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Ethnological Review of the Van Kyrgyz

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Özet: Afganistan'ın Pamir Dağları'ndan Türkiye'ye göç eden Kırgızlar, Türkiye'de Van Gölü'nün kuzeyinde yaşar. Onların köyü, Ulupamir adıyla bilinir. Bu ad, Pamir Kırgızları'ndan gelir. Van Kırgızları'nı şekillendiren aşiret grupları, Orta Asya'da yaşayan Kırgızların sancıralarında (şecere) görülen asıl aşiretlerdendir. Bu bağlamda onlar, Pamir'deki asıl Kırgız gruplarından olan Teyit, Kesek, Boston, Nayman ve Töölös gibi boylar tarafından teşkil edilirler. Bu yüzden Ulupamir toplumu, hala Orta Asya Türk halklarının kültürünü ve geleneklerini takip eder. Dolayısıyla bu makalede öncelikle Ulupamir köyünün sosyal yapısına değinilir. Buradan anlaşıldığı kadarıyla bu boylar arasında bazılarının nüfusu az olmasına rağmen Teyit boyunun daha yüksek bir sosyal mevkî ve nüfusa sahip olduğu görülür. Sonra onların Pamir'deki tarihi ve kültürü, Pakistan'da bulundukları süreç ve Türkiye'ye göçleri, Türkiye'deki Ulupamir köyünün genel görünümü, geleneksel kültürleri ve buna ilaveten sözlü destan, hikaye ve ağıtları, folklorik oyunları, uyum sağlama süreci ve sosyal dayanışmaları gibi konular üzerinde bilgiler verilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Van Kırgızları, Pamir, Ulupamir köyü, uruu, kültür, gelenek

Abstract: The Kyrgyz people who immigrated from the Pamir mountains of Afghanistan to Turkey live north of Lake Van in Turkey. The name of their village is called *Ulupamir*. This name comes from the Pamir Kyrgyz. The tribes who formed the Van Kyrgyz are from the main tribes that can be seen in the genealogy of the Kyrgyz people of Central Asia. The native Kyrgyz of the Pamirs originated from the Teyit, Kesek, Boston, Naiman and Töölös tribes (uruu), etc. Therefore, the society of Ulupamir which consists of these tribes still keeps the cultural traditions

of the Turkic people of Central Asia. In this respect, the article focuses on the social structure of Ulupamir village. As far as is known since the population of some tribes is small, the Teyit tribe occupies a higher social position and has a larger population than the others. We learn from the article about their history and culture in the Pamirs, the period of time they lived in Pakistan and their migration to Turkey, as well as the situation of Ulupamir village in Turkey, the traditional culture, and professional level of Ulupamir, verbal customs, folk games, language, the process of adaptation and social unity.

Key Words: Van Kyrgyz, Pamir, Ulupamir village, tribe, culture, tradition

Introduction: Issues of social status

The Van Kyrgyz are a Turkic ethnological group living near the river basin Altindere, 26 kms. northwest of Erjish, one of the most populated centers north of Lake Van. The village that they built is called *Ulupamir*. The village was named after the Pamir Kyrgyz, a group of people who lived in the Afghan Pamirs. The name of their motherland and their ethnonym were closely connected; and if we review the background of the Van Kyrgyz and their present life, we can see that their life historically could serve as a model and a source of research for many branches of the social sciences.

This society still follows the culture and traditions of the Turkic people of Central Asia; and according to social position, for example, in Afghanistan, it is not a *Turkic Language Diaspora*; it is just a society that was able to assimilate into the country's way of life, one that *has been experiencing physical and cultural adaptation; lately, especially in works of foreign sholars, it has started to be called the Van Kyrgyz (Van Kyrgyzdary)* and has gained the status of a Turkic ethnographic group. Researching this ethnographic group from a historical and ethnological point of view will contribute to a profound understanding of their ethnogenesis and ethno-cultural structure, their rich folkloristic inheritance and linguistic features. So this article will dwell on the ethno-

genetic structure of the Van Kyrgyz, the social issues, including the past, traditional cultural elements and the present ethno-sociological position.

