazars in Talas District and Rules required for a visit to mazars” which was elaborated jointly with guardians of mazars and government workers in Talas town, who were involved as a stake holders that connect shaykhs with government officials.

### *Ethics of Revealing the Sacred*

For *ziyaratchys* keeping sacred knowledge secret is very important. According to the conversations with my informants, keeping the sacred a secret will help to preserve the character of mazars. *Ziyaratchys* are concerned that the distribution of a map will increase the number of visitors to the mazars and since local worshippers could have various *ziyaratchys* with positive and negative cultural behaviors, it will effect the spirits of the mazars that make the mazars powerful. According to the research results, *ziyaratchys* think that each mazar has its own spirit that can have different visions. However, *ziyaratchys* who are capable of seeing the ‘owners’ or ‘spirits’ do not reveal their own visions to other visitors who are not capable of seeing them. They have a taboo against revealing the visions of the ‘owners’ of the mazars and are expected to keep the sacred phenomena they witness as secret. Abbot called for caution and exposed the risks inherent in visualizing place specific local knowledge and making it available for public consumption, without ensuring sufficient control of the process and outputs by legitimate custodians of such knowledge (Rambaldi, Chambers, Mccall and Fox, 2005).

Most of the *ziyaratchys* claim that people cannot and do not have to visit the mazars for the purpose of entertainment. It would harm not only the environment of the mazars, but also would harm them as well. Since *pirs* of mazars could get angry at them or abandon the mazars and leave to other places.

According to Adylov Dui’shonkul the method of treatment that traditional healers use during treatment process for their patience, perfectly combines the elements of rationality and mystery in itself. By using the element of mystery during the healing process, a healer have opportunity to create a sacred image of a mazar spirit who possess special capacities (Adylov, p.352, 2007). Believe in this sacred image lead to believe in power and special capacities of a spirit. Accordingly, spirit which possesses special capacities is able to treat *ziyaratchys* by using them.

For keeping sacred knowledge secret there are several reasons, such as a monopoly of knowledge which equals social power. Dissemination of knowledge that some *ziyaratchys* or *shaykhs* possess might lead to the loss of power. Although it is not an exception that it might be an individual explanation and view of a *ziyaratchy* and not an attempt to secure her/his power through knowledge, since we speak according to our experiences and understandings.

As Trevor W. Purcell stated, in his article “Indigenous Knowledge and Applied Anthropology: Questions of Definition and Direction,” - “A spiritual healer may explain a persistent headache not as resulting from physiological phenomena, but from reluctance to accept power of an ancestor and believe in them. The plausibility of this explanation rests on intuitive understanding within the symbolic structure of the healer’s culture. Purcell also claimed that conceptual separation of knowledge from culture and problematizing knowledge and its application, scholars are inserting culture/knowledge into the contemporary discourse as a component of power relations, beyond the notion of cultural division of labor, beyond race and beyond ethnicity. (Purcell, 1998).

Most *ziyarat*chys experienced social and political system of the Soviet time. During the Soviet time, the practice of worshipping at sacred sites was prohibited but it does not mean that people would not practice worshipping at sacred sites. Attempts to keep the sacred a secret are the remains of the Soviet period, since during the Soviet time people would keep any information regarding their beliefs a secret for the sake of securing their safety.

Most of my informants believe that the *pirs* of Manas Ordo in Talas left that place and moved to clean and pure locations such as the Nyldy ata complex of mazars. To my question, “Why are you visiting such far away mazars when you have another big Manas Ordo?” one of the *ziyarat*chy from Talas answered that because of the many weddings celebrated at the Manas Ordo many people consume vodka, smoke cigarettes and have fun there which makes the mazar less powerful. The *pirs* of mazars can leave certain places and move to other ‘more pure’ places. As I have mentioned before, most of my informants claimed that the powerful spiritual hosts of Manas Ordo left the Manas Ordo and moved to Nyldy ata in their search for pure and clean places. Specifically, places could be ‘clean’ in a sense that places were not spoiled by, not only vodka and smoking, but also with bad thoughts and ironic attitudes towards the mazar and its visitors. For example, as the guardian mentioned, “the visit to a mazar might be harmful if the visitor does not acquire the knowledge that s/he is not allowed to urinate near sacred places, because s/he might be paralyzed forever or her/his mouth might be physically curved.” Guardians assume that the spirits of the mazars become angry because of such actions of visitors and might punish a visitor who urinates at the mazar.

Such culturally expected explanation for why one cannot urinate at mazars can help to keep sites physically clean and which also makes most of the visitors to follow this expectation because of the fear that it will make the ancestors angry. Specifically, aura of physically dirty place with bad smell cannot be appropriate place for healings since it creates negative perception of the place instead of the believe in it.

### *Conclusion*

As a first result of the mapping project we were able to hear the “voices” of the local practitioners as shaiykhs and guardians about their hope, fears and concerns.

The strong beliefs of Kyrgyz people in the power of mazars and their ancestors, and the phenomena of worshipping at sacred sites in general is more powerful than any seminar on the topic of how to preserve the ecology and cultural environment that is essential for survival.

Thus, I support the opinion that Stephan Dömpke expresses in his article, “Yssyk-Köl – A Sacred Land in Central Asia,” where he states that, “traditional populations historically have had at their disposal comprehensive and time tested knowledge about sustainable forms of the use of natural resources and the protection of biological diversity. This knowledge has been connected to cultural systems, worldviews and practices that render meaning and values to it, and because of this, ensure their tradition from one generation to the next” (Dömpke, p15, 2004).

During the research and interviews I heard the word “blessing” many times. It could be a blessing of spirits, blessing of Allah or blessing of the ‘owner’ of the mazar. Blessing in Kyrgyz is ‘*bata*’ which could be a sign of acceptance. People take part in rituals in order to define their roles in society and to feel as a part of this society.

Practice of worshipping at mazars is not only a cultural practice of people that inhabit in Central Asia but one of the ways to learn lore and moral teachings of Kyrgyz people.

Emil Shükürov claimed in his article that it is important to emphasize that holy places satisfy the spiritual needs of human beings, which are sometimes more important than the material ones.

Based on research I would like to conclude that *ziyarat*chys in Talas have their, every research or certain and particular situation has its locally relevant and locally sound ethics. In other words ethics in accordance with particular situation. In this article I tried to express all fears, hopes and concerns of Kyrgyz practitioners. All mentioned ethical expectations might not be relevant or applicable to other cases of the same country. I strongly believe that ethics has a situational character.

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## THE NAME CONNECTIONS BETWEEN MAZARS AND VILLAGES IN KARA BUURA DISTRICT

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### **Abstract**

*This article examines a question regarding the etymology of sacred site (mazar) titles and reasons for which mazar were named in certain ways. The names of various locations are attached to natural or geographical peculiarities. Most of the regional names were shaped and used throughout the decades, which was a motive to dwell on this issue. The names of mazars might be derived from historical, traditional knowledge and experiences of local people. Some of the names of mazars reflect a conjunction of mythology and mundane life accompanied with 'sacred' narratives.*

*Moreover this article shows specific relationship of mazar and village names. The fact that Kyrgyz people give names to their villages, in accordance with a name of mazar, has a profound meaning. Since some of the villages were named after the names of places that Kyrgyz people regard as sacred. According to research the cases when certain villages were named after mazars seem to be a wide phenomenon in Kyrgyz culture.*

From ancient times to nowadays Kyrgyz people have gone through many arduous historical events. Today, we can see reverberations of their historical past in traditions, customs, manners and beliefs. Religion was an important cornerstone of Kyrgyz beliefs. Before the introduction of the Islamic religion, Kyrgyz people were pagans. In other words, they considered earth, water, lakes, mountains, stones, springs and trees as sacred elements, and worshipped them. The demonstration of piety to earth and water was due to their nomadic lifestyle. Earth and water were considered as the primary components of all existence and thus played a significant role in nature worship. Before adopting Islam, Kyrgyz people believed that the elements surrounding them were created by water and earth. Nowadays sacred trees, lakes, mountains and stones, called *mazars*, are regarded as Allah's handiwork. The emergence of this belief was clearly the result of Islam.

Our ancestor's mazar worship illustrates Kyrgyz pre-Islamic religious beliefs. Kyrgyz people understood mazars as the habitats of the saints, spring waters, and burial sites. Evidence for this faith can be found in archeological, ethnographic and folklore studies. For instance, the veneration of mazars can be observed in some parts of the epics "Manas" and "Semetei'". The characters in these epics regarded mazars as sacred and considered worshiping them to be a Kyrgyz duty. When describing the beauty of the Talas regions, Kanykei', in the epic "Semetei'", tells Semetei' to venerate a mazar at that place.

Kanykei' says:

Chyi'yrchyk, Salar—are two dales,  
You will be passing soon these vales.  
There is a mazar, where lived a saint  
Oh, my dear darling son  
Do not forget to worship that place

Ancient Kyrgyz people deeply believed that it is disrespectful to speak ill of the deceased, so cemeteries, tombstones and vaults were viewed as “sacred places” and animal sacrifices were common practices resulting from this respect for the deceased. Nowadays, we can see that these customs have developed into widely practiced traditions.

To say it unambiguously, Kyrgyz people worship mazars and sacred places, and perform various traditions that did exist prior the introduction of Islam. It is commonly known that Islam was forcefully imposed into the Kyrgyz people. Therefore, it would be correct to state that mazars and sacred places are part of authentic Kyrgyz beliefs.

Today, the problems of drug addiction, drug abuse and drinking are influencing many people in Kyrgyzstan. Kyrgyz people used to live in harmony with nature by respecting their own traditions and finding solutions to illnesses in natural substances. At the present moment, our youth have forgotten their country's common weal and heritage, and have succumbed to Western civilization. Nevertheless, we should not neglect the significant positive influences coming from unique and invaluable sacred places and mazars.

Questions could be raised about the origins of mazar names and the reasons for naming them in certain ways. Every name of a well-known place, town, and river has a deep meaning. Yet, in some places the names are incomprehensible. The reason is the names of these places are attached to natural or geographical names. And these geographical names are formed and shaped during many years—10, 100 or even 1000 years. The names might be attached to historical events, to the way people inhabited in that area, to flora and fauna, or some other unique components. But the names of the above-mentioned mazars are not named accidentally and incomprehensibly. Indeed, a name of each mazar has its own history and secret of which I was a witness.

Finding the explanations for the names is a very exciting endeavor, as these attempts lead us to some interesting legends and history. There are so many things in our lives that lie under a veil of secrecy, one of them being the reasons behind the naming of mazars and sacred places. By uncovering the mysteries behind the names of mazars, we can reveal to some extent the lifestyle of Kyrgyz people.

I was selected by “Aigine” Research Center to do a research in Kara Buura, one of four studied districts. We confronted numerous problems in our research, but were able to solve them. We had to pass through violent rivers, mountains and rocks during cloudbursts and scorching heat. In order to achieve an intended goal, it is essential to overcome barriers on the way. And if a person tries to evade reaching this aim due to some difficulties, he or she is like a tree without roots.

During our research, we witnessed some striking things. Our first step started from Sheker village, the place where Chyngyz Ai'tmatov was born. There is a tomb mazar, called Ak Üi', built by Eshen Oluya. First we worshiped at Ak Üi', then moved to a nearby mazar, called Jer Üi'. When we counted ourselves at the village's sacred place, there were seven people (5 research workers and 2 clairvoyants). I used to hear from the connoisseurs of mazars: “People with good intentions go in groups of 7 to a mazar”. I caught myself thinking that our work would be fruitful. When we arrived at the spring, the water was tranquil and quiet. While drinking water from the spring, it started seething—we were amazed.

From the moment of undertaking this research, I pondered the origin of the name Kara Buura. Probably, I was not the only person to ask this question. During our work I

seemed to find the answer. There is a Chat mazar, located at the intersection of Kara Buura and Shilbili rivers in Chong Kara Buura village. Indigenous people believe that the mazar belongs to the spirit of Oi'sul Ata. Many years ago, there were graves and tombs at this mazar. People considered it a sacred place and used to avoid it. Today, when passing this place, many people claim that they see a huge black camel (*chong kara buura*) on top of a mountain, sometimes along the edges and sides of a mountain. Since people started frequently seeing this camel, local population erected a wooden wall around the mazar. They started worshipping it when some ill people began seeing this camel-buura in their dreams. However, there were no black camels in the Kara Buura area. It is remarkable that people see only the camel but not other animals.

Myrzabekov Rai'ymkul ata, an inhabitant of Aral village (Talas region), recounted that "Camels are naturally close to people, unfaltering, straight, and strong, and many human qualities can be found in camel's character." People see buuras for a reason. These animals are spiritually close to people.

Atamkul Ata (Dubana Ata), an inhabitant of Molotov village (Kara Buura district), twice saw this animal. There were sheds inhabited by people on the western side of Chat mazar. Atamkul Dubana, during his youth, was returning from the farm sheds to the village when he saw a black camel. Afraid, he avoided the mazar. After some time, Atamkul Ata was asked to go to kolkhoz. Atamkul Ata took his dark trotting horse and rode out at dusk. When he reached the same place, he noticed a dark shape approaching to him. Since it was dark and impossible to see clearly, he was not able to identify it. Nevertheless, there is a prudent Kyrgyz saying "a horse's eyes see even the invisible", so his horse shied at the approaching object and jumped sideways. Again afraid, he avoided choosing the usual road and passed across a mountain side. Atamkul Dubana stated that, "afterwards, recalling that moment, I think I saw Oi'sul Ata, approaching me and carrying something."

Camel Oi'sul Ata does not reveal itself to ordinary people and if one meets him, Oisul ata passes on some extraordinary qualities or skills. For instance, Atamkul Ata is a fine and gifted dervish. It seems that many people have seen this black camel, but since these visions were not written down, a great number of them have been forgotten or omitted.

Atamkul Dubana recalled another story, which took place during the Second World War, presumably in 1940-43. Atamkul Ata's elder brother was coming from Chatkal when he noticed a black camel near a river. Since the river was much larger than it is today there were no bridges. Rejoiced at seeing the camel, he used the animal to cross the river. After reaching the other side, the camel stopped. His brother, angry with the camel, beat the animal, leaving it on the side of road. Regretting his ruthless behavior, the brother returned right away, but the camel had disappeared. Shortly after this incident, his brother contracted a serious disease. The protracted disease lasted for 6 to 9 years and he eventually died in 1949. Seeing a walking, tired man, Oi'sul Ata felt pity and helped him cross the river. The brother did not realize this and was cruel to the animal.

