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Adam Mickiewicz University  
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Traditional Kazakh Medicine in Change

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## Preface

The subject of this study is traditional Kazakh healing with special reference to the activities of healers.<sup>1</sup> In the independent Republic of Kazakhstan we witness a revival of all traditions that have been erased from public life in the days of the Soviet Union. When studying traditional Kazakh healing, we have to keep in mind the historical and cultural context. Arabo-Persian, Chinese, Indian and present-day western influences have been essential for the formation of traditional Kazakh medicine and its change.

My aim is to show the importance of traditional Kazakh medicine for Kazakhs and the process of change that it has undergone to acquire its modern shape nowadays. I searched for an answer to the question of the foundations of traditional Kazakh medicine. Is it possible to establish genuine Kazakh elements among numerous influences of other cultures in the past and globalization that is going on today? I also examined some specific features of the professional practice of Kazakh healers and the reasons for the popularity of their services.

There is some literature on traditional Kazakh healing in Kazakhstan, but most of it are popular publications of no scholarly value. Therefore, in addition to scholarly studies I employed brochures and books which I received from healers and people active in religious circles. It is important to mention the academic work *Qazaq halıq meditsinası* (Orazakov 1989) which contains detailed descriptions of traditional Kazakh medicine with interesting examples. Traditional healing methods and remedies were also investigated in detail by Qanapiyaulı in *Qazaqtñ halıq emi* (1995). Another important source was the dictionary *Qazaqstan ösimdikteri. Rastenija Kazaxstana* (Aristanğaliyev, Ramazanov 1977), addressed to professionals; the collective work *Fitoterapija* (Ladykina, Morozova 1987); and *Słownik roślin użytkowych* by Zbigniew Podbielkowski (1980) to identify plants and herbs. Some ethnological studies written by both Kazakh (i.e. Argynbaev 1995) and Russian authors (i.e. Basilov 1992, 1994) were used. Other very useful ethnological works which I would like to point out are *Muslim Turkistan. Kazakh Religion and Collective Memory* (Privratsky 2001) and *Medycyna komplementarna w Kazachstanie. Siła tradycji i presja globalizacji* by Penkala-Gawęcka (2006). The latter has become my own ‘talisman’ and a ‘pass’ in contacts with healers. Many of them remembered the author very well—Penkala-Gawęcka studied traditional Kazakh medicine and complementary medicine in Kazakhstan in 1995-2000—and due to the photographs appended to her book which I could show to the healers, I was treated more openly, with trust and honesty.

Material to the present work was collected during my seven-month-long scholarship in Kazakhstan granted by the Polish Government. I spent most of time in Almaty, therefore most information comes

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<sup>1</sup> This study is a revised version of MA thesis submitted in Polish, supervised by Prof. Dr. Danuta Penkala-Gawęcka (editor’s note).

from this city and its surroundings. I also worked with several healers in eastern Kazakhstan. The list of informants and addresses of traditional medicine centres provided to me by Penkala-Gawęcka was a starting point for this research. The informants whom I found personally in the course of my own search were a second source for this study. The research was done in a group of twenty-five healers, nineteen female and six male. Interviews were not formalized, although I used supplementary questionnaire consisting of ten questions. A brief survey was also carried out among the patients. It was intended to reveal their assessment of the quality of traditional Kazakh medicine. Informal conversations were helpful in this case as well. Thirty Kazakh informants, nineteen female and eleven male participated in this research.

The first chapter focuses on characteristic features of traditional Kazakh medicine and those adopted from other medical traditions as well as their relation to magic and religion. The chapter dedicated to contemporary healers, based on my own fieldwork, and paragraphs on former healing practices which we know from literature are the basis of this work. *Baqsi*, being a ‘king of healers’, is portrayed in a separate section. Political approach towards healing and the functioning of institutions which employ healers are characterized as well. Some space is also devoted to the patients of healers. The last chapter considers terminology related to traditional medicine.

The term ‘traditional medicine’ is defined by World Health Organisation as “the sum total of the knowledge, skills, and practices based on the theories, beliefs, and experiences indigenous to different cultures, whether explicable or not, used in the maintenance of health as well as in the prevention, diagnosis, improvement or treatment of physical and mental illness”.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, traditional medicine is just a piece of folk knowledge being still in process of development. The term ‘complementary medicine’ is often used in reference to the relationship between traditional medicine and biomedicine.

Kazakh names and terms are given in both the original form in Cyrillic script and a transcription employed in Turkic studies in italics. Russian names are written according to the rules of Russian language transcription. The terms ‘shaman’ and *baqsi* are used interchangeably. The term ‘spiritual healers’ refers to the healers who use the power of Islam and those who heal through the contact with the spirits. Kazakh *baqsi* is considered to be a kind of soul healer.

All photographs except number 5 taken by Radosław Andrzejewski are mine.

I would like to thank all people without whom this work could never be written, especially the healers and fortune-tellers who were my informants.

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<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.who.int/medicines/areas/traditional/definitions/en/index.html> (February 2010).

## 1. Traditional Kazakh medicine in change

### 1.1. Characteristics of traditional Kazakh healing

The establishing of the features of traditional Kazakh medicine is not a simple task, mostly because of lack of sources prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As a result, the early Russian researchers like A. I. Levshin, S. A. Yarotskiy, A. Yagmin, A. Alektorov or N. P. Richkov refer to the oral tradition of the transmission of medical procedures. Unfortunately, some of these researchers were ideologically motivated to demonstrate nomadic peoples as superstitious, illiterate and ignorant and therefore their studies are biased. Therefore it is impossible to assess which healing practices reported by those researchers were really rooted in the Kazakh tradition and which of them were adopted from other medical traditions.