I. The issue of ethnogenesis

I.1. Ethno-genetic dominants

The Pamir Kyrgyz, - the source of a Turkic ethnographic group as an ethno-genetic phenomenon - appeared as a result of at least the assimilation of three Kyrgyz ethnic categories. The first and the most important element are the native Kyrgyz tribes who lived for ages in the Afghan Pamirs. Because of historical events at the beginning of the 20th century and as a result of reconstruction of new ethnographic maps, one part of the Kyrgyz people who lived in the Pamirs stayed in Tajikistan; another part remained in Afghanistan. and the third part in China. The Kyrgyz tribes lived in different countries, and communication between them was broken off because of political events of these countries. Local differences in the linguistic and cultural spheres between them increased and caused them to be mentioned in literature with a new ethnonym. In this way, terms like Pamir Kyrgyz (*Pamir Kyrgyzdary*), Kyzylsuu Kyrgyz (*Kyzylsuu Kyrgyzdary*), and Jergeiatal Kyrgyz (*Jergetal Kyrgyzdary*) appeared. It is known that in the history of the Kyrgyz people many years ago, the same reasons caused ethnonyms like Yenisei Kyrgyz (*Yenisei Kyrgyzdary*), and Füyü¹ Kyrgyz (*Füyü Kyrgyzdary*) to appear. In some research it is stated that their name is similar, to that of the present Kyrgyz people who form the basic element of Kyrgyzstan.

According to some scholars, the Kyrgyz people are one of the most ancient nations in Central Asia, and obviously they originated in the Pamirs. But some historians think that these Kyrgyz tribes started living in the Pamirs because of their migration. While some scholars are trying to prove that the Kyrgyz came to the Pamirs in the 9th to 10th centuries, others state that they migrated in the 16th to 17th centuries. Some researchers connect the migration period of the Kyrgyz to 19th century ethno-political developments. Actually the assumptions that the Pamir

¹ The following diacritic signs are accepted: Ä, ä [æ], Ü, ü [ju:], Ö, ö [:].

Kyrgyz migrated at different times for different reasons and started living with native Kyrgyz, that Kyrgyz tribes appeared because of their assimilation, and that the latest migration was in the 1930s are not correct.

The native Kyrgyz of the Pamirs originated from the Teyit, Kesek, Boston, Naiman etc. tribes. Language, tradition and religions of these native Kyrgyz were different from the Kyrgyz families that came to that place later. The native Kyrgyz called one part of the displaced people *Alaichy* because they came from Alay, a place in Kyrgyzstan. This name later became an ethnic name and it is still considered an ethnic name. From a social viewpoint, the second important ethnic category includes Kyrgyz groups that migrated to the Pamirs from Kyrgyzstan at the end of the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th centuries. It is known that in 1865 Kyrgyzstan came under the domination of the Russian empire. The ineffective government of the Kokand Khanate, on the one hand, and the imperialist policy of Russia on the other brought about a deterioration of the standard of living and economic situation of the native people, and caused them to distrust the current government. As the negative reaction of the people did not influence the government, bloody struggles started. Of course, because of some communication problems, it was impossible to gather all the people immediately against the imperialists and the weak local government. As the rebels had only one leader and since they comprised only a small group, the struggle ended in a bloody revolt. The rebels had to move to remote places after escaping from armed government soldiers and not being caught. In short, the majority of Kyrgyz people were the first rebels; and to avoid pressure, they had to leave their lands; and later during the first period of the USSR, they migrated to the Pamirs for political reasons. .

According to verbal sources, in the 1880s Rahmankul Khan's tribe from the south of Kyrgyzstan, from the Alai region, moved to Murgab (Nurgab), which is nowadays in Tajikistan. The leader of the refugees was Atabek who belonged to the Teyit tribe. But after some time, Russian domination came to Murgab. Then they moved to the Kichikpamir high plateau in Afghanistan where other Kyrgyz tribes were living. Rahmankul Khan was a leader not only of the Pamir Kyrgyz, but also of all tribes who lived around the Pamirs.