Starting from that moment, the indigenous population considered the place sacred and erected a wall around it. Today, they sing a four line song, describing the sacredness of place:

If there is a Chat mazar,  
If it is wide around,  
For a tired person,  
It gives a rest and power.

Nowadays, the inhabitants of Kara Buura district say that the name of their district was named after that camel. Currently, there are 19 villages and 10 village administrations. The district is regarded as among the more economically well-developed in the Talas region.

There is another village—Archagül—in Kara Buura district. A mazar, called Archaluu, is located at this village. Today, the number of people seeking cures and visiting this mazar is continually increasing. Even people from other villages go to Archaluu mazar and hold a solemn annual celebration. If we turn to the history of Archaluu mazar, nearly 100 years ago, many junipers grew in that part of Archagül village. (The name Archa refers to juniper.) The area was also inhabited by predators, such as leopards.

In 1924-1928, people started settling in the area and began destroying all the trees. Junipers were on the verge of extinction. Local people remember a story related to these trees. Russian people started coming and settling in Archagül village and brought with them many construction ideas and plans. The people were instructed to cut down the trees. While cutting the junipers, people believed they saw the trees bleeding. Those who ordered the cutting of the trees and those who actually cut them were very prone to accidents. Junipers differ markedly from other plants in nature. They live longer than other trees and their year-round greenness engenders a feeling of peace. These trees give off a remarkable smell and people use them in various holidays as a ritual, by burning them and chanting incantations. Probably because the trees bled when cut, people made this a place to worship, a mazar. And most likely, the bleeding shows that it is not an ordinary plant, but a sacred one. Since that time, people started considering that place to be sacred and named it Archaluu mazar. The village's name Archagül was derived from archaluu mazar's name. Since local people could not pronounce the name archaluu, they modified it to Archagül.

There are two other villages in Kara Buura district—Suulu Mai'mak and Kuru Mai'mak. The names of these villages are also closely associated with the name of a mazar. An old man named Mai'mak Ata used to live in village Suulu Mai'mak. He was from a tribe called Dos. Mai'mak Ata was a sorcerer who healed ill people by chanting incantations and giving them herbs. When he passed from among them, he was buried in a nearby cemetery. Later, the burial ground was called Mai'mak Ata. People, when asked about their destination, spoke of Mai'mak Ata. Having a profound respect for Mai'mak Ata's curing abilities, people named their village Suulu Mai'mak. Nowadays, Saparbaev Bai'myrza is a guardian of Mai'mak Ata mazar. He gave the following explanation for being the overseer: "Mai'mak Ata is our great-grandfather. I am also from the Dos tribe, and Mai'mak Ata happens to be our fourteenth grandfather. Even prior to my settlement, grandfather Ajbek was the mazar guardian. When my grandfather Ajbek died, I was assigned to this place during Soviet times. That's why our village is named after Mai'mak Ata's mazar." The first part of the village name—Suulu—was added to Mai'mak due to the abundance of water during that time. To the word *suu* (which means water) was given the ending *lu*. On the contrary, Kuru Mai'mak had a water shortage and was an arid area, and *kuru* means 'dry.' Even the train station was named after Mai'mak Ata's mazar. There was only one train station in Talas region and it had the mazar's name. Bai'myrza Bai'ke stated that the station was named after the mazar. The reason for naming villages and other places after mazars denotes that mazars play a significant role in Kyrgyz life.

The naming of places after mazars seems to be a widespread phenomenon. For instance, there is a Chech Döbö (hill) mazar in Chech Döbö village, Manas district. In ancient times, the village fathers met on top of this döbö-hill to make important decisions. As time passed, the place became a mazar and again the name of this village was named after Chech Döbö mazar. There is also a mazar of khan Karacha's daughter Akbermet in Karacha village, Manas district. This indicates that there are links between the names of villages and nearby mazars.

The old people of Manas village in Talas region tell that in ancient times Manas and Kanykei' used to feed their horses at their place in spring time. This is why their village is called Manas and why the biggest mazar in Kyrgyzstan is called Manas Ata's tomb. There is

also a mazar, Stone Bakai' in Konezavod village, Manas district. Local people named their school after this mazar.

In summary, it would be accurate to state that mazars and sacred places play important roles in the Kyrgyz way of life. Kyrgyz people deeply respected mazars and passed their national well-being and priceless heritage from generation to generation. The Kyrgyz method of naming villages has a profound meaning, and their living places are named after the places that they consider sacred, or using today's terminology—mazars. The above-mentioned naming practices of villages and other places provide vivid evidence of Kyrgyz attitude toward mazars and holy places.

After completing this research, I understood that mazars are like the unwritten history and untold secrets of Kyrgyz people. When unfolding the history of mazars, we became acquainted with the unwritten lifestyle, rituals and tradition of Kyrgyz people and life stories of noble men and women.

At last, I would like to express my gratitude to the “Aigine” Research Center. Thanks to this organization I was able to conduct research in a totally unknown field and was introduced into the world of mazars. After being introduced, I discovered that this world is mysterious and has its own secrets. However, even though we did thorough research, there are many riddles left without answers.

## **PARTICIPATION AND ANALYSIS IN STUDYING RELIGION IN CENTRAL ASIA**

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### ***Abstract***

*In this chapter I consider historical and ethnographic approaches to the study of religious practices and beliefs, and the contrasting ways participants and outsiders conceive and experience interactions with the supernatural. I focus on the ways that Islam is conceptualized within studies of Central Asian religions, and explore some of the ways of integrating the study of Islamic practices with what are variously described as local or native traditions, both in Kyrgyzstan and elsewhere. Through critiques of essentialist approaches to the study of Islam, I attempt to show the problems that arise when people assume that believers do or should have consistent and standardized understandings of Islam. In contrast, scholars who conduct careful ethnographic and historiographic investigations of religion have revealed the wide diversity of practices among people who consider themselves Muslims. Through collaborative approaches to religion such as those followed in the present Aigine research project, scholars can avoid using their authority to suppress or neglect local understandings people have about their own practices. Such collaborative studies offer more accurate understandings about the varieties of religious knowledge, belief and activities, and how these relate to social life.*

### ***Introduction***

In this chapter I discuss problems of the study of religion in Central Asia, and relate these issues to the study of Kyrgyz religion. Academic study of religion is particularly difficult because of the fluidity and ubiquity of the subject matter. Scholars have significant power to make authoritative representations about religion that people will accept as facts, even sometimes the very believers about which they write. To avoid distorted ideas about

religion, serious research and analysis has to stay close to the religious activities themselves and avoid the distractions of extraneous materials.

Religious practices in Kyrgyzstan are manifold and not susceptible to simple definitions or systematic descriptions. As in most societies, Kyrgyz connect beliefs and practices with many aspects of life. Kyrgyz religious practices are as diverse as those found anywhere: they are related to diagnosis and treatment of physical and mental problems, divining causes and truths about events, defining good and evil, providing cosmological and teleological explanations of existence, promoting good fortune and dealing with misfortune, interpreting and warding off catastrophes and social disorder, using supernatural and social rituals to mark life passages, interacting with the spirits of the dead, and so on. Of course, practices within Kyrgyz society differ from those of other societies, but the range of religious concepts, contexts and uses are similar to those found in many societies. Like languages, religious practices reflect cognitive structures of the human mind: what people believe is closely related to what they are psychologically capable of believing. How patterns of human cognition relate to religion is an expanding area of study (e.g., Pascal Boyer 2001).

The diverse religious practices within Kyrgyz society show the active and creative work of the practitioners in exploring the range of possibilities for connecting experience with the supernatural. People engage in religious exploration when they seek knowledge about health, fate, morality, nature, society, survival, history and so on. When people seek understanding and certainty, they come up with many answers through a variety of discovery processes. Rational and empirical scientists claim that only testable physical processes constitute reliable knowledge, but this offers no solution to social, moral, medical, and historical difficulties where testing is not possible.

Religious practices are also based in traditional practices and meanings learned in society from other people's experiences, interpretations and actions. But religions offer many options and strategies for solving life problems, including being open to revealed knowledge from sources outside of society and of the human mind. Both tradition and revelation can provide solutions to gaps in conceptual or practical knowledge about the world. People and communities make creative choices and changes within tradition. Such changes in religious traditions can result from conscious and subconscious changes in people's thinking and social experiences. As people's ideas about knowledge and interpretations change, they may also change their ideas about which authority figures have the power to define religious beliefs and practices.

In Kyrgyz religious life, certain practices are widely shared: for instance, the words of prayers and ways of acting during prayers, or ways of giving respect and gifts to ancestors through actions, prayers, food, sacrifices, or burning substances. People learn these shared practices in social rituals and then reuse them in many different contexts. Specialists transmit practices such as *zikir* (*q.v.*) from one to another, and still other practices, such as healing methods, are discovered or revealed in dreams and other direct spiritual experience. As will be discussed below, Malinowski found a very similar diversity in his studies of Baloma beliefs (1916).

### *Insiders and Outsiders*

In addition to the diversity of Kyrgyz religious practice, another vital dimension of religious life concerns the diverse ways of thinking and talking about religion. People discuss their own religious beliefs and practices, they compare these with those of other people, and sometimes make judgments about which are more correct or effective. Understanding religious experience often includes studying the discourses and judgments people make about others' practices.

In this chapter I make a distinction between two approaches to understanding religious practices. The first is learning to become a participant or insider through community experience and learning from other insiders. The second approach—usually less significant for participants, but increasingly important in the modern world—concerns the outsider study of religious practices. Outsiders who study religious practices tend to make historical, scientific, political or theological judgments about the practices.

In the Soviet Union, scholars studied religions as part of a speculative history of cultural evolution. Islamists of various legal schools often attempt to use what they feel are authoritative interpretations of Islam to establish the rules that should govern certain religious activities. In many areas, interested outsiders have begun to adapt insider rituals and beliefs to create so-called New Age religious systems and practices. In the Altai, outsiders that Halemba terms “energy tourists” have developed a range of esoteric practices based in Nicholas Roerich (Nikolai K. Rerikh)’s ideas about the Altai as a place of mystical experience (Halemba 2006; see also Roerich 1929). And some scholars of religion label and define certain practices such as shamanism or fetishism in order to have a consistent, objective classificatory system and make comparisons among societies. All of these kinds of outsider thinking about religion can impose misleading concepts and assumptions upon insider practices.

The categories of participant and non-participant, or insider and outside observer, are not a rigid opposition: they are instead poles of a continuum of kinds of participation. People can move along this continuum, from non-participation towards participation, by learning practices during childhood socialization, through conversion to a new religion later in life, or through entering a new community with different ideas about religion. People may move from participating as a child to rejecting beliefs and rituals when they are older, or they may lose conviction in one set of insider practices, and adopt those of another group, or create their own. In very few social contexts are people unable to choose among and decide how strongly they will commit to the practices and beliefs they observe around them. Hence, even insiders experience varying degrees of participation.

Because of the ways formal education constructs authoritative knowledge, people often believe that religious scholars and social scientists have privileged insight into religion, but to understand a religion as people practice it, the concepts and experiences of insiders need to be given priority. Studying religion demands great respect for participant understandings. Scholars from outside with their own knowledge cannot speak authoritatively about insider practices until they participate extensively to learn how insiders understand religion. This is the purpose of the method of participant observation that cultural anthropologists have developed since the work of Bronislaw Malinowski among Trobriand Islanders. Sharing in the activities of a community offers the ethnographer a uniquely deep knowledge.

Cultural practices have meanings to participants that are not obvious to outsiders. These insider meanings may vary from person to person within the group, and there may be conflicts within the group about how to understand rituals and other activities. Such complexities of local life are important knowledge that will be difficult for outsiders to perceive until they have spent a long time in the community. In his research on magical and religious beliefs, Malinowski finds that all members of the Baloma community do not share the same beliefs. Individuals have beliefs and ideas that are shaped by personal and social experiences, while specialists are seen as having more formal and authoritative religious knowledge (1916: 423-430). Malinowski divides religion into two domains: one shaped by shared behaviors and social dogmas that are not subject to specialist knowledge, and one shaped by the interpretations of specialists, as well as by practitioners and individuals without specialized knowledge. In the latter domain, people’s interpretations are not equally valued, but Malinowski shows the value of examining the dynamic processes whereby

individuals attain community recognition as religious specialists whose ideas are considered particularly authoritative.

Some anthropologists prefer to use more objective scientific measures of social practices in order to develop theories and interpretations about local practices that do not depend on local understandings. These anthropologists do not have the goal of understanding people's cultural and social activities as insiders do, but seek to show how ecological, environmental, or economic pressures have shaped these cultures. However, most cultural anthropologists would not attempt to explain social realities as the result of external pressures without understanding people's active, local responses and interpretations of these pressures (see Headland, Thomas N., Kenneth L. Pike & Marvin Harris, 1990). The world is a complex and uncertain place, in which people make their social and cultural lives through choices that have to be studied from an insider perspective. The outsider perspective helps form comparative explanations by objectifying social practices into stable, measurable and essentialized patterns, while the insider perspective understands social life as ongoing processes, actively shaped by individual choices.

The importance of studying insider or *local* knowledge, as Clifford Geertz puts it, is often overwhelmed in the academic world by the many political scientists, historians, sociologists and others who do not see the value of conducting ethnographic participant observation before making comparisons and generalizations about the cultural practices and concepts of a group. Outsiders readily end up misunderstanding local practices because they objectify them on the basis of limited experience and fall back upon prejudices and stereotypes to interpret what they observe. For instance, western scholarship of Islam in Central Asia over the past 15 years has focused disproportionately on political Islam, terrorist threats, and organizations such as the IMU and Hizb-ut-Tahrir or the Wahhabi movement that are fringe elements within Muslim society (cf. Knysh 2004). In a respected scholarly volume on Xinjiang, the only article on Islam investigates primarily its political and institutional contexts. The authors offer few details of Islamic practice, and no citations to materials that provide such details (Fuller & Lipman 2004).

There is a conflict here between the view of Islam as an ideal religion defined outside of human activities, and the ethnographic study of Islam as the religious activities of people who describe themselves as Muslims. From the latter perspective, Islam exists in people's practices. Studying Islamic practices is becoming more widespread, but it is a rigorous and demanding approach that does not suit scholars who wish to generalize conveniently about social and political activities on the basis of limited empirical study. Although many Islamic scholars feel that human actions are prone to error or innovation (*bid'a*) unless one follows the *sunna* of traditions established by Muhammad, in fact new discourses and activities have long been part of Muslim practice and scholars have often had little authority (Berkey 1995).