Since summarizing works are lacking, I draw most of my conclusions from literature and my own research. The earliest materials which I used were published in the 1970s. Kazakhs claim that there was a unique written document on traditional Kazakh medicine, a *Treatise of Healing* (Шипагерлік баян, *Şıypagerlik bayan*), said to be written in the 15<sup>th</sup> century by a Kazakh scholar, Öteyboydaq Tilewqabilulı, as they put it. The extant version of this treatise is a later a copy of the original manuscript.<sup>3</sup> It is an important source of knowledge for healers and its procedures are still taught during traditional medicine courses. Due to the fact that Kazakh tradition was basically transmitted orally, there are no other similar materials.

It is not an exaggeration to claim that the Kazakh people have an ability to unite and adjust new elements to the tradition of their own. Many different medical traditions have played a significant role in the process of creating traditional Kazakh medicine. Arabo-Persian medicine is considered to be one of the most important of these factors. It has reached Kazakh land simultaneously with the appearance of Islam. Chinese and Indian influence could be noticed as well, thus it is obvious that all these traditions contributed to what the researchers call traditional Kazakh medicine today.

Traditional medicine constitutes inseparable part of Kazakh culture. This is why healing has been practiced not only by specialists, but also at home. It is the result of a strong relationship of medicine with old beliefs of Kazakhs, especially with the cult of ancestors.<sup>4</sup> Spirits of ancestors—әруақ (*är-waq*)—have to be treated with respect. When respected, they can reward people with help, support, fortunate fortune, and health. Manifestation of illness imposes the need of contacting the ‘invisible world’ for help. This is understood to be a natural way of solving the problem. All these beliefs and magical or religious rituals linked to them live on until today, as well as other actions preventing illnesses and methods of treatment.

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<sup>3</sup> The date of this alleged original document and the name of its author or compiler exclude any possibility of attributing it to a real Kazakh scholar (editor’s note).

<sup>4</sup> For more on the cult of ancestors see Mustafina (1992) and Privratsky (2001) who refers to it as “remembering the saints”.

Distinguished ancestors and saints (әулие, *äwliye*) were treated with great respect, as they were considered to be close to the divine power. Before Muslim religion appeared, holy places, usually identified with the presence of spirits of nature and healing powers had been significant for the Kazakh people. The custom of tying up scraps of cloth to branches of ‘holy’ trees which still exists across Central Asia aims to give offerings to the spirits and to ask them for help in treatment (Photo 1). The respect for spirits, as an important element of Kazakh culture, was transferred to Muslim ground. Meritorious Muslim priests, the mullahs (молда, *molda*), as well as Sufi mystics, are revered after their death, their tombs are visited by many pilgrims. The purpose of pilgrimages, among other things, is to receive the blessing (бара, *bata*) from the saint and his help in treatment. Visiting (зиярат, *ziyarat*) the *mazar*—that is the tomb—is a goal on itself, since Kazakhs are convinced about good influence of ‘holy places’ on the visitors and they are sure that gratefulness should be expressed and ancestors should be remembered, for they will surely help if needed. During *ziyarat* the pilgrims walk around a mausoleum, touch the walls of the sacred building with piety and ‘wash’ their faces with the palms of their hands. It is a sign of receiving healing power from the saint. Usually a tomb’s guardian (Photo 2), i.e. *şıraqşı* (шырақшы) or a mullah recites prayer for pilgrims who can also pray individually. Some important founders of clans and national hero (батыр, *batır*) who had struggled for the nation are also recognized as saints. A good example of this is mausoleum of Rayımbek Batır, a warrior who lived in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and became famous for his great courage he proved in the battles with Zhungars. Newly built mausoleum is situated close to the city cemetery in Almaty and everyday it attracts worshippers, healers and members of Muslim religious group White Path (Ақ жол, *Aq jol*).

Many different specialities of traditional Kazakh medicine were formed because of nomadic lifestyle. The Kazakh people had to cope with bone fractures and other injuries caused by intense horse riding or ailments characteristic of harsh climate such as very hot summer and extremely low temperatures in winter time. Life conditions determined the choice of treatment procedures, i.e. herbs or animal medicaments. Moreover, it was strongly believed that effectiveness of treatment depends on the person who is healing. The one whose healing powers are the strongest is called *baqsı* (бақсы). The *baqsı*, a Central Asian shaman, esteemed and treated with respect, was a distinguished personality among nomadic Kazakhs. Standing next to a clan leader, he was the most respectful member of society. He was able to communicate with the world of spirits to ask them for help or to cast out the spirits who—as it was believed—caused the illness.

Beyond a strong relationship between traditional medicine and magic or religion and the tendency of integrating different healing ‘specialisations’ among the Kazakh people, they take special care of health and employ various methods of prevention. The reason why the knowledge of Kazakh people how to prevent illnesses is so wide could be explained by harsh climate conditions and their beliefs in supernatural world. Prophylactic measures are not only limited to drinking specific milk beverages or herbal teas. Various methods of driving evil spirits away such as preparing protective amulets (тұмар, *tumar*) or burning special herbs as incense play a vital role.



In the preface to *Qazaqstanniñ halıq emşileri* Erasıl Äbılqasımov writes: “Traditional Kazakh healing means the usage of plant and animal medicaments in order to heal or prevent illness” (Äbılqasımov 1993: 3). Other authors add that traditional Kazakh healing has always been related to faith, morality and purity of the soul (Şıntayev 2006: 7).

This system of beliefs shapes Kazakh worldview and is a basis for the model of traditional Kazakh medicine related to the magic perception of the world. Cult of ancestors is the most distinct manifestation of Kazakh religiousness which has got its ancient roots, but is still present in everyday life. Entwinement of traditional medicine with magic and religion could be noticed in practices of fortune-tellers