The third ethnic category consists of Kyrgyz groups who lived in Eastern Turkistan. The ethnic and religious troubles that sometimes existed in China, economic conditions that brought citizens to a pitiful situation, and changes in the state system all caused the Kyrgyz people who were living in Kyzylsuu, Akchiy, Danbash etc., all places of Eastern Turkistan, to migrate to the Pamirs. Thus, as known from history as the Pamir Kyrgyz, the ethno-genetic unity of these people was created from the assimilation of native Pamir Kyrgyz, and the tribes of Kyrgyzstan and the tribes of Eastern Turkistan. That's why the language, folklore and traditions of the present Van Kyrgyz are in one respect similar to the elements of *Ichkilik* tribes who live in southern Kyrgyzstan, and on the other hand, to elements of the culture of the Eastern Turkistan Kyrgyz. Moreover, it is very interesting to find peculiarities that belong only to the Pamir Kyrgyz language and culture which cannot be seen neither among the Kyrgyz of Kyrgyzstan nor the Kyrgyz of Eastern Turkistan.

In addition to these three main categories, we should mention some features of two other ethnic features, though they don't play a big role in the ethnic formation of the Pamir Kyrgyz. The first is the migration of Kyrgyz who lived in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Arabia to the Pamirs. The Pamir mountains with their uncongenial climate and passageways far from civilization and political centers became a shelter for people who for political reasons were doomed to leave their motherlands. For instance, at the beginning of the USSR, one of the leaders of the national movement, Janybek Kazy came to the Pamirs in 1936 with his two sons and settled in the place where the *Otunchu* subtribe lived. Then because his life was in danger he moved with the help of England to Pakistan where he spent the rest of his life.

Among the Pamir Kyrgyz it is possible to see people of other nationalities who mixed with the Kyrgyz. Insignificantly the Kyrgyz encountered Turkmen, Uzbek, Uighur families and also Wakhi families who were different in terms of religion and language. The Pamir Kyrgyz, in comparison with their neighboring population, were more developed in the socio-economic sphere. Rahmankul Khan was of Kyrgyz origin. He supported communication between mountainous regions and administrative centers and established working places for the people. The

representatives of other ethnic groups also lived among the Kyrgyz, so gradually they became like the Kyrgyz. Today they call themselves Kyrgyz, but there aren't any differences between them and the native Kyrgyz people in terms of traditions, culture, language and religion.

I.2. Tribes and Subtribes

The tribes who formed the Van Kyrgyz are from the main tribes that can be seen in the genealogy of the Kyrgyz people of Central Asia. This peculiarity was determined earlier by foreign specialists of Turkic philology. *Sanjyra* (genealogy) that is systematically 'told' can't be seen in the traditional narrations and written works of the Van Kyrgyz. However, the main concepts of the hierarchical system, like *uruu* (tribe), *uruk* (subtribe), *ata* (kindred), *top* (kinship group, kin group), *üy-bülö* (family) can still be met in the oral narrations of this Kyrgyz community. But they forgot about the tradition of recalling the origin of these people in the Kyrgyz way: the Kyrgyz people were created by Adam, then they were divided into three branches *Ong* (Right), *Sol* (Left) and *Ichkilik* (Middle). The Van Kyrgyz told about the division of the tribe into a subtribe and the division of the subtribe into kindreds.

The settlement by tribe and subtribe, life, and form of government are still in evidence. Everybody knows which tribe and kin he/she is derived from. In relations between people, in establishing homes and in wedding and funeral ceremonies kinship plays an important role. The people who are from the same tribe are considered as relatives and they must help each other in different ways.

Nowadays the *Teyit*, *Kesek*, *Boston*, *Naiman* and *Töölös* tribes form the ethnic structure of the Van Kyrgyz. As the population of some tribes is small, obviously the Teyit tribe has a higher social position and more people than others.

I.2.2. The Teyit tribe

The Teyit tribe is divided into the following subtribes:

- I. Saryteyit
- II. Karateyit
- III. Chalteyit

IV. Jamanteyit

V. Chapanteyit

VI. Arykteyit

I.2.1.1. Saryteyit: Among the Teyit subtribes, the Saryteyit in comparison with others held a dominant position in terms of density of population and social activities. Being the most populated in comparison with other tribes and subtribes, the Saryteyit consists of three kindreds: 1) *Kutanuulu*; 2) *Aidaruulu*; 3) *Mamaulu*.

These kindreds are divided into kinship groups.