### *Encountering Outsiders*

There is a long history of outsider analysis of religious practices: comparative investigations of religion arise when members of one faith encounter the beliefs and practices of members of other faiths. Famous historical accounts by Greek and Chinese historians offer documentation of the religious beliefs of peoples who otherwise did not leave written records. In other cases, the comparative study of religion arises when a leader seeks a religion to which he can convert his followers: we see this in the Russian Primary Chronicle when Vladimir I is said to have sent envoys to report back on Islam, Christianity and Judaism, before choosing among them the religion that is best for himself and his Rus subjects.

We find similar comparative contexts in religious debates and disputations in the Mongol courts, in Moorish Spain, or before Catholic Popes. In the courts of Moorish Spain

and during the crusades, many Christian Europeans encountered Muslim and Jewish peoples and practices, giving extensive opportunities to compare practices (see for instance, Burns 1961 & 1971, Chazan 1992, Hames 2004). In his autobiographical sketches, Usamah ibn Munqidh describes daily life encounters with European crusaders who had established themselves and were living in his town in the region of Syria (1929). Likewise, geographers and travelers such as al-Muqaddasi and Ibn Battuta comment on the variations in practices among their co-religionists, as well as those who are from other faiths (al-Muqaddasi 1994: 288-9, 334-6). Ibn Battuta mentions observing different ablutions and prayer practices of Shi'a, as well as practices among Rifa'i and Suhrawardi Sufis (Dunn 91-95). Although he is judgmental of deviations among supposed followers of Islamic legal schools, Evliya Çelebi also describes religious practices and ideas among the people of Albania (2000: 127, 145, 219).

When Muslim writers observe and describe the practices they encounter, they tend more towards accurate remarks than to offhand rejection of others' beliefs. Trade, pilgrimage, and learning from travel are important dimensions of Islamic scholarly tradition. The diversity of the world is an aspect of God's creation from which these scholars strive to learn. Although few writers overtly grapple with the implicit contradiction between appreciating of god's creation—including human religious diversity—and asserting that there are correct religious practices, the issue remains a part of the tradition.

In Europe in contrast, medieval knowledge of other religions tended to be limited and distorted by stereotyped Christian discourses (Tolan 2002; Beckett 2003). Some of the most detailed accounts of religious belief in Europe come in fact from the Inquisition, when descriptions were very precise (Ginzburg 1989).

### *Soviet Outsiders*

Soviet era scholarship on religion was motivated by a number of powerful research agendas. Scholars relied upon historical materialism to argue that religious beliefs were part of cultural systems that developed in stages defined by the mode of production. Scholars argued that people's beliefs were ideological manipulation that prevented questions about control over the means of production: religion was studied as part of the cultural superstructure that helped justify the relations of production. Ideas about cultural evolution were important in Karl Marx's idea that human societies pass through historical stages of primitive communalism, feudalism, capitalism, socialism and communism. Many Soviet ethnologists also accepted Edward B. Tylor's theory that societies evolved through stages from savagery through barbarism to civilization. Further, argued Tylor in his *Doctrine of Survivals*, although more progressive segments of society would abandon the traits characteristic of each stage when they advanced to later stages, less uneducated groups in a society preserved the cultural products of earlier stages of evolution.

Soviet scholars of religion relied upon assumptions of development through stages of cultural evolution built into both Marx's and Tylor's models. Those who studied Islam tended to idealize it as consisting of rigid beliefs and practices. When they studied religious life within the Soviet Union, scholars focused on those practices that were not part of supposedly official Islam, Christianity or Buddhism that they thought of as survivals from prior religious beliefs. This allowed scholars to avoid the politically sensitive topic of contemporary religious reality and focus on supposed backwards practices that endured despite the assumed development towards socialism and atheism. Many Soviet scholars published studies of relics (*relikty*) and survivals (*perezhitki*) of traditional beliefs (Snesarev 1969, Sukhareva 1975, Baialieva 1972, Guliev and Bäkhtiyarov, 1968). As DeWeese (2002:316) points out, such studies continue a old approach exemplified by Westermarck's study of *Pagan Survivals...* (1933).

Such studies also emphasized the local and ethnic styles of religious practice that co-religionists supposedly did not share, or had been elsewhere forgotten or suppressed under the influences of institutionalized Christian or Islamic religion. Scholars identified some practices as remnants of shamanism and Zoroastrianism, and others as uniquely local. Rarely did they consider such non-institutional practices to be innovations. Scholars assumed such practices were part of the shared heritage of ethnic groups, based in Stalin's idea that one of the criteria for ethnic identity was shared religious beliefs. By finding in these survivals the non-institutional, uneducated practices of the working classes, not the elites, scholars were able to avoid being seen as studying the elite religious beliefs that were more frequently denigrated as the 'opiate of the masses,' or ideologies that Marxist theorists argued promoted class stratification and exploitation of the working class.

Only with the end of the Soviet Union has there been some analysis of the scholarly ideologies that produced such studies. Scholars are beginning to critique more seriously the approaches of Soviet scholars and politically-oriented studies by Western researchers (Atwood 1996, DeWeese 2002, Saroyan 1997).

Another dimension of Soviet scholarship—also found in some Western scholarship—was the study of indigenous communities as though they had preserved older traditions with little change. Scholars assumed that such practices were historical data: what people did in the present was treated as reliable evidence directly from the past. Scholars distinguished pre-Islamic practices from those that came with Islamization in terms of behavior, and disregarded beliefs. For these scholars, a physical practice such as a particular style of burial retained a pre-Islamic essence even when people's beliefs changed. The effect was to deny beliefs a central role in religion. In their eagerness to find local and ethnic continuity with the past, scholars described popular practices as pre-Islamic even if the entire community felt they were Islamic. The ethnic cultural past was important: shared folk practices in the present that could be identified as pre-dating Islam were claimed as autochthonous and authentic, while later religious beliefs and practices tended to be disregarded as introduced, elite and inauthentic because not part of a supposed enduring and original ethnic culture.

Further, institutional religious beliefs, such as Islam, were treated as parts of a supposedly fading past. Politicians and Soviet scholars felt that modern urban workers should lose such beliefs in the Soviet Union. Many Soviet and Western scholars held related concepts in this area, although they interpreted the situation differently. Mark Saroyan summarizes,

Briefly stated, the Soviet literature follows from the assumption that modernization has indeed taken place in the USSR; hence what remains of Islam are only its "vestiges." In contrast, the Western specialist literature focuses on the fact of an existing Islam and thus draws the conclusion that the Muslim societies in the USSR have not in fact been modernized (Saroyan 1997: 21).

Western scholarship relied heavily on Soviet accounts of Islam in the Soviet Union, but as Saroyan points out, evaluated these accounts differently. Westerners tended to accept Soviet views of Islam as backwards. An example is the wide reliance Sergei P. Poliakov's *Everyday Islam*. Although purportedly a study of popular Islam, Poliakov's book instead demonstrates the problematic relationship of Soviet modernizers and "traditional" life in Soviet Central Asia. Since it is a critical essay written by a Soviet Russian who advocates modernization, it offers a glimpse into Soviet cultural politics, but its details about popular Islam or Central Asian culture are limited, although many Western scholars cite it. Instead, Poliakov defends Soviet colonization as an enlightenment movement, and when Central Asian Muslims reject this *mission civilisatrice*, Poliakov accuses them of willfully remaining backwards and bringing upon themselves problems such as poverty and poor health.

The book reveals how ideology and sloppy scholarship in the Soviet Union shaped intellectual dogma. Poliakov argues that Central Asian Muslims have not made the most of the benefits of Russian education and the access it provides to “the heritage of world culture”—implying the Islamic learning is not part of world heritage—and “new information, which is the basis of modern development in society” (1992: 129). Ironically, Poliakov’s own work provides an example of the poor scholarship and Russian chauvinism that vitiated Soviet social science and damaged Russian-minority relations. Such a Soviet Russian education alienated many Central Asians.

Devin DeWeese provides a detailed critique of outsider scholarship on Islam in the Soviet and post-Soviet period. DeWeese sees “Sovietological Islamology” as the study of Islam arising from political analyses of the Soviet Union. Although dominant, this school of analysis of Soviet and post-Soviet Islam relies upon poor sources and poor theoretical models, and does not make connections to the study of Islam elsewhere. DeWeese argues that many of the specialists studying Soviet Islam are ‘ill-equipped to deal with all but the most superficial aspects of religion and its place in Soviet life’ (2002: 299). DeWeese offers as examples the work of Yaacov Ro’i, and of Alexandre Bennigsen and his students.

In reviewing Ro’i’s work, DeWeese finds an accurate discussion of Soviet efforts to administer and control Islam, but the analysis of Islam in the context of Soviet policies is weak and misleading. Ro’i has done important archival research but his interpretations perpetuate the limited understanding that Soviet policy makers and academics had of Islam. This narrow view of Islam excludes much of daily practice. Soviet scholars viewed Islamic orthodoxy much the same way as the Muslim fundamentalists who attacked traditional Islamic practices such as *ziyarat* as un-Islamic (DeWeese 309-10, see also Saroyan 1997:114). DeWeese further argues that scholars saw supposedly unorthodox practices as remnants of pagan autochthonous faiths that had been suppressed by Islam. The ideologues of the Communist Party, scholars studying local religious practices, and the institutionalizing Muslim leaders who tried to impose narrow limits to practices all promoted a similar purified and abstract view of Islam, in contrast to the actual practices of popular Islam.

Ro’i essentializes Islam by claiming that knowledge is fundamental to belief, while practice is secondary, so those who do not perform religious rituals according to learned and literate traditions have distorted the religion. He thinks those who do not follow orthodox scholarly knowledge of Islam are deceived and inauthentic believers. Although Soviet scholars and anti-religious officials, and Ro’i himself, use formal literate learning as a test for authentic knowledge of Islam, DeWeese argues that religion does not depend on understanding scriptures: religious practices are valid without such learning (311). The idea that “real” Islam is learned and literate is a pervasive and problematic assumption. Local traditions are vital to religious practice, and should not be rejected through reference to Islamic scripture (313). Even within the traditions of literate Islam there is a long tradition of defending “pilgrimage to saints’ shrines” (317). And finally DeWeese faults Ro’i for failing to provide “any discussion, or even a brief digest, of ethnographic accounts of how Islam was lived in the Soviet context” (323).

DeWeese highlights problems that have simple causes: scholars have limited knowledge of scholarship about Islam, and Soviet and Sovietological institutions and scholarly approaches make the materials about Soviet policies more accessible than those describing Muslim practices. Most American and much European scholarship on Muslim Central Asia relies upon Russian sources. Both serious ethnography and research using primary sources in Turkic or Persian have been deficient among Soviet scholars or Sovietologists.

### *European Outsider Scholarship: Ethnographic Objectification*

Some modern European scholars also attempt to distinguish Islamic and non-Islamic practices within contemporary religious practices, in order to examine supposed syncretism and survivals. In studying shamanism and Islam in Kazakhstan, Patrick Garrone links his present observations with documented practices from the past. He assumes the categories of shamanism, *bakhshylyk* (*baksylyk* in Kazakh), Sufism, and Islam and divides materials according to his own assumptions. Because he classifies cultural traits according to these categories, his analysis finds what he assumed: healers are syncretically combining distinct religious practices. Garrone falls into the traps identified above, avoiding primary sources from Central Asia, and relying heavily on Soviet scholars' *a priori* distinctions between Islamic and non-Islamic practices. After dividing the phenomena he observes, it is tautological that Garrone will find these same distinctions. When he describes *baksylyk* as "an Islamized shamanism" (2000:150), Garrone in effect asserts that Islam and shamanism are two essences that can be separated from one another, and as an outsider, he can tell which is which. In this sense, shamanism and Islam exist outside of particular practices, and the outsider can recognize the essence of the activities better than the insider. He follows Thierry Zarcone and others in describing local varieties of Sufism and Buddhism as shamanic (2000:231).

When Poliakov describes people as backwards, or Ro'i and Garrone essentialize Islam and shamanism and deny people's own agency in making their culture, they are participating in the practice of *allochrony*, which Johannes Fabian defines as placing societies on a scale of cultural evolution and discounting the lives of those who are perceived as backwards, at another evolutionary stage (Fabian 1983). Such analyses of survivals and essentialized religions suggest that some people's practices are rooted in the past, making them backwards. Fabian suggests that colonial cultures justify the domination of others through speculative histories and arguments about archaic culture dragging some people into the past. Such people are literally excluded from participation in the modern present, and their concerns are ignored or subordinated to the projects of the supposedly advanced civilization of the colonial power. Marxist and Tylorian speculative histories served this purpose in Soviet scholarship: scholars assigned religious practices the labels of 'relic' and 'survival' and those who carried them out were not seen as valid participants in the present. Instead these were archaic superstitions that would be best as part of museum exhibits.

Academic and popular models of cultural evolution perpetuate these ideas. In his studies of Hui (Dungan), Uyghur and Kazakh folktales in China, Karl Lückert assigns each tale to the cultural stage in which it was supposedly created. Lückert and his colleagues interpret cultural traits and practices mentioned in the tales as traces of the cultural stage in which people first told the tale. Lückert argues that folklore preserves past cultural activities during transmission (Hali, Li & Lückert 1998; Li & Lückert 1994; Wei & Lückert 1998). He assumes the tales do not change across millennia and motifs continue to reflect the cultural stage at which they were created. He promotes an analytic method founded in speculative cultural history and ignores the role of folklore performers. But academic folklorists have intensively studied the ways folktales change. Research shows that tale-tellers do not preserve motifs from when the tale was first told because tellers can not preserve elements that do not fit with their own experience: tales change constantly according to the experiences of the people who tell them, and reflect little from the distant past. Tales hold interest for and continue to be told to present audiences when they reflect present concerns and interests.

The Euro-American anthropologist Franz Boas was an early opponent of speculative histories of human cultural and social evolution (Boas 1920). He strongly advocated historical research that was based in actual evidence of earlier forms of cultural organization: he argued that cultural change and development could not be understood in terms of evidence

from a later time. Boas did not accept that history fit a timeline or standardized sequence: instead it could be known only through the actual study of specific data from a given period.

Contemporary ethnography and cultural anthropology avoid such historicizing approaches: cultural practices are analyzed in terms of the present meaning and role they have within social life. Cultural analysis that understands people as active participants in making and perpetuating their own culture avoids imposing judgments on cultural practices that suggest people are somehow stuck in the past, missing out on historical progress. People cannot be trapped in traditions or reproduce culture automatically: scholars who imagine uncritical and passive cultural transmission are generally implying a contrast to the progress and agency of “modern” scholars and their societies. Instead, cultural analysts have to understand the motivations that lead people to preserve or change their culture.

People transmit culture through time, but this process has to be analyzed in terms of cultural reproduction: people are actively engaged in experiencing and recreating traditional practices. They try to change some practices and recreate others. Cultural structures are not mindlessly reproduced, nor do they change only because of external pressures: people form concepts and make judgments about their own cultural practices, and change them or reproduce them in ways that they find significant. Motivations in the present lead people to continue or change practices. For example, the religious rituals many Kyrgyz carry out at the Ata Bei’it shrine apply ideas about tombs to a place established as a political monument to those killed during the Stalinist purges. Similarly, victims of the Ürkün events in 1916 are beginning to be honored in both political and religious rituals. And the newly established tomb of Manas in Talas Rai’on combines a political monument to a Kyrgyz culture hero with the religious practice of pilgrimage to tombs. Culture involves communicative interaction in society, and people creatively use culture as a resource for accomplishing particular political, social or spiritual goals.

Politics and religion often interact in complex ways because people can organize politics more effectively when they have ideological legitimacy that can be created through religious authority and interpretations. As many people have pointed out, aspects of Soviet ideology and heroes were treated as if they were sacred (e.g., Keller 2001). Symbols from Russian religious practices were used in innovative ways to reinforce Soviet ideology and rituals. These creative uses of existing practices and concepts accomplished new goals.

Complex examples of creativity within Islam can be seen in the many different political systems that have been based on Muslim ideas. Rulers and their officials have devised ways of linking Islamic concepts with political processes and symbols. Religion served to legitimate rule, and rulers promoted Islam, but just as Islamic religious practice is very diverse, political ideas and practices that are based upon Islam are likewise diverse. Whether it is the court of Sultan Husayn Baiqara Myrza in Herat, or Afaq Khoja’s court at Yarkand (Papas 2005), the varied connections of Islam and politics are the product of cultural strategies. To understand the politics, one must understand the religious ideas, and vice versa.

### ***Ethnography: Studying Local Knowledge and Local Complexity***

I have argued at some length about why religions cannot be studied adequately without ethnography. Religious cultures exist through the local understanding and knowledge of the practitioners. People carry out cultural practices because they have personal or community significance. The challenge of good ethnography is to understand what people think, feel, and say in local terms. We cannot assume we understand how and why people do things until we see how things make sense from a local perspective. The words, actions, symbols, and other aspects of local social practice have meanings that are not obvious to outsiders.

Although there are very few ethnographic studies of Central Asia in English, one excellent study is Bruce Privratsky's fascinating and detailed ethnography of religious life in the city of Turkistan, where the tomb of Shaykh Ahmad Yasavi is located. Privratsky describes the details of Muslim daily life, and the *zyyarat* (q.v.) practices to the shrine of Yasavi. He shows that although Soviet era made deep changes to religious practice and belief, many domestic practices of popular Islam have continuing vigor. On the other hand, few people in Turkistan know much about scholarly Islam. During the Soviet period, Islamic learning was largely abandoned, and at present a small, but increasing number of Kazakhs can recite from the Quran.

In other regions, ethnographers John Bowen and Mark Saroyan examine diverse Islamic practices: practices and knowledge vary from one community to the next, and among individuals within communities. During the Soviet period, Sunni clergy and Soviet officials both attempted to eliminate *zyyarat*, but the Shi'a clergy of Azerbaijan supported *zyyarat* and other aspects of tomb worship (Saroyan 1997:114). After comparing Muslim rituals in Morocco and Indonesia, John Bowen argues that the diverse and complex weaving together of local practices with local understandings of scripture is "the historical essence of Muslim ritual life" (Bowen 1997:671). Authoritative versions of Islam arise from diverse traditional sources, and interact with local understandings, beliefs and practices.

Saroyan shows that even during Soviet times in Azerbaijan, politicians were not excluded from popular Islamic practice, and clerical Islam interacted with popular practice. Power relations varied from one situation to the next: clerics relied on popular practice in some contexts, but could also be undermined by it (1997: 121-2). This reminds us that we should develop models for thinking about concrete interactions among political, clerical, and popular ideas about religion in Kyrgyzstan. As mentioned above in regard to Ürkün, Ata Bei'it, and Tomb of Manas, people are changing their ideas about political and religious rituals. Clerical interpretations of Islam that include Manas and popular Kyrgyz practices of healing and honoring ancestors have an important role in these changing practices, while less locally-informed interpretations of Islam, and those that disparage Kyrgyz practices are more contested. These contests revolve around challenges to the authority and legitimation for differing interpretations. People adopt positions depending on personal choices about which aspects of belief and morality are more important. Many people abstain from the debates but participate in spiritual activities that make sense and feel rewarding to them.

Islamists or Kyrgyz nativists who are more committed to classifying and distinguishing types of religious practices, try to define or present religious concepts and practices such as *Kyrgyzchylyk* or Tengrianism as being outside of Islam. Whether they consider themselves followers of Islam or of *Kyrgyzchylyk*, they define narrower and more exclusive interpretations of Islamic practice. But as Bowen, Saroyan, and many others show, there are many different versions of what Islam can include, and the real question is not where to draw the boundary lines, but who can speak authoritatively about such divisions. There will always be diverse, sometimes conflicting understandings of what should be considered as Islamic within Kyrgyz religious practices, and what should be considered native. In addition to studying practices and rituals themselves, anthropologists have to study discourses about such religious categories and systems, and how and when people feel it is important to talk about them.

Many religious people understand their beliefs as having outside sources of authority, and so seek interpretations and meanings from elsewhere. Since religious practices and experiences are inherently uncertain, many practitioners rely upon authoritative knowledge, reinforced by symbolic and ritual forms that provide confidence in the "reality," "truth," stability or reliability of the religious knowledge and practices. In Islam—as in Christianity and Buddhism—many believers feel textual knowledge and rituals that involve texts are important sources of certainty. But many Muslim mystics have argued against relying upon

textual knowledge as a source of truth or access to God. Some mystics feel that words, work and scholarship get in the way of mystical experience (Schimmel 1975:17-19). In Islam there is also a tradition of receiving knowledge and even interpreting Arabic texts directly through meditation and revelation (Privratsky 2001:118-123, 159-60, 186-188; Schimmel 1975:28). Studies of Islamic practice have to examine the ways people think about knowledge and interpretative authority. Written sources of knowledge are only some of the sources that people respect. But when literacy becomes a criterion of institutional authority, then popular and oral practices may be less respected in public, written, and media discourses (see Shahrani, 1989).

Genealogies provide good examples of how literate and oral knowledge interact. Because genealogies are often used as sources of political and spiritual legitimacy, they are included in many written compilations of oral tradition. But even such a basic element of sacred history as descent from the sons of Noah appears in many different versions. This reflects the practical use of genealogies. Ideas about ancestors and descents change over time in response to people's present ideological, social and political goals. As oral versions of descent acquire currency and authority, people change texts to accommodate them. People use writing as a resource to discipline or regulate oral and practical social life, but such use depends on social processes of interpretation. Written genealogies change to reflect existing interpretations and oral knowledge. Heroes in Central Asian tradition become resources that people include within lineages: Alexander, Afrasiyab, Oghuz Khan, and Chingiz Khan appear in many genealogies. Culture heroes who come from elsewhere and convert people to Islam are sometimes included as ancestors. Some versions of Kyrgyz origins include the ancestor Ana al-Haqq, whose name itself preserves the famous words of the Sufi martyr al-Hallaj of Baghdad (*Materialy* 1973:205; DeWeese 1994: 504-512). A sacred source of authority has been made into a part of the lineage.

### *Conclusion*

Debates about correct practice endure in Islam because of the learned emphasis on following *sunna* (the example of the Prophet) and avoiding *bid'a* (innovation). In the case of Kyrgyz religion, throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century both Soviet scholars and clerical officials have attempted to distinguish Islamic and native practices, while popular practitioners have generally been less concerned with these divisions. Since the end of the Soviet period, a renewed interest in learned Islam has meant that more people are making formal judgments about popular religious practice. Because many people perceive Islam as a shared, scripturally-based international religion, and they do not hear about the diversity of Islamic practices throughout the world, they often accept as authoritative pronouncements about what all Muslims should do.

Tolerance, and debating alternative understandings of spiritual practices are strong traditions within Islam, but it is difficult to affirm these traditions when many people interpret Islam more strictly. As in many religions, the rise of literacy and formal education have led to wider acceptance of written, institutional interpretations of Islam, while individual religious diversity can be seen as error. Through formal education, whether secular or religious, many people learn to accept the certainty of external authority and are more likely to doubt religious practices they learn within their community and in personal spiritual experience. Outsider perspectives on local practices, and *a priori* definitions of universal and essentialized Islam gain acceptance, with the result that locals lose confidence in the validity of long-standing practices such as *zyyarat* and *nazir* offerings.

Ethnographic approaches to understanding local practice are important for countering the increasing influence of learned definitions of Islamic practice. Ethnographic research assumes the expertise of the people being studied. It does not classify institutional and

literate versions of knowledge as more valid, nor the local as more traditional or more ethnically distinctive, but remains deeply attentive to the complex processes of negotiating knowledge, authority and practice within local social contexts. Ethnographic methods help outsiders enter a community and begin to understand the local understandings and causes of positions, debates and effects. As Alexandre Papas points out in his critique of Joseph Fletcher's approach to Khoja rule in Eastern Turkistan, one cannot understand political and religious history as the result of ideas and practices adopted from abroad: historical events arise from processes deeply rooted in local society, people, ideas, and practices (2005:16-19).

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## **ON THE ROLE OF SUFI SHEIKH MIRACLE-WORKING IN THE PROCESS OF ISLAMIZATION OF THE POPULATION OF KYRGYZSTAN**

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### **Abstract**

*The article considers the spread of Islam in Kyrgyzstan and neighboring regions in eastern Central Asia, and demonstrates that due to Sufi Sheikhs the new religion was able to peacefully penetrate the region. The various stages and peculiarities of Islam's penetration into the region, as well as the role of dervish orders are also analyzed.*

*In their efforts to popularize Islam, Sufi sheikhs often resorted to creating miracles and other startling deeds, which closely corresponded to the rituals and traditions of the nomad populations. More specifically, Sufi sheikhs were able to displace Shamans by practicing healing among converted Muslim nomads. The article maintains that this considerably contributed to the peaceful conversion of shamanistic Turkic speaking tribes to Islam.*

Located right in the very center of the Great Silk Road, Central Asia, since ancient times has served as a bridge for exchange of not only goods and knowledge, but also of spiritual values between the East and the West. Buddhism, Christianity and Islam have closely co-existed here for a long time.

The most important stage in the development of the spiritual culture of the Turkic people of Central Asia was the adoption of Islam, which played the role of a civilizing mission by imbedding notions of the highest forms of culture, morals and behavior into the consciences of people, as well as implementing the functions of integration, and law and order. It offered people the idea of social egalitarianism and excluded race and ethnic discrimination by which, to a significant extent, it secured a victory for itself in this vast region.

In Kyrgyzstan and in neighboring regions of the Eastern part of Central Asia, the spread of Islam was performed exclusively in peaceful ways through the efforts of the Sufi sheikhs, who were very successful in the steppes, but less so in the settled areas. The most famous Islamic missionaries of the early centuries in Central Asia were Sheikh Mansur-al-Halladj and Sheikh Abul Hasan al'-Kelimati, and later on Kojo Ahmed Yasawi, whose names were inscribed not only in written sources, but also in the folklore heritage of the Kyrgyz people.

A decisive turning point in the spread of Islam in Kyrgyzstan started with the establishment of the Karakhanid Kaganate (840-1125 A.D.), the Regents of which in the middle of the 10th century announced Islam to be the state religion. Data from some sources show that in 960 A.D., thanks to the missionary activities of Sheikh al-Kelimati, Islam was adopted by 200,000 families of the Turkic people in the area of the Semirechie River.

It is known, of the Sufi religion, that the Sufi sheikhs frequently resorted to miracle working, which to a great extent allowed for the converting of Turkic tribes, who were believers in traditional religions, into the faith of Allah. Miracle working in the Islamic religion is an exclusive prerogative of the Prophet Mohammed and it is called by the Arabic word, *mou'jiza*, i. e., a miracle, publicly performed by the Prophet in confirmation of his mission. In early Islamic literature a term *aya* (plural of *ayat*) was frequently used as a synonym of the word *mou'jiza*. The majority of Islamic theologians contrasted *aya*, with *mou'jiza karama* (plural of *karamat*), i. e., a supernatural action (*haric li-l-'ada*), performed

by a 'saint' (*vali*). The issue of correlation between *mou'jiza* and *karama* was publicly discussed in the Muslim theology. *Mou'tazilits* (Arabic for 'those, who isolated themselves,' or 'those, who separated themselves,' i. e., strict monotheists in Islam assumed that *mou'jiza* is beyond human capabilities and therefore is performed directly by God. They saw in *mou'jiza*, the confirmation of the truthfulness of the Prophet's revelation, which is, to an equal extent, provable also by reason. The majority of *ash'arits* (adherents of *mou'tazilits*) also recognized *mou'jiza* as the necessary precondition for the prophetic mission.<sup>1</sup> Many Muslim theologians emphasized the qualitative superiority of *mou'jiza* over *karama*, in particular the 'inimitableness' and 'uniqueness' of *mou'jiza*.

In general it was considered, that public miracle working after the death of the last prophet, Muhammad, stopped forever. The Sunni fakihs accused those who later resorted to *mou'jiza*, for the support of their religious and political claims, of being lying prophets and having no faith, hence, requiring their execution. A bright illustration of such court cases was that of one of the outstanding persons in Sufism, al-Halladj, who in 922 was publicly executed in Baghdad for his audacious declaration of '*ana-l-Hakk*' ('I am the truth'). Sermons of al-Halladj were causing unrest among the people; his adherers saw in him a new 'Messiah' (al-mahdi), or an absolute 'saint' (*al-kutb*). Opponents of al-Halladj, among whom were the Baghdad fakihs, who were scared of the people's unrest, accused him of public miracle working (*ifsha' al-karamat*). As it was mentioned before, miracle working was considered to be the privilege of the Prophet. Therefore al-Halladj was accused of confusing the believers, in his claims of self-deification, and in the propagation of mystic love of God (*mahabba, 'ishk*), the goal of which is union with God, which was recognized as a 'Manichean delusion' (*zandaka*). He was also accused of rejecting the Muslim rituals and other 'sins'.<sup>2</sup>

Later on, Sufism produced a philosophy of the chosen ones, which was adjusted by the Sufi orders to the needs of masses. Not only the great sheikh, but also his successors, inheriting his *baraka* (spiritual power), were intermediaries in transferring this spiritual power. The rite of visiting the grave of a saint, *zyyarat (q.v.)*, is connected with it. The status of being a saint (*vilaya*) is identified through *karamat*, i. e., the ability, given from above, to work miracles.