1) *Kutanuulu* consists of five kinship groups: a. Chegitir, b. Kyzylbash, c. Barky, d. Kutan, e. Chogorok.

a. The names of kin groups that formed the Chegitir kinship groups have been forgotten. The *Churay* kin group is the one mentioned.

b. Kyzylbash kinship group consists of four kin groups: Asatbek, Joonsan, Karabash, Galcha.

c. The Barky kin groups have been forgotten. According to some sources, it was divided into several kin groups.

d. The Kutan kinship group is divided into four kin groups: *Karatai*, *Shaiyk*, *Tarykchy*, *Kurmushu*.

e. It is said that the Chogorok kinship group consists of two kin groups, but the people of that time only recalled the *Kööbash* kin group.

2) The *Aidaruulu* consists of six kinship groups: a. Kochkor, b. Otunchu, c. Jamanang, d. Buka, e. Böörü, f. Zarip.

As the population of this generation increased rapidly and the people became more active, some kinship groups achieved the status of *ata* (kindred) and even the status of *uruk* (subtribe). For example, *Kochkor* and *Otunchu* kinship groups were considered as subtribes.

a. Kochkor kinship group consists of four kin groups: Moju, Chöjö, Eshbol, Kulbol.

b. Otunchu kinship group consists of three kin groups: Karakozu, Joru, Akeren.

c. Jamanang kinship group has two kin groups: Chaarkalpak, Akkalpak.

d. Buka kinship group contains four kin groups: Gydyrsha, Bekpolot, Kasymbek, Kazakh.

e. There is no information about kin groups of the Böörü kinship group.

f. As the Zarip kinship group's population was small, it didn't have any kin groups; it even mixed with other ethnic units and vanished.

3) *Mamauulu* as a kindred consists of five kinship groups: a. Alapa, b. Shaiym, c. Nooruz, d. Seytmat, e. Dürvööl.

Every kinship group that forms the *Mamauulu* is divided into kin groups.

a. Alapa kinship group consists of three kin groups: Kaldar, Bayma, Godol.

b. Shaiym is one of the most populated kinship groups, so it consists of four kin groups: Bölökkojo, Melke, Bayma, Bokkara.

c. Nooruz kinship group contains three kin groups: Chöpkyidy, Sarybashyl tobu, Küchük tobu. The *top* (kinship group) and the kin groups that comprise it have the same name.

d. Since the population of the Seytmat kinship groups was small, it didn't form kin groups.

e. **Dürvööl** kinship group consists of two kin groups: *Nooruz* and *Tekireng*. As mentioned above, the kinship groups that have larger populations can achieve the status of *top* (kinship group) or *uruk* (subtribe). For example, the Tekireng kin group is divided into Aybash top, Aksakal top, Temirkul top and achieved a status of *uruk* (subtribe).

I.2.1.2 Information about **Karateyit** *uruk* (subtribe) is very scanty. According to some rumors, it was divided into three kindreds. But people of that time could recall the names of only two: 1) ödököy, 2) Shaakeuulu. At the same time, there is no information about the Karateyit kin groups. The reason for that is that the population of this tribe was small.

I.2.1.3. **Chalteyit** subtribe was dissolved into other ethnic tribes, so people forgot the names of its kin groups. Although the sources say that the people who belong to this tribe “are among us,” they cannot recall their names.

I.2.1.4. As there aren't any participants in the Jamanteyit, Chapanteyit, and Arykteyit subtribes, we know only their names. It was impossible to find more information about the three families of the Teyit tribe.

I.2.2. The Kesek tribe

The Kesek tribe consists of eleven subtribes. The main feature of this tribe is that its kindreds aren't divided into kinship groups. With the exception of the *Kyzylayak* subtribe, it consists of six kindreds.

The subtribes that form the Kesek tribe are the following:

- I. Shaabulut
- II. Jygjym
- III. Shaltak
- IV. Kuralay
- V. Koshkulak
- VI. Chamgarak
- VII. Kyzylayak
- VIII. Möshkö
- IX. Mamachar
- X. Baykesek
- XI. Gydyrsha

Among these subtribes, only the Kyzylayak is divided into the following six kindreds: *Myrza*, *Baky*, *Kylkurt*, *Sarybashyl Kyzylayak*, *Mita*, *Jölömö*.