The concept of 'sanctity' in Islam always has been a kind of intellectual challenge. In European and Russian science there was an extremely hostile attitude toward it for a long time. Even more critical towards the cult of saints are the adherents of 'pure' Islam, from *hanbalits* to contemporary *vahabbits*. In the worshiping of saints, they see polytheism; adding partners (*shirk*) to God, in other words, an un-permitted novelty (*bid'a*), and corrupting the initial purity of Islam. As opposed to Catholic and Orthodox Christianity, in Islam there is no legitimate institution for the canonization of saints. Muslim saints are not approved by any special decisions; in Islam there is no procedure of determining the sanctity of one or another person, there are no exhaustive lists of saints, official days for honoring them, official rituals of post funeral rites, or glorification of saints. There exists only the talk of people and the opinions of various theologians, respected people and rulers, who have the right to dispute and disagree with each other.

Popularizes of actions of Muslim saints in Central Asia were *calandaris* (mendicant dervishes) and *maddahi* (professional story tellers of hagiography). It is suggested, that *maddahi* began their existence as ancient Islamic prophets *kussas* (plural from the Arabic *kas*). The origin of *kussases* is connected with the ancient preachers and interpreters of the Quran and the *hadises* who frequently accompanied the troops during crusades against the traditional practitioners. By preaching their stories, they stimulated courage and bravery in

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<sup>1</sup> Islam. Encyclopedic dictionary. Moscow, 1991. p.269.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 269-271.

people who were fighting for their faith. As centuries passed, *kussases* degenerated into charlatans, pursuing only one goal, profit. The *kussases*' ignorant preaching attracted the attention of orthodox clergy, and they prohibited the *kussases* from preaching near mosques and in the streets. When *kussases* started to be persecuted, they became an underclass element of the east (*ayyars*) and joined organized gangs.<sup>1</sup>

Obviously, *ayyars* also accompanied the troops of the Muslim Mojaheds during their military crusades against the nomadic tribes of the Central Asia, who believed in traditional religions. Echoes of the crusades found their reflection in the Kyrgyz epic story of Manas, where the *ayyars* were shown as miracle workers, possessing supernatural power. One was able to turn into a dragon in the course of a military action and in this way inflict great damage to the troops of Manas during the battle with the army of Shooruk-Khan.<sup>2</sup>

The Muslim saints, *auliya*, acquired the ability to work miracles from their asceticism and virtue. *Karamat*, in Islamic literature, were understood as special skills, which were acquired as the Prophet's heritage due to generosity and magnanimity of Allah. A person, possessing *karamat* could, in the wink of an eye, move across great distances, and participate while being invisible in various events. *Auliya* could also foretell various events, including natural disasters and cataclysms.<sup>3</sup>

Sufi sheikhs of Central Asia, who were attributing to themselves the rank of *auliya*, in a state of ecstasy were conducting public performances of becoming one with God, which was perceived on behalf of their *murides* as *karama*. According to historical sources, which now are available, one such *auliya*, living in the period of the Karahanid State (12<sup>th</sup> century) was Burhaniddin-Kylych. Based on information of Ahmad Uzgendi, a biographer of Burhaniddin-Kylych, Burhaniddin killed with the glance of his eyes any person who was distracting him while he was meditating.<sup>4</sup>

An illustration of the motive of the love of a mother and the power of her prayer is available in the story of Abd al-Kadyr Gilani, the founder of the Sufi Order *kadiriya*, who died in 1166.<sup>5</sup> According to this story, a mother prayed to this saint, asked him to raise her deceased son from the dead. Abd al-Kadyr appealed to Allah and upon his request, not only the son of this woman was resurrected but also all people who had died on the same day. Their souls, which were stored in a glass container by Azrail, the angel of death, were released and returned to Earth. According to specialists, the power of the above mentioned Sufi sheikh, which was able to even bring the dead to life, are represented in this story.

In the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, with the establishment of the state of Mongolia, Islam became the state religion within the boundaries of the south-eastern Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. In spite of the fact that Tukluk-Timur Khan, the first ruler of this state, adopted Islam and his successors had Muslim names, many nomadic tribes, living in

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<sup>1</sup> A.L. Troitskaya. From the past of Kalandars and maddahs in Uzbekistan.//Pre-Muslim beliefs and rituals in Central Asia. Moscow, 1975. p. 207.

<sup>2</sup> Manas. Birinchi boluk, I book. Frunze, 1958.B.158-160.

<sup>3</sup> B. M. Babajanov. Dukchi Ishan and the Andizhan insurrection of 1898r.// Hermits of Islam. Cult of saints and Sufism in Central Asia and in the Caucasus. Moscow, 2003.p. 269.

<sup>4</sup> S.N. Abashin. Burhaniddin-Kylych: a scientist, a Ruler, a miracle worker? On genesis of the cult of saints in Central Asia.// Hermits of Islam. Moscow, 2003. p.214-215.

<sup>5</sup> J.S. Trimingham. Sufi Orders in Islam. Translated from English. Editor and preface by O.F. Akimushkin. Moscow, 1989, p.25.

remote eastern areas of the state of Mongolia were not converted to Islam until the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup>

This is why the new stage of spreading Islam among nomadic tribes of Mongolia is connected with activities of the Order of *Nakshbandiya*, the founder of which was an influential Bukhara sheikh, Beha-ad-di Nakshbandi (1318-1389). Hermits of this Sufi brotherhood carried out an active advocacy of the Muslim faith among the nomadic tribes of Mongolia, the Golden Horde and in western Siberia. Namely due to the missionary activities of Sufi hermits of the powerful and separated Order of *Nakshbandiya* an end was put to the belief in Buddhism in eastern Turkistan, even though a significant part of this area was still under the influence of Buddhism at the beginning of 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>2</sup>

According to 'Madjmu at-tavarih,' by Sai'f ad-Din Ahsikendi (16<sup>th</sup> century), another Sufi Order, *Ishkiya*, whose successors considered themselves as descendants of the legendary imam Ibrahim Zaranjish, was operating at the same time as the Order, *Nakshbandiya*. In this manuscript which is half historic and half legendary in nature, there are records of the earliest variants of the Kyrgyz epic story of Manas, where the spiritual leader and mentor of the hero was Seyid Jalal ad-Din, one of the founders of the Order, *Ishkiya*. According to this version, Seyid Jalal ad-Din sometimes, prior to a battle, worshiped God and spiritual patrons. The brothers-in-arms of Manas were called Muslims, and those who were defeated were given the opportunity to convert to Islam, and those who rejected this offer were eliminated. Thus, the author of this manuscript tries to turn Manas into a protector of the faith and a faithful successor of Sufi sheikhs.<sup>3</sup>

It is obvious that this successful way of telling the very popular Manas epic, in the spirit of the Islamic religion, to a great extent allowed for spreading Islam among nomadic Kyrgyz tribes. In the most recent variant of the Manas epic, Ai-Kojo, the legendary spiritual protector of the hero, magically cures Manas of a deadly dose of poison after he had been poisoned by Kōzkaman, his close relative, who remained a believer in traditional religions. This episode of the folk legend, probably reflects the echoes of good and trustworthy relations which existed some time ago between Sufi sheikhs of the Fergana valley and leaders of the Kyrgyz tribes of Mongolia, as well as the existence of religious contradictions inside the Kyrgyz society where there was an obvious combat between adherents of Islam and believers in traditional religions.

At the concluding stage of the Islamization of the Kyrgyz tribes, a very important role was played by Kojo Iskhak, one of the followers of Beha ad-Din Nakshbandi, whose missionary activities among Kyrgyz tribes are described in such hagiographic works of the 17<sup>th</sup> century as '*Ziya al-Kulub*' ('Radiance of Hearts') and '*Jalis-i Mushtakin*' ('Interlocutor With Those Who Are Wishful'). Kojo Iskhak was the son of sheikh Seyid Ahmad Kasani, better known under the title of Mahdum-i Azam (died in 1542), to whom was attributed the conversion to Islam of the peoples of eastern Turkistan who believed in traditional religions.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> V.V. Bartold . Essay of history of the Semirechie (Seven Rivers).C.80.

<sup>2</sup> N.D. Nurtazina. Islam in history of Medieval Kazakhstan... p.189.

<sup>3</sup> Collection of Stories» by Madjmou at-Tavarih. Photographic reproduction of abstracts from a manuscript, introduction and indexes. Prepared for publication by A.T. Tagirjanov. Publishing House of the Leningrad University. 1960, p.40.

<sup>4</sup> In detail about missionary and political activities of successors of Mahdum-i-Azam in the Eastern Turkistan, see: Togan, Isenbike. Differences in ideology and practice. The case of the Black and White Mountain factions // Saints and Heroes on the Silk Road. pp.25-38.

Kojo Iskhak was brought up from childhood by the successor of his father, Sheikh Lutfallah Chusti (died in 1571-72), who also was responsible for spreading Islam among the nomadic tribes of Central Asia. Biographers tell us that Kojo Iskhak, as well as the sheikh, were able to work miracles. Thus, the author of '*Ziya al-Kulub*,' tells that after Kojo Iskhak, with the power of mysterious prayers, cured a hopelessly sick person and found a source of water in the desert, the Kyrgyz, who were present, threw away their idols, and crowds of Kyrgyz people adopted faith in Allah. The author of this work sees the main contribution of Kojo Iskhak, primarily in the fact that this sheikh destroyed Kyrgyz and Kazakh traditional temples and converted to Islam 180 thousand traditional practitioners, which is an obvious exaggeration of the results of his missionary activities.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, as was mentioned above, we think that advocates of Islam, found elements of miracle working by Kojo Iskhak and other Sufi sheikhs, portrayed in the epic story of Manas.

Therefore, Sufi sheikhs, while practicing medicine among nomads converted to Islam and gradually replaced the shamans, who always combined the performance of religious rituals with curative activities. Eventually, the Sufi sheikhs took forever, the place of the shamans.

In this regard it is necessary to point out that successors of the Kazakh *kojo*, who connect their genealogy to Kojo Ahmad Yasavi, even now continue to be engaged in folk treatment with the application of ritual *zikir* (*q.v.*). In the opinion of Kojos themselves, *zikir* is considered as one of the traditional elements of the Sufi Order of *Yasawiyas*.<sup>2</sup> Traditions similar to folk treatments when the sheikh resorts to ritual *zikir* to cure a sick person, and to former shamans falling into ecstasy, were recorded also among Turkmen.<sup>3</sup> As S. M. Abramzon, a famous researcher of ethnography of the Kyrgyz people, established, Central Asian shamanism was closely linked with dervishism, which in turn is a branch of Sufism.<sup>4</sup>

As the above material demonstrates, a significant role was played by the Sufi sheikhs in the Islamization of the population of Kyrgyzstan and of the neighboring regions of the Semirechie River. Sufi sheikhs, for almost one thousand years, in conditions of political change and natural cataclysms, did not stop advocating the religion of Islam among nomadic tribes of the region where periodically new inflows of nomadic hordes were coming from the depths of Central Asia. The main weapon of the Sufi sheikhs was their faith in Allah and revelations of Prophet Mohammed, written in the holy book of the Quran. The main device for conversion was the word, and sometime a miracle, to which they resorted, obviously, while being in collusion with selected representatives of the nomads themselves, with whom sheikhs were maintaining secret contacts.

For the purpose of achieving the main goal of conversion of traditional practitioners into Islam, the Sufi sheikhs were also using pre-Islamic beliefs and customs, including them in with the Islamic rituals and traditions. On the other hand, thanks to the Sufi sheikhs, elements of Arabic-Persian literary traditions were intertwined into the folk

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<sup>1</sup> *Ziya al-Kulub* /Materials on the history of the Kyrgyz...pp.170-184

<sup>2</sup> In detail about it, see.: Privratsky, Bruce. Muslim Turkistan. Kazak Religion and Collective Memory. Curzon Press. 2001. pp. 227-228.

<sup>3</sup> V.N. Basilov. On the origin of Turkmen-Ata—folk forms of central Asian Sufism.// Pre-Muslim beliefs and traditions in Central Asia. Moscow, 1975. pp. 158-161.

<sup>4</sup> S.M. Abramzon. Kyrgyz jana Kyrgyzstan taryhy boyuncha tandalma emgekter. Bishkek, 1999. p.217.

mythology of nomadic peoples of the Central Asia, including the epic legends of the Kyrgyz people, which to a significant extent allowed for integration of nomads into a new ethno-cultural space of the region.

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## **SYNCRETISM OF RELIGIOUS BELIEFS (KYRGYZCHYLYK AND MUSULMANCHYLYK)**

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### ***Abstract***

*This article examines the current discourse on syncretism and various opinions on the synthesis of kyrgyzchylyk (folk ritual practice) and musulmanchylyk (Islamic practice) in today's Kyrgyz society. Although religious syncretism has been widely discussed by many social scientists, due to the socio-political environment the synthesis of kyrgyzchylyk and*

*musulmanchylyk has often been disregarded. There has been a tendency of opposing Islam to popular folk beliefs, despite certain religious practices which demonstrate a close integration of kyrgyzchylyk and musulmanchylyk. The current nation building process in Kyrgyzstan, together with the new freedoms of religion and the development of Islam can explain this persistent need to distance kyrgyzchylyk and musulmanchylyk.*

*The opposition of Islam to popular folk beliefs is not only taking place at the administrative and political level, but is also occurring among ordinary people who practice religion. The influx of information on Islam seen after the adoption of freedom of religion legislation has not only provided people with deeper knowledge about Islam but has also sharpened their knowledge about “pure” or canonical Islam. Local Imams call people to reject those folk customs which they claim are “contradictory” to Islam. In this context there is a growing tension and confrontation between Imams, healers and mystics. This article explores the views of those three groups on the syncretism of religions, and specifically the relationship between kyrgyzchylyk and musulmanchylyk.*

### **Introduction**

This article examines the discourse of syncretism and the various opinions on the subject of synthesis of *kyrgyzchylyk* (folk belief) and *musulmunchylyk* (Islam) in the present Kyrgyz society. Although many scientists proved that religious beliefs can be syncretic, but sometimes due to social and political conditions *kyrgyzchylyk* and Islam are considered contradictory to each other. The policy of national revival in our country, development of Islam due to freedom of religion and the present political leadership of our country are the reasons for that.

#### **I. Visions of Syncretism in Kyrgyz Society**

Syncretism in religion was widely discussed in scientific researches. Those researches show that there is no pure religion in the world that is not mixed with other religions. This applies to all nations, including Kyrgyz nation. Taking into consideration present religious situation in Kyrgyzstan, it can be observed that Islam and *kyrgyzchylyk* are not perceived as complimentary elements of the general religion system.

This confrontation of Islam and *kyrgyzchylyk* is explained by the current political and social situation. The end of atheistic era and adoption of freedom of religion have created new questions in society. Those questions are: Which religion is right for Kyrgyz? What should be allowed and forbidden in order to practice religion appropriately? Members of the society answer differently to these questions depending on their interests and the current social situation.

In their answers we can see how they try to separate Islam and *kyrgyzchylyk*.

Here are the groups, which were divided according to their activities:

1. Present state authorities
2. “Patriots” supporting the idea of national revival
3. Researchers
4. Ordinary people, who practice religion

As it was noted above, representatives of these four groups try to decide how Kyrgyz people should “correctly” practice the “appropriate” religion for them. And they do it by opposing the folk belief to Islam in different aspects. Let’s look at each of them more closely.

First group includes the present state authorities, State Committee for Religious Affairs and Muftiat (Religious Control over Muslims). They declared that not “pure” Islam but “folk Islam” is suitable for the Kyrgyz State and our government has to impede development of pure Islam. From their point of view Islam should be limited due to its potential to create insecurity. According to the state authorities we need to limit the practice of Islam in order to guarantee national security and avoid religious extremism. At the same time they did not explain what is the distinction between folk and “pure” Islam.

*Kyrgyzchylyk* is supported because worship of sacred places is harmless. That is why practicing Islam on the traditional level is enough. (Islamic rituals in funerals, celebrations, weddings, fasting Ramadan, reading namaz are enough).

Thus, because of security concerns, *kyrgyzchylyk* and Islam are separated by present state authorities. This confrontation originates from Soviet atheist ideology. During Soviet times the Muftiat and State Committee for Religious Affairs helped the Soviet Government to propagate atheism and control religion. Old traditional customs were used by the Soviet government as one of the objects impeding “pure” Islam. Nowadays our state authorities also do not interfere into *kyrgyzchylyk* because, from their point, it does not threaten security. For instance, the State Committee for Religious Affairs does not have any information about sacred places (like a register or list), but at the same time, sacred places such as “Manas Ordo” and “Sulai’man Too” are named as national, historical and cultural places and supported by the government. Thus, state agencies set up *kyrgyzchylyk* against Islam and use the last one to weaken the role of “pure” Islam.

The second group consists of “patriots”. This group actively participates in discussions about which religion is “appropriate” for the Kyrgyz. They are very radical in setting *kyrgyzchylyk* against “pure” Islam. This group relates religious issues to national revival ideas. Their purpose is to select religion, which emphasizes national features and belongs only to the Kyrgyz. This religion has been called by them “*tengirchilik*”. It requires people to save Kyrgyz national customs and traditions and worship sacred places. Islam is perceived as an alien religion with incomprehensible Arabic language. Thus, the second group sets *kyrgyzchylyk* against Islam as a basis of national identity.

Nowadays, there are many discussions and ideas about defining religion for Kyrgyz among local researchers. The idea that Kyrgyz were never “pure” Muslims and that the original religion of the Kyrgyz is “*tengirchilik*”, prevails over other ideas in the discussions. Others say that Islam was accepted by Kyrgyz in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and now is the official religion of our country. Of course, these opposing ideas cannot eliminate each other. Among Kyrgyz, there are many rituals contradictory to Islam but every Kyrgyz now considers himself as a Muslim (even when no Islamic rituals are practiced). On the other hand ordinary people use freedom of religion as an opportunity to develop their own practices. The growth in quantity of mosques, religious schools and people who visit mosques are the results of freedom of religion.

Both ideas mentioned above have their own rationale. The issue of mixing Islam with traditional beliefs is also common in other nations. Are those people real Muslims? Or, is that version of Islam, which is “pure”? These kinds of questions have often been raised.

Nowadays, there are those who say that this way of phrasing the question is incorrect and that the natural syncretism of Islam and folk beliefs should be accepted. Russian scholar, Seleznev, who researched Islam in Siberia, has offered the following on the right way of researching syncretism in religion: “Methodologically it is extremely important that religious syncretism is considered as an integral and nonsegmented world view and as united system of views and beliefs. Thereupon, attempts to separate pre-Islamic, pre-Christian and other elements of traditional worldview are considered methodologically incorrect”.

Abashin has explained incorrect methods in religious research during Soviet times: “modern experts on Islam negatively consider such definitions as “folk Islam” and “local Islam”, which were widely used in Soviet literatures. Indeed, occasionally the word “folk” has meant non-Islamic or not really Islamic”. Abashin believed that the new method will be successful in researching Sufism and noted that research should not judge Sufism but accept its nature: “Sufism research should not be limited by finding signs, features of high or classical Sufism”. According to Abashin, describing Sufism, its degradation means already one of the elements of Sufism at some point.

To sum up, it must be noted that during research one should not separate *kyrgyzchylyk* and folk rituals with any religion in setting appropriate religion for people, but analyze the nature of people’s belief as they stand.

The opposition of Islam and *kyrgyzchylyk* is taking place not only on the administrative and political level but also among ordinary people who practice religion. An influx of information about Islam after the adoption of freedom of religion does not only inform people deeper about Islam but also sharpens knowledge about rituals and concepts of *kyrgyzchylyk*, which are “unislamic”. The numbers of people, who have learned about Islam and indicate which points in *kyrgyzchylyk* and national culture are contradictory to Islam, has increased. They call people to reject those customs which are contradictory to Islam. In this connection, there is a high confrontation mostly between imams, healers and clairvoyants. The practices of Islam and *kyrgyzchylyk* can be seen as naturally integrated to each other in our culture in the example of sacred places (mazars). This article explores views of ordinary practitioners on syncretism of religions.

## ***II. Hypothesis***

Islam and *kyrgyzchylyk* are deeply integrated in religious practices of Kyrgyz before, but at the same time in the preset situation it does not promote people to search for common similarities but to search for contradictions.

## ***III. Testing Hypothesis***

In order to test the above mentioned assumption, first of all, one should take a close look at religious practices of people and examine religious rituals and their meanings. We took an example of worshiping mazars, which is considered by local people as the main element of *kyrgyzchylyk*. On the one hand, this example clearly shows how *kyrgyzchylyk* was mixed with Islamic rituals. And on the other, this example presents a hot debate among imams, healers and clairvoyants on the “correct” rituals of worshiping mazar or sacred places.

To test our hypothesis the following examples will be analyzed: a) the present perception of *kyrgyzchylyk* and *musulmanchylyk*; b) mullahs and healers, different attitudes toward them; c) rules in worshiping mazar; d) rituals which are practiced at mazars.

Materials from my research on “Islam in Kyrgyzstan: current changes”, which was supported by the CARI program and materials from the field research in Talas by Aigine Research Center were used in the article. We visited mazars, interviewed local healers, villagers, imams and analyzed rituals, presented on mazars

## ***IV. Mazar. Kyrgyzchylyk and Musulmanchylyk***

The word mazar means a sacred place where people worship, pray and conduct different religious rituals. Mazars are deeply rooted in Kyrgyz culture. According to the

research by Aigine, there are more than 200 mazars in Talas oblast. Those mazars are not only old historic properties but also places that satisfy people's spiritual necessities and still remain fully functioning mazars. Some mazars are protected by guardians and provide services. Especially, after the adoption of freedom of religion the practice of visiting mazars has revived.

The practice of visiting mazars has created a debate among Islamic teachers, healers and shamans concerning *kyrgyzchylyk* and *musulmanchylyk*. According to the field research, *kyrgyzchylyk* means preserving and practicing all rituals from the pre Islamic period and Islamic rituals. *Musulmanchylyk* means practicing only according to Islamic rules and rituals. *Musulmanchylyk* requires strict adhering to Islamic rules and clear distinction from folk beliefs. During Soviet times being Muslim meant identifying oneself Muslim, even if one did not practice Islamic rituals, nowadays being a "real" Muslim means following many rules.

*Kyrgyzchylyk* may have been one of the methods Soviet ideology used to advocate atheism and smooth down religious fervour among the population. *Kyrgyzchylyk* is a wider notion than *musulmanchylyk*. It contains national, cultural and religious concepts. Sometimes, *kyrgyzchylyk* was against modern medicine, for instance, curing someone with *kyrgyzchylyk* meant curing through customs and rituals. *Kyrgyzchylyk* was also sometimes used in the religious context and was opposite to the word "secular". In this connection, it is interesting to look at some examples from the research on mazars in Talas conducted by Aigine in 2005. To the question "what is the difference between *kyrgyzchylyk* and Islam"? Some respondents answered in the following way:

*"When I hear Islam, I think of mosque, wise imams, when I think of kyrgyzchylyk, I think of wise man and healers"*

*"Healing belongs to kyrgyzchylyk and recovering spiritually belongs to Islam"*

These two answers show how people try to separate *kyrgyzchylyk* and Islam, but at the same time it shows that people accept both of them. Each of them has different functions in the same situation.

The next example presents how Islam and *kyrgyzchylyk* are considered as one single concept.

*"Even if you practice kyrgyzchylyk you are a Muslim, not kyrgyzchy"*

*"Human being needs both an imam and a healer"*

*"I believe in kyrgyzchylyk, because my grand father was a great Hadji, he was one of the first who has visited Mecca"*

*"Our grandfather was a great Islam teacher, teaching Islam is kyrgyzchylyk"*.

These examples indicate that people need both of these practices. Ordinary people explain with the first notion second one and vice versa, both notions mean one thing.

In the interviews with clairvoyants during field research, most respondents thought learning Quran and namaz were the initial steps in accepting *kyrgyzchylyk*. Some came to this with the help of teachers and some came after dreams where they saw pages from Quran and Arabic letters or they received the holy book Quran in their dreams.

When people with supernatural qualities were asked if their ancestors had *kyrgyzchylyk* qualities, they answered that one of their dead relatives was a teacher of Islam. Thus, for people imam from mosque or clairvoyant in mazar are representatives of one religion or spiritual power, but may be expressed in different ways.

According to informants, Islam and *kyrgyzchylyk* are not contradictory to each other

and accepted by them as a whole system.

However, the different explanation came from the modern imam's side. One person was elected to be imam in one of the villages of Talas oblast in 2001. He has been practicing Islam for five years, which means he became Muslim under the influence of information from mosques and religious lessons that advocate "pure" Islam. His wife had a medical education and worked as a nurse in a hospital. She had a serious disease and medical intervention could not help her so she turned to folk medicine, to the traditional healer with supernatural power for help. Her husband, who believes that worship of sacred places and asking for help from people with supernatural power are contradictory to Islam, is against her actions. As a wife of the respected imam she could not openly follow the healer's advice and worship on holy places even, her grandmother used to worship on mazars. According to the local healer, imam's wife had to become a healer. The next example was taken from the experience of the famous mullah in Talas oblast. Back in Soviet times, he had studied in Tashkent with many famous mullahs from Central Asia. Then he became imam and did not deny the qualities of mazars and people with supernatural qualities. In his autobiography he wrote some examples describing that he also had supernatural qualities.

Another imam from Özgörüşh village of Naryn oblast has been not only conducting wedding rituals according to Islam but also has been offering services with his shamanic skills. People invited him to drive evil forces away when women had problems during delivery. But now people are suspicious of him, because he is a mullah and at the same time he practices shamanic activities and that is why he does not conduct many wedding rituals now. The reason for this is that modern Islamic teachers come to villages and spread information that shamanic practice is contradictory to Islam.

From the above mentioned examples it can be concluded that Islam and *kyrgyzchylyk* during the soviet times were united and named as customs and traditions in order to avoid clashes with the communistic atheism. That is why the older generation considers Islam and *kyrgyzchylyk* as one system, and do not oppose them to each other.

The practice of visiting mazar shows that *kyrgyzchylyk* and Islam are complementary to each other. According to local imams in Islam worshipping in sacred place is a great sin, because people in their practice associate sacred places with. People can read the Quran for the dead or make pilgrimages to sacred place, but they shouldn't worship. Under the influence of imams many visitors of mazars say that they came for pilgrimage. However in practice, people come to mazars not only to read Quran for dead, but also to conduct various rituals to receive power from water, mountains, plants and supernatural powers at mazars.

There is a big variety of mazars in Kyrgyzstan, which have different qualities but it does mean that they have no relation to religion. On the contrary, these mazars can show folk rituals are mixed with Islam and coexist with each other. In order to prove this idea, let us examine rituals that are practiced at mazars.

Regardless of the variety of mazars, all people visiting mazars practice the same rules and rituals. Here are some of them:

*One should take an ablution, wear head-dress and make seven loaves when coming to mazar. First thing to do in mazar is to read Quran and pray. Healers put out a candle and spend a night there. People drink spring water and wash themselves. Sometimes they sacrifice an animal.*

Usually, these activities are done under the supervision of healers. Healers usually possess supernatural skills and help people to cure diseases or overcome difficulties in

life. Whip, rosary, Quran, knife, divination stones, forty brushwood and other things are used in helping people. Mazars also help people: water in mazars, stones, soil, plants or supernatural energy influence people. There will be a positive influence from these only if people come to mazars and follow appropriate rules and rituals. It is impossible to say definitely that some rules and rituals belong to Islam and others belong to *kyrgyzchylyk*, they are mixed.

Mazars in Central Asia are researched in connection with Sufism. Indeed, in Uzbek and Tajik cultures mazars are signs of Sufism. According to the words of Babajanov, “mazars are places where great Sufi leaders were buried and they are material remains of Sufism. Followers of those Sufi leaders or other sacred people could practice their rituals and customs in those mazars” features.

In Uzbek culture, the level of sanctity of a mazar is defined through the status of religious person who was buried in that mazar. This example shows that sacred places are graveyards of a religious person.

In Kyrgyz culture there are many more varieties of mazars. Research in Talas has shown that mazars are not only connected with religious affairs. According to informants in Talas, there are 7 types of mazars:

1. Water mazars: spring, lake, river
2. Nature mazars: tree, mountain
3. Man made mazars: cemetery, headstone, fortress, mill
4. State mazars- national properties guarded by state: Manas Ordo, Sulai'man Mountain
5. Animal mazars. (spiritual supporters of those mazars are sacred animals)
6. Mazars of people who just disappeared but not died
7. Stone mazars

It is clear from these examples that a place where a great personality was buried is one type of Kyrgyz mazars. In Kyrgyz mazars, personalities buried at mazars were not always religious people, for instance the headstone of a smith can also be a sacred place. Mazar Usta Döötü in Talas was headstone of smith Döötü.