The Kesek tribe is one of the first tribes that form the Pamir Kyrgyz. There is much folklore information that this tribe lived in the Pamirs for ages. For example, a Kyrgyz idiom ‘Kuralay kuralgycha, Shaabulut shaptap ketet’² - 'While Kuralay is preparing, Shaabulut is putting to the sword' is from this tribe. It means that the Kuralay subtribe is quiet, isn't

² Informant: Sadyk Baljy, 20 November, 2001.

in a hurry, but the Shaabulut's people act very fast and grab at every chance. The probability that the Kesek people are native inhabitants of the high plateaus of the Pamirs is high.

I.2.3. The Boston tribe

It can be said that the Boston tribe, as the Kesek tribe, is one of the most ancient tribes of the Pamirs. The Boston tribe consists of seven subtribes, but there isn't any information about the division of subtribes into kindreds and kinship groups.

The Boston tribe consists of the following subtribes:

- I. Moloy Boston
- II. Sarybashyl Boston
- III. Genje Boston
- IV. Jangy Boston
- V. Karagenje
- VI. Sarigenje

I.2.4. The Naiman tribe

The Naiman tribe consists of eleven subtribes, but there isn't any information about the division of subtribes into kindreds and kinship groups. The Naiman tribe consists of the following subtribes:

- I. Kögechki Naiman
- II. Jerde Naiman
- III. Jooru Naiman
- IV. Joonput Naiman
- V. Kön Naiman
- VI. Kuran Naiman
- VII. Daydibarak Naiman
- VIII. Chöö Naiman
- IX. Böö Naiman
- X. Aryk Naiman
- XI. Yngyrchak Naiman

The Naiman tribe doesn't belong only to the Kyrgyz. It can often be seen in other ethnic maps of other Turkic peoples in Central Asia. This tribe can't be considered to be a tribe that came to the Pamirs later. According to verbal narrations, when other ethnic groups came to the Pamirs and settled the high plateaus, the Naimans held many high plateaus and winter quarters and were powerful enough to invade other tribes. In long narrations it is said that the Naiman tribe had been in an ethnically dominant position for a long time; it even levied tax on other tribes and sometimes plundered. That's why a proverb appeared about the Naiman tribe: 'Myiman - uch kun myiman, Uch kunnon kiyyin Naiman' [A guest is a guest only for three days, if more, he is a Naiman (a plunderer)]. In some other folklore you can find a phrase like 'Bulunkol tolgon Naiman' ('Bulunkol valley is full of Naimans'). It shows that the Naiman tribe, in comparison with others, had a larger population.

Bulungköl tolgon Naimannan,
Buiurgany shul boldu.
Bulkak tolgon ayrannan,
Kuyulgany shul boldu.³

(Bulungköl is full of Naimans,
The (small) part that I got.
From the skin bag full of yoghurt,
The small portion that I got).

The above mentioned strophe describes the deep mortification of a woman who was wronged by life and who was made to get married to a Naiman man who was from the most populated tribe and who wasn't her type. In some proverbs you can see the reflection of characters of the Naiman tribe and others: 'Dooga - kandi menen teyit, Jooga - Naiman menen Kypchak'⁴ [A lawsuit is for Kangdy and Teyit, A holy war is for Naiman and Kypchak].

³ Informant: Abdulmalik Kutlu, 01 August, 2001.

⁴ Informant: Ashym Adyguzel, 08 June, 2004.

The Naiman's cultural feast was also foreign to other tribes. 'Bir bödönönün göshugö kyrk Naiman kol juuptur'⁵ [For sharing some quail meat forty Naiman people wash their hands] or 'Bir bödönönün göshunö altymysh Naiman kol juuptur. Arkasynda altymysh Naiman güptü boluptur'⁶ [For sharing some quail meat sixty Naiman people wash their hands. In the end the sixty Naimans felt sick]. These phrases became idioms. In these idioms you can see criticisms of one tribe that practices stock-breeding and eats much meat about the feast of another tribe that practices agriculture and eats vegetables.

1.2.5. The Kypchak tribe

It is said that the Kypchak people came to the Pamirs and settled in the 1930s. Also it is confirmed that a restriction was placed on the number of Kypchak families in the Afghan Pamirs and in the Ulupamir villages of Van. There are only Öztürk and Shanly families of the Kypchak tribe in Ulupamir village.