As there are many different mazars, they can be different in their purposes: praying, healing from diseases, connecting with supernatural powers, reading the Quran for the dead, receiving inspiration for artistic skills, asking for a good life and saving soul and livestock, etc. Stefan Dempke has written about the functions of mazars.

When we look at rituals practiced on mazars and analyze their meanings then we can see that on mazars Islamic rituals emerged and received their meaning “in ways understandable, recognizable, and meaningful” to local people. Let's analyze the ritual *zikir*, which is one of the most practiced rituals on Kyrgyz mazars.

This ritual is done during the night only by a healer or by a group of people. They sit around a candle and read passages from the Quran and slowly raise their voices saying words faster. Sometimes this ritual is accompanied by some movements and jumps. Healers enter a special psychic condition and see the future and receive energy. People asking for help also participate in this ritual. They expect to be influenced by this ritual. *Zikir* is a ritual which gives energy, connects with supernatural powers and cleans from evil forces.

Practitioners do not differentiate *zikir* and *jar*, they are same. In everyday life they use both words to mean one ritual.

The word “*zikir*” is a ritual which was widely used in Sufism. It means praising God. The word “*jar*” comes from Sufi word “*djahr*”. *Jar* is one of the types of *zikir*. In Sufism there were two types of *zikir*: saying *zikir* silently or with low voice and saying *zikir* loudly (*djahr*). In some cultures second type of *zikir* was considered as a sign of ill-breeding and people who practiced it were persecuted. “Loud *zikir* is associated with the fall of morality and attracted

evil forces. Its main evilness is sensibility leading to incontinence”.

Of course, in the religious practices of the Kyrgyz, *zikir* and *jar* rituals do not coincide with *zikhr* and *jahr* rituals in Sufism. Healers in mazars make their own choices on how to conduct the ritual *zikir*, be it silent or loud. Experienced healers practice this ritual loudly by making different movements, snapping a whip around and calling supernatural powers. Practitioners say that this ritual means praising God and a way they receive extraordinary power with the help of this ritual.

Babajanov has described a ritual during the Nooruz holiday in Kashkadarya region of Uzbekistan: “women and a few men made up a circle and sang quatrains about Sufi martyrs. The last two lines of a quatrain were traditional forms of *zikir* and were repeated constantly by other participants of the ritual. The ritual lasted for several hours. Some participants were in ecstasy, loudly cried, scratching their faces and constantly repeated “La Illaha illa-Lah”. Babajanov further describes this ritual: “Indeed if this ritual is not *zikir*, then it is very similar to it, which was formed under the influence of Sufi rituals. Or on the contrary, Sufism has brought to itself some elements of folk rituals and customs”.

*Zikir* and *jar* rituals presented in Kyrgyz mazars have the same meaning. These rituals are conducted by healers. They must fulfil two conditions:

- 1) They must possess supernatural power, using special instruments such as whip and rosary, special clothes; healer has to have a *kyrgyzchylyk* in their genealogy, to be the person who experienced heavy illness and etc.
  - 2) They must follow Islamic rules properly, pray five times and know the Quran.
- These two conditions must be fulfilled by healers at mazars and in helping people.

Texts from *zikir* or *jar* come from the Arab and Kyrgyz languages. Arab words are taken from the Quran and Kyrgyz words make up most of the text and contain the following themes: talking to creator, faith, life, universe and death.

### *Conclusion*

Recently when interaction between cultures and different nations is growing, it is rational and natural to speak about syncretism of religions not about their purity.

However at present time due to socio-political conditions the subject of synthesis of *kyrgyzchylyk* and *musulmanchylyk* is debated by different groups of Kyrgyz society. Current Nation building process and development of Islam due to freedom of religion stated in the society a question about importance of Islam in comparison to *kyrgyzchylyk* and vice versa. During Soviet times, ordinary people accepted syncretism between Islam and *kyrgyzchylyk* in order to avoid clashes with the communist atheist propaganda. Now, after adopting freedom of religion, like any other religion Islam is also reinforcing its position. This reinforcing means driving out other religions and non Islamic rituals from Islam. Mazar worshiping is becoming a central topic for local imams, which they use to present and criticize non Islamic, sometimes “anti-Islamic” sides of folk traditions and customs. Imams are using those examples in teaching local Muslims to differentiate clearly between Islamic and non-Islamic rituals and teaching them to follow only “pure” Islamic rituals.

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## GLOSSARY

### -A-

1. **Abyke** – one of the six sons of Jakyp's (father of Manas) concubine. Together with his younger brother Köbösh, he fought Manas (Manas Encyclopedia, Vol. I, 32).
2. **Adal**- pure.
3. **Ai'chürök**- Manaschy say that Ai'chürök comes from the *peri* or *kai'yp* (Manas Encyclopedia, Vol. I, 49). Wife of *Semetei'*, mother of *Sei'tek*, and daughter-in-law of Manas. Also see *peri* and *kai'yp*.
4. **Ai'köl**- "magnanimous," one of the epithets of Manas.
5. **Ai'tymchy**- a person who has an ability to foretell future events.
6. **Ai'tymchylyk**- ability to foretell future events. Profession of *ai'tymchy*.
7. **Ajybek Datka**- a duke who contributed to the extension of the Kokand Khanate's power in the mid-17 century, collecting taxes from people in Talas and performing other services for the Kokand Khanate.
8. **Akkula**- also, Kakkula, White Horse – in all variants of the epic, it is the primary horse intended for and used by Manas. (Manas Encyclopedia. Vol. II, 57).
9. **Ak Shumkar**- a hunting bird, which was left by Manas to Semetei' as an inheritance.
10. **Ak Tai'lak**- white one-year-old camel (Higher Literature. 567).
11. **Aksakal**- respected elderly person, literally 'grey beard'. Kyrgyz people usually use this term when referring to the elderly man.
12. **Albarsty**- evil creature.
13. **Almambet**- one of the heroes of Manas epic, who came from China and joined the Kyrgyz. He was one of the best friends.
14. **Alty bakan**- six poles, a type of swing like a wheel. On a site free of trees and bushes, heads of three poles are tied together and fixed in two places and swings are hung between them (Kyrgyz ethnographic dictionary. Compilers O. Karataev, S. Eraliev. – B.: Bii'iktik, 2005, 41).
15. **Aram**- evil; impure.
16. **Asa tayak**- Asa stick. **Asa** is a hard tree with patterned bark, and by extension the hard stick made of that tree (Kyrgyz Language Explanatory Dictionary. Vol. I, 92). **Asa tayak** is used by *dubana*, *bübü* and *bakshy* as a ritual tool.
17. **Ash**- funeral repast conducted when a year passes since the death of a person.
18. **Ashar**- a gathering of relatives, neighbors and friends for one day to get their help in construction of a house or other project.
19. **At mai'dany**- an area for horse races, known as *at chabysh*. **At chabysh** is horse race (Kyrgyz Language Explanatory Dictionary. – F.: Mektep. 1969, 66).

20. **Ayan-** supernatural dream or sign orienting a man to do specific actions.
21. **Aziz-** sacred snake.
22. **Azytky-** small creature such as a bird.

-B-

23. **Baabedin-** Baabedin Bahhaudin is the name of Buhara protector; usually the heroes of Central Asian epics call to his help.
24. **Bai'** - a wealthy person, who has influence over people
25. **Bakai'** - is the old, very experienced, far-sighted and wise advisor of the main heroes (Manas, Semetei', Sei'tek) in all parts of the trilogy "Manas"; a main character who played an active role as a mentor (Higher Literature. 129).
26. **Bakshy-** is a type of traditional, male healer.
27. **Balbal-** See *molo tash*.
28. **Bek-** a rich man, leader of the community.
29. **Bii'** - 1. In the pre-revolutionary times, a representative of the authorities that arbitrated various complaints, claims and disputes and conflicts among people; a justice officer (Kyrgyz Language Explanatory Dictionary. Vol. I, 157).
30. **Bismillah-** Muslims pronounce it when going to start something. Literally means in the name of Allah.
31. **Bolush-** 1. The Kyrgyz version of *volost*, an administrative-territorial unit of *uezd* in the pre-revolutionary Russia and pre-1930s USSR, before the division into rayons. 2. The governor of such a unit (Higher Literature. 170).
32. **Boorsok-** fried dough cooked in small pieces.
33. **Bozo** – slightly alcoholic Kyrgyz national drink, made from boiled wheat.
34. **Bübü-** A woman-healer who uses shamanic techniques; a female bakshy (Kyrgyz Language Explanatory Dictionary. – F.: Mektep. 1969, 126).
35. **Bübüchülük-** ability of a woman to heal by shamanic techniques. Profession of *bübü*.
36. **Bübü Mariam** Musa kyzy– a woman that says that from the beginning of the 21st century she began to tell "Manas" based on information transmitted to her by the spirit of Jai'san Yrchy. **Jai'san Yrchy** was a *manaschy* but there is no information about Jai'san Yrchy in history. In the 14-18th centuries, the name Jai'san appeared in relation to the Chinese title "Tsai Xian" from the Yuan dynasty (1260-1368). Later, starting from the 14-15 centuries, this title was widely used among the Oi'rat Mongols to refer to their feudal nobility. Through the Oi'rat Mongols it came to the Kyrgyz and was used as a person's name (Manas Encyclopedia, Vol. I. B.: Chief editorship of the Kyrgyz Encyclopedia. Scientific-propaganda business project "Muras", 1995. 194). According to Bubu Mariam, **Jai'san Ümöt uulu** was born in 682 AD. His mother Janylcha was a daughter of Karach Khan. Both Jai'san and his father Ümöt were among the fellow knights of Manas. Together they went to the Big Campaign; Jai'san was wounded and lost consciousness, but when he was awakened by some magic voice, he began to tell the epic "Manas". Jai'san was poisoned at the age of 54 years by Toktogul Tokchoro uulu (*Yraman Yrchy*), who envied Jai'san's wide popularity of a great poet among people, followed him and memorized almost all of his songs. He is buried at Kyzart pass (Jai'san Ümöt uulu. The story of Manas or Kutlug El-törö. The first book. – B.: Pedagogy. 2001.) – However, the mentioned book was stopped and not printed upon the request of Bübü Mariam that tells "Manas" based on Jai'san's information. The book was fully ready for printing, but the work was stopped at the phase of binding. We obtained a copy of that unprinted, unbound book, from the present owner of "Bii'iktik" Print House, poet Jumadin Kadyrov.

-C-

37. **Chachykei'**- a wife of Semetei'. A heroine opposed to Ai'chürök. Chachykei' does not meet the necessary criteria of a wife of the main hero, and as a result Semetei' married Ai'chürök (Manas Encyclopedia, Vol.2, 332).
38. **Chakmak Tash**- flint stone.
39. **Chii'**- a tall, stiff grass, with stems that are used to make mats.
40. **Chilten**- in mythology, a kind spirit, which has very great power and it does good to people
41. **Chong Shabdan**- See *Shabdan Baatyr*.
42. **Chyi'yrdy**- Mother of Manas.
43. **Chynkojo** –a hero of “Manas” epic, khan of the Jediger tribe, one of the enemies of Semetei'
44. **Chyrakchy**- A person who educates and shows the way.

-D-

45. **Daavat**- lessons on Islamic values to invite people to become a Muslim.
46. **Dastan**- heroic epic. In this Manas epic is considered as *dastan*.
47. **Dastanchy**- A person who recites epic. Manas teller.
48. **Dem saluu**- reading Quran and blowing a fine spray of saliva or water on a sick person.
49. **Dobulga**- is a type of herb.
50. **Dombura**- 1) a name for *komuz* in the south of Kyrgyzstan. 2) a name of Kazakh two- stringed musical instrument played by plucking.
51. **Döpür**- Disease in which one talks as if unconscious of everything.
52. **Dööt Pai'gambar**- Prophet David.
53. **Duba**- special incantations.
54. **Dubana [dervish]** – A begging person that chants religious songs with the purpose of religious preaching; religious mendicant (Kyrgyz Language Explanatory Dictionary. Vol. I, 261).
55. **Dubanachylyk**- a profession of dubana.
56. **Dutar [duutar]**- a name of a two- stringed Kyrgyz musical instrument played by plucking.

-E-

57. **Emchi-domchu**- healer who treats by with incantations.
58. **Emdöö**- treatment by incantations.
59. **Er sai'ysh**- 1. Male, man (Kyrgyz Language Explanatory Dictionary. – F.: Mektep. 1969. 766). National sports.
60. **Eshen**- spiritual tutor who has wide religious knowledge.

-G-

61. **Gülgaaky**- a special name for mountainous flower.

-J-

62. **Jai'chy** – is a person capable of changing the weather with the help of the jai'tash magic stone. In the epic, mainly sorcerers possess *jai'chy* skills (Manas Encyclopedia. Vol. I, 195).
63. **Jai'chylyk**- is a profession of jai'chy.
64. **Jakyp Khan**- is a father of Manas.
65. **Jai'loo**- a summer pasture.

66. **Jar, jar saluu** – to perform a loud call or praying.
67. **Jarma-** is a Kyrgyz national drink made of ground wheat by fermenting
68. **Jeti chabaty, jeti oi'mo, jeti tokoch-** fried dough especially cooked for the spirits. Jeti means seven. Use of these three words differ from region to region but they have the same meanings.
69. **Jin-** genie. Evil and kind spirit in mythology of Muslims
70. **Joro-** gathering, in which the participants offer each other Kyrgyz national drink *bozo*. It is usually conducted in winter time.

**-K-**

71. **Kabylan-**“tiger”, one of the epithets of Manas.
72. **Kai'yp-** the world between this life and the after death
73. **Kalpa-** 1. A follower of an eshen [spiritual tutor; religious person that continues the eshen's work; the title of such a person]. 2. Religious upbringing educator, mentor (Kyrgyz Language Explanatory Dictionary. Vol. I, 450).
74. **Kanykei'**- is one of the main heroines of the trilogy (the epic “Manas” consists of three parts. The second and third parts are called “Semetei” and “Sei'tek”, respectively). She is a wife of Manas. The character of Kanykei' is distinct from other women's characters in the epic “Manas”. She always helped Manas Baatyr and was his wise advisor (Manas Encyclopedia, Vol. I., 267-268).
75. **Karool Choku-** Watch Peak – 1. Guard performing the watch, guard duty. 2. Guard, watch service or site of such service (Kyrgyz Language Explanatory Dictionary. Vol. I, 479). In the epic “Manas”, the Watch is mentioned as a hill. It is said that during his time, the knight Manas posted sentry there. In our case, Karool Choku is also linked to the knight Manas. This place is suited for watching against the enemy and the surroundings.
76. **Kelme-** The affirmation in Arabic, 'there is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is his messenger' through which Muslims declare their faith in Islam (Kyrgyz Language Explanatory Dictionary. – F.: Mektep. 1969, 503).
77. **Kii'ik ot-** the type of pasture for wild animals, which grows on a very high altitude.
78. **Kirne-** negative energy.
79. **Kojo-** a descendent of prophet Muhammad who have religious authority in Islam (Ar. Khwaja). (Kyrgyz Language Explanatory Dictionary. – F.: Mektep. 1969.)
80. **Kolhoz-** means a collective farm.
81. **Koldoochu-** Supporting, backing, protecting, helping, defending. 2. The same as totem (Kyrgyz Language Explanatory Dictionary. Vol. I, 534). Totem – for some peoples, an animal (sometimes, a plant, etc.), worshipped as the founding ancestor of the tribe and as an object of religious reverence (Kyrgyz Language Explanatory Dictionary. – F.: Mektep. 1969, 610).
82. **Komuz-** Kyrgyz traditional instrument, a lute smaller than the guitar, with a smaller, rounder form, and three strings usually made from synthetic materials.
83. **Komuzchu-** a person who plays *komuz*.
84. **Kongurbai'**- a hero in the epic “Manas”. The Chinese king who killed Manas.
85. **Köbösh-** the leader of the six children (“six villains”) of *Bakdöölöt* – Jakyp Khan's concubine. When Manas died, Köbösh usurped his place through violence; Köbösh was Manas's half-brother and established a khanate over the Argyn and Nogoi' tribes in Talas (Higher Literature. 330).
86. **Kök Börü-** Kyrgyz national sport, in which two teams of horsemen are trying to capture the carcass of a goat kid, and throw it into a round goal.
87. **Kök Tengir-** See *Tengir*.

88. **Körmöch-** a tool of jai' chy.
89. **Közü achyk-** under the religious explanation: a person that recognizes various jinns, devils, etc.; 2) a knowledgeable person that knows the future and is aware of supernatural beings (Kyrgyz ethnographic dictionary. Compilers O. Karataev, S. Eraliev. – B.: Biyktik, 2005. 70).
90. **Kudai'y tamak-** something dedicated to God and specially given to the poor, beggars, and *dervishes* (Kyrgyz Language Explanatory Dictionary. Vol. I, 586).
91. **Kumai'yk-** 1. In fairy tales, a tenacious dog that never loses its prey. (The sovereign or patron of birds is Buudaiyk, the sovereign of dogs is Kumaiyk. See *pir.*). 2. Dog name (Kyrgyz Language Explanatory Dictionary. Vol. I, 593).
92. **Kumuru Baba-** *pir* of Ants
93. **Kut-** a spirit of good fortune. Sometimes thought of as a substance that can come to a house or family and bring wealth, prosperity, happiness and pleasure. Some people believe that only a good person without sins may receive and keep kut, and if a bad person with sins receives it he will be burned.
94. **Kuuchu-** is a *bakshy* (male healer) who makes childbirth easier for women suffering with difficulties to give birth. See: Kyrgyz Historical Encyclopedia. – Bishkek, 2003. 254.
95. **Kuuchuluk-** Ability and profession of *kuuchu*.
96. **Küsül daarat-** Ablution of the whole body.
97. **Kydyr Ata-** many Kyrgyz add the words “alei'salam” to his name. In Arabic, “Aleihissalam” means “may this man rest in peace”. The Kyrgyz add the words “Kydyr daarysyn, Kydyr koldosun, joldoshun Kydyr bolsun” [“May Kydyr touch upon you, may Kydyr support you, may your friend be Kydyr”]. People say “One meets Kydyr seven times” and when shaking hands, they make it a very firm handshake. The Kyrgyz Kydyr can help people in all situations. He helps people traveling in the desert, infertile women, and those wishing to do well. Kydyr appears as a white-bearded man to people. Kydyr (Hyzyr) is not mentioned in Koran. However, he is regarded as a prophet and holy man (Higher Literature, 289).
98. **Kyl tabyp-** a healer who uses the tail hairs of livestock.
99. **Kyshtoo-** winter place.
100. **Kyrgyzchylyk (Kyrgyzness)-** In a broad sense, *kyrgyzchylyk* means the totality of traditions and customs thought to be inherent to Kyrgyz people. In relation to Mazars, *kyrgyzchylyk* is usually understood as a diverse spectrum of extrasensory abilities, which a person receives congenitally and which help him/her heal and help people. Comment: Concerning the word – “kyrgyzchylyk.” May be – “peculiar solely to Kyrgyz” or “Kyrgyz peculiarity” or “ Peculiar to Kyrgyz” ? Or – “Endemic to Kyrgyz ” however I am not sure whether the term “endemic” could be used in this context as well since from my experience it could be used in terms of medicine (endemic medicine) and (endemic plant).

-M-

101. **Manap-** 1) a social class, which governs and leads ordinary people, 2) a cunning lazy person
102. **Manas-** is the central positive character of the first section of the *Manas* epic. According to the epic, he is the main hero of the Kyrgyz people. He possessed infinite power and courage, united all the Kyrgyz tribes, protected them from various external enemies and forces, safeguarded the freedom of his motherland and his people, and fought for the political unity of the Kyrgyz. He was a valiant and wise man, leader and khan (Manas Encyclopedia, Vol. I, – B.: Chief editorship of the Kyrgyz Encyclopedia. Scientific-propaganda business project “Muras”, 1995. 402 – From this point on, information taken from this source will be followed by

only the name of the book, volume, and page. In case of certain explanations suggested by Aigine, the explanations will not be followed by any information about the source.)

103. **Mazar(sacred site)** - In Kyrgyzstan, a sacred site is usually called a “Mazar.” “Mazar” is a word from the Arabic, which means “place which is visited.” It is an object of pilgrimage, usually the grave of a Muslim saint or oluya (I, 151). Later, a more specific notion of Mazar as the “place of shahid’s burial” appeared. Over time the word came to be used to designate any place with a sacred character. (Gulnara A. Aitpaeva, 2006).

104. **Moldo-** a literate, knowledgeable person; mullah.

105. **Moldochuluk-** profession of moldo.

106. **Molo tash** – means a stone image put upon graves in the old times. Usually in the form of a smiling, bearded man with a cup in the hands put together at the chest.

#### -N-

107. **Namaz** – In the religion of Islam, each of the five daily prayers considered to be a Muslim duty (the five are: bagymdat, beshim, digger, sham, kuptan). Prayers are made in the direction of the Kiblah, preceded by ablutions and combined with a prescribed set of bodily movements, which expresses submission to and faith in God (Kyrgyz Language Explanatory Dictionary. – F.: Mektep. 1969. 449).

#### -O-

108. **Oi’mok-** a special ring worn on the forefinger in order to protect it while embroidering.

109. **Oi’sul Ata-** a Kyrgyz khan, in Central Asian peoples’ understanding the **pir** or **ee** of camels (K. Karasaev Wise dicta. – B., 1995, 337-338)

110. **Oluya-** noun. A person capable of foreseeing future events (Kyrgyz Language Explanatory Dictionary. – F.: Mektep. 1969. 463). From Arabic *awliya*, plural of *vali*, “a person close to God”. Broadly, an oluya (singular in Kyrgyz) is capable of foretelling and prognosticating future events; a wise person, usually deceased, similar to a prophet who can protect human beings from different kinds of mistakes, suffering, torture and troubles. People pray to the spirits of similar holy persons in other religions such as Judaism and Christianity.

111. **Ökül kyz-** affinal daughter of a family, who was accepted after her marriage. In Kyrgyz culture a girl after marriage chooses parents who would “replace” her parents when she is among her in- laws.

#### -R-

112. **Rai’com-** a district committee during Soviet times.

#### -P-

113. **Peri-** In Kyrgyz language, it has two meanings: 1) a mythical spirit (fairy), mostly in the form of a beautiful woman, or alluring spirit. It may take the form of a man; 2) smart, extremely handsome. In the epic “Manas”, both meanings are common.

114. **Pir-** (Pe. 'old man, elderly man, knowledgeable old man') in the mythology of Turkic-speaking people, a supporter of various activities. In Turkic mythology, it is widely developed. With the emergence of Islam, many pirs have arisen in Muslim

mythology. For example, Kumai'yk is the canine *pir*, Sulai'man is the water *pir*, Cholpon Ata is the sheep *pir*, Shai'merden is the *pir* of young men, Döötü is the *pir* of craftsmen, Koroson Ata is the *pir* of restless boys, Ulukman is the *pir* of healers, etc. People call upon these *pirs* believing that they will help them. Sometimes, a highly significant person, famous wiseman, experienced old man, or a person regarded by others as a holy man is also considered to be *pir* (Manas Encyclopedia. Vol. II, 154, B., 1995.).

-S-

115. **Sabaa-** a water-skin for kymyz – fermented mare's milk.
116. **Semetei'**- the son of Manas.
117. **Shabdan Baatyr-** Shabdan, son of Jantai' (1839, Chui valley, Kok Jar jailoo, presently Onbijylga village administration – 1912) – a manap [governor] from the tribe Sarybagysh, kin Tynai, who lived in Chui', Kemin valley; a political and social figure... In 1909, he had a madrasah with new teaching methodology built in Chongkemin. At the age of 65 years, he went to Hadj to Mecca (Kyrgyz History. Encyclopedia. – B., 2003. 429).
118. **Shai'yk** – people who voluntarily take responsibility to care for a sacred site, provide information to pilgrims about the sacred site, and carry out healing work at the sacred site.
119. **Shai'yktyk-** profession of a shai'yk
120. **Shyldyrkan-** a special traditional musical instrument as drums.
121. **Sham, Sham jaguu-** establishing a contact with or obtaining some information from some sacred forces through burning torches by bubu at the mazar or site bubu deem appropriate, pilgrimage.
122. **Shypaakana-** a place where bubu-bakshy see and treat patients.
123. **sopu moldo** (q.v.), just sopu too
124. **Suk-** (meaning, first, when treating a sick person influenced by some bad energy (*s* the latter may be transferred to a healer; and second, not to admire too much a person you like).
125. **Surah-** a chapter from Quran.
126. **Surnai'**-Kyrgyz national musical wind instrument very similar to a trumpet. In earlier times Kyrgyz people would use it wartime.
127. **Süyüinchü-** means telling good news in exchange for a gift.

-T-

128. **Tabyp-** a traditional healer.
129. **Tabypchylyk-** Healing practice. Profession of tabyp.
130. **Tai'gan-** one breed of dogs in Kyrgyzstan that are often used for hunting.
131. **Takyya-** an ancient traditional headwear.
132. **Tamyrchy-** a person who can predict and heal by sensing one's pulse.
133. **Tengir-** name of a God of Turkic-speaking and Mongolian people. Literally means sky.
134. **Tergöö-** gerund from the verb **Terge**. A word taboo. Under the old customs, not calling relatives of the husband (sometimes, the husband too) by their names, and using other words to call them (Kyrgyz Language Explanatory Dictionary. – F.: Mektep. 1969. 591).
135. **Toguz Korgool** – the ancient, ageless monument of the Kyrgyz people; the depository of intellectual treasure; an entertaining board game describing the nomadic life, the secret meaning of military relations and the loss of wealth. The

game of Toguz Korgool is described as one of the main games in the epic “Manas” as follows:

Having pared down a flat block,  
Having carved out the holes –  
Nine on the one side,  
And nine on the other side,  
Having put up the “yurts”,  
Having thought it through,  
Having filled it with the stones –  
The birth of Toguz Korgool,  
Naming it Ordo Toguz Korgool  
Young Manas invented the game.  
(Manas Encyclopedia. Vol. II, 282)

136.  
137. **Toltoi'** - a hero of “Manas” epic, Semetei’s rival.  
138. **Tölgö tash**- Fortune-telling stone  
139. **Tumar**- is a triangle-shaped amulet worn as a necklace.  
140. **Tushoo kesüü**- ceremony of initiating a child at the of one. It is done thorough cutting the binding in the feet of a child.  
141. **Tuyak**- [Hoof] is a circumlocution for son.  
142. **Tükürükchü**- healers who use a fine spray of saliva to heal.  
143. **Tülöö**- is a sacrifice of a livestock animal dedicated to God, spirits, or the protective spirits of land and water. Also, whenever someone is saved from an accident, or recovers from a serious illness, or after a bad dream, Kyrgyz sacrifice animals and invite co-villagers to eat the meat of the sacrificed animal, and get the people's blessings. “Tuloo” emerged from the words “tiloo” [desire], “tilek kyluu” [wishing]. Kyrgyz pray for blessings, good fortune and help from God as the source of all good wishes, as well as from the spirits of the forefathers. An ancient ritual that continues in the present (K.Karasaev. Wise dicta. – B., 1995. 435).  
144. **Tülöökana**- a room, building or place where *tuloo* [sacrifice] is made.  
145. **Tündük**- round wooden window on the roof of the yurt into which the side poles are inserted.  
146. **Typyratma**- the disease which is found in livestock.

-U-

147. **Umai' Ene**- a mythical mother that helps in maternity and childbirth and protects children’s health (Manas Encyclopedia. Vol. II, 312).  
148. **Uchuktoo**- healing with steam or something hot.  
149. **Üchiltik**- general name for “Manas”, “Semetei”, “Sei'tek” epics

-Y-

150. **Yraman Yrchy**- one of the characters in the epic “Manas”.

-Z-

151. **Zikir, zikir chaluu**- (Ar: *dhikr* 'remembering'). Ishans with their followers (murids) sit in circle and loudly repeat words referring to Allah the Most High. In ishans’ opinion, referring to Allah is not limited to only “namaz”. It is necessary to refer to Allah in all parts of life (K. Karasaev Wise dicta, 151)

152. **Zyyarat (ziyaret)** - pilgrimage –worshipping and revering sacred or holy sites. (Kyrgyz Language Explanatory Dictionary. Vol. I, 395).
153. **Zyyaratchy**- a person who comes to a sacred site to perform the rituals of a religious visit.
154. **Zyyaratkana**- a place for the pilgrims.

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