1.2.6. The Töölös tribe

There is very little detailed information about this tribe in Sanjyra (genealogy) and other different narrations. As this tribe was small, it wasn't divided into subtribes, kindreds and kinship groups. This tribe consists of several subtribes. It is sometimes called *Kalmak*. People of the Töölös tribe also aren't against using this ethnic nickname. As a wife of Rahmankul Khan called Erke was from the Töölös tribe, they settled near the Teyit tribe and started to form an ethnic unity.

In addition, in some Van Kyrgyz proverbs like 'Töölös törünü berveyt, Ölsö görünü berveyt'⁷ [Töölös doesn't give an honorable place in his house, and doesn't resign to death somebody who isn't from this tribe], 'Töölösکو töönün hadyry jok...'⁸ [For Töölös a camel isn't worth...] it can be seen that some other Kyrgyz tribes find something strange in some traditions of the Töölös tribe. So 'Töölös people don't know the value of a camel' which means 'in comparison with other tribes, the Töölös isn't a

⁵ Informant: Muhammed Salih Sanjaktar, 24 July, 2001.

⁶ Informant: Aydar Erdem, 28 March, 2003.

⁷ Informant: Muhammed Salih Sanjaktar, 24 July, 2001.

⁸ Informant: Abdulhalim Vatan, 12 May, 2001.

nomadic tribe', they don't let other people sit in honored places in their homes and they don't permit people who are from another tribe to be buried in their cemeteries. All of this shows that they, as other Töölös people who live among the Siberian Turkic people, keep the tradition 'the tribe's cemetery'. According to this information, it is possible to suppose that at some time the Töölös people lived under the domination of the Oirots (Kalmaks). Then they moved to Eastern Turkistan and after that they settled in the high plateaus of the Pamirs. It is confirmed that the name of the Kalmak people whose roots belong to Mongolia was given as a nickname to the Töölös people by villagers.

II. Chronological observations

II.1. In the Pamirs...

The government forms of the Ulupamir's villagers when they lived in the Pamirs are very interesting in terms of their history and culture. Afghanistan recognized the government of the Pamir Kyrgyz as a Khanate and released them from tax and exempted them from military service. Rahmankul Khan governed very well, solved daily problems of the Kyrgyz and of the different people who lived around the Pamirs, fulfilling their needs. As he was recognized as 'Han-sahip' by all the people, Afghanistan's Shah, Zahir-Shah gave him a title of 'Pasiban-i Pamir (the Lord and defender of the Pamir's) and then he was awarded a state medal.

PhD Nazif Shahrani, dean of the Anthropology faculty at Indiana University, has examined carefully the social anthropology of the Van Kyrgyz who lived in the Pamirs and published a monograph. He said, 'I am writing a book about life of the Van Kyrgyz in the Pamirs. The name of the book will be "The last Khan of Central Asia" or "The last Khanate of Central Asia". Hadji Rahmankul Khan was a true Khan. The dominion that he governed was a real Khanate'. Khan achieved the most honored place in the traditional governing system of the Pamir Kyrgyz. The *Biy's* came after Khan. They usually executed the orders of Khan and informed him about problems of the people. In addition, Khan and Biy had a group of *Aksakal's* (wise old men) with whom they consulted. The title of Khan of the Pamir Kyrgyz wasn't passed from father to son. Khan was elected by the people and was approved by the Aksakals.

The government system in the Pamirs was based on three main areas: a national tradition, Sharia(h) and Afghanistan laws. This system was stable and wasn't abolished until 1979 when socialism came to the high plateaus of the Pamirs.

Mullas in the charge of Hadji Rahmankul Khan taught young children. At that time Chagatai works were dissiminated and read by the people. You can still find many manuscripts and old copies in the trunks of the Ulupamir people.

II.2. The period of time in Pakistan and migration to Turkey

In 1979 the Soviet Army entered Afghanistan and started establishing the Soviet government. As Hadji Rahmankul Khan (1913-1990) didn't want to live in a communist country, he and his family decided to move to Gilgit in Pakistan. Preparations for migration took a long time, and finally Hadji Rahmankul Khan and all his people migrated to Gilgit. It was a completely strange place for them with an altogether different ethno-cultural sphere and climate. In addition, economic and human losses and an unknown future made them change relations between each other. After consulting, 40 families in the charge of Abdirashit came back to the Pamirs. At the present, Abdirashit is Khan of the Kyrgyz people who live in the Pamir plateaus.

At the initiative of Rahmankul Khan, the Pakistan government, foreign unions and cultural centers rendered material and financial assistance to the Kyrgyz people who suffered and couldn't adapt to Pakistan's climate. As the Kyrgyz were used to living in high and cool places like the Pamirs, in four months 272 people (majority of them were young) died from the heat.

The Kyrgyz who had lived on stock-breeding had to continue grazing in Pakistan and work in factories; they got used to the market system. However, the majority of refugees had to do daily, temporary, underpaid work in order to survive. For four years they opened shops, markets, and some of them succeeded in this sphere. But Rahmankul Khan considered the general condition of his people and decided to migrate to another country.

Despite a collapse of the government system in the Pamirs, people continued to call Hadji Rahmankul Khan as *Han Ääjim* (My Khan Hadji), and Rahmankul Khan for saving people from this difficult situation decided to migrate to Turkey or America. After consulting with Aksakals Rahmankul Khan wrote some letters to the Presidents of Turkey and the US asking them to give him permission to take refuge in their countries. Both Presidents gave him positive responses. Rahmankul Khan taking into consideration the opinions of his people decided to migrate to Turkey. The reason for his choice is the similarity of the Turkish people with the Kyrgyz in terms of tribe, language and religion. Hadji Rahmankul Khan met with the President of Turkey, Kenan Evren at that time and confirmed his choice. After that he started preparing the people to migrate.

So in 1982, one part of the Pamir Kyrgyz, 760 of them (330 men; 430 women) flew by Turkish Airlines from Islamabad to Adana. Between 1982 and 1986, out of 298 families, 202 stayed temporarily in Erçek, the other 96 families stayed in Malatya. Now they have been living in Ulupamir since 1986. For the last 20 years their population has grown to 3,000.

III. Position nowadays

Ulupamir village is an autonomy that belongs to the Erchish administrative district. It has secondary schools, a medical center and a mosque. In the last few years, educational centers and courses that had been created before were closed down. For example, at the initiative of Sumerbank a carpet manufacturing course was created. This provided a great opportunity for many girls to learn the techniques of carpet weaving. But now it was closed down by Sumerbank.

The young people of Ulupamir established the Union of Pamir Social Solidarity for helping children to study and to support families that live under bad economic conditions.

As the population increased and the number of families became larger, housing problems increased. As the amount of granted land was limited and permission for building new homes wasn't given, this Kyrgyz group started dwindling.

Ulupamir's villagers live on stock-breeding. In the summer cheese, which is made of fresh and pure milk of cows, sheep and goats meets with a ready market. About 10-15 families live temporarily in Istanbul manufacturing leather and taking up handicrafts. About 10 families in Malatya live on trade. Until recently part of the income of the villagers was coming from looms that were bought by Sumerbank for making carpets. The girls of Ulupamir, in spite of the cold in the winter and heat in the summer and bad conditions in the workshops, succeeded in manufacturing the best quality carpets for the markets.

Gradually the desire of young people to study is becoming stronger. In recent years 4-5 schoolchildren with the high scores annually enter the universities and study in different faculties.

III.1. Traditional culture and professional competence

The villagers of Ulupamir follow some traditions of the Pamir Kyrgyz. In almost every family handicraft is an activity that carefully passes from one generation to another. Woven mats, saddle-bags, a handbags, a horse outfitting etc. are made by women. Spoons, plates, spades, etc. are made by craftsmen from wood and metal.

The people of Ulupamir have been able to make shoes since they lived in the Pamirs. They have many skilled people like Usta Asan and Vahap who can make shoes that are qualitatively nicer than factory-made ones. These shoes are cheaper, so they are sold out very fast.

Professional masters also come from among the Ulupamir villagers. For example, the sons of Hadji Rahmankul Khan, Abdumalik Kutlu is a painter and Muhammed Akbar Kutlu is a sculptor. They are subtle masters whose works and paintings are exhibited in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Germany, Belgium and whose statues are bought by museums of many countries. At present these two masters have been working at the Turkish Handicraft Research and Application Center of Yuzuncu Yil University.

III.2. Verbal Customs

It is impossible not to mention the verbal customs of the people of Ulupamir. Versions of the epics like versions like “Manas”, “Sametei”,

“Göroglu”, “Chong teke” (“Kojash”), “Oljobay and Kishimjan”, “Janaiyl Jalgyz”, “Maktym” etc. haven’t lost their importance. These epics, fairytales, stories, folk songs about love and weddings, funeral orations, proverbs, idioms, nicknames, riddles and tongue twisters are waiting for collectors of folklore. Their works of folklore that have been published since 1997, and ethnographic and language works, all preserve many themes of oral tradition.

Although the *Akyn-Ashyk* tradition was rich in the past it didn’t carry over into our time. Masters who can tell poems extemporarily are called *yrchy*. The works of these masters don’t interest the new generation.

If we treat the issue of realizing scientific works and preserving some examples of traditional culture and art, we can see that no steps have been taken so far. And any serious scientific research hasn’t been done, except for some collections and research in traditional culture, verbal customs and ethnography of the Ulupamir people that were done by European scholars.

III.3. Folk games

In spite of some changes, folk games remain an example of traditional culture. For example, the *Kökbörü* game (other names are *Ulak tartysh* or *Buzkesh*) is played on horseback. This game is one of the most favorite sports. To play this game a goat is killed and its intestines and internal organs are removed. The inside of the goat must be cleaned well and the slit must be sown together. The lower extremities of the knees must be cut. After this procedure, the players must bring their horses to a suitable wide place. The dead carcass is usually brought to the center of the place by a person who doesn’t take part in the game. Before starting the game 40-50, sometimes more than 100 players say their prayers saying the 'Omiin!' (Amin!). Then they at the same time ride their horses towards the place where the goat is left. Scores of people come to the goat and from horses bend forward towards the goat trying to pick it up. In a cruel struggle the strongest and most experienced rider takes the goat from the ground to the mane of his horse and rides towards a certain place (*patta*) and tries to leave the goat there. The player who succeeds in reaching the place and leaving the goat is awarded. There can be several *pattas* at

different distances. The extent of awards depends on what patta the player reaches, whether it is far or not. It is difficult to reach a patta because all the players snatch the goat out of the other player's hands. Only the strongest player who has good riding skills can take part in the game. Those who can play *Kökbörü* well are called '*chavandoz*'. Many spectators come to watch this game with great excitement. When good players get the goat they cry in support "Chap, chap, azamat, chynygy jigıt eken, kem bolboo!" ('Ride a horse at top speed, good job, a real youngster must be so, keep up!') The players play for 4-5 hours, sometimes longer.

Another folk game is called *Ordo*. This game, which is played with great pleasure, is also one of the folk sport games. When the Van Kyrgyz lived in the Pamirs they often played such games like 'Vazir- pasha', 'Besh- tash', 'Chakanek'. Now these games are not played because they need much space and time.

IV. Language

The Van Kyrgyz are a multilingual people. The people who were over 35-40 years old before coming to Turkey knew Kyrgyz and Persian languages; at the same time, those who studied individually knew Arabic and some of them knew Wakhi as well. When they lived in Pakistan people who worked in the sphere of trade learned a native language of this country. After their migration to Turkey, the Turkish language became more functional as a language of education, communication and art. Turkish became the dominant language and was learned in a very short time. Nowadays people who are over 40 years old can communicate in 4-5 languages. People who are younger than 30 speak only two languages: Kyrgyz and Turkish. The people who work only in the trade sphere and people who associate and have other relations learned the Kurmanj dialect when speaking colloquially.

V. The process of adaptation and social solidarity

Nowadays the majority of all arguable problems that existed in the Pamirs earlier are being solved by the council of 'aksakals'. More serious problems are considered by the court. The number of divorced families isn't very high. It is possible to see harmony between customs, traditional

experience of the people of the Pamirs as well as time and laws of a modern, secular, democratic country.

Nowadays Ulupamir is a modern village connected with the city center by an asphalt road, and from the outside there doesn't seem to be any serious problems. But from the inside it is possible to see a different set of problems. For example, the migration of people caused by economic problems to big cities like Istanbul, Malatya, Adana and sometimes abroad is one problem; and now it isn't clear what this migration can bring. It doesn't seem that the people's physical and cultural adaptation process will ever finish.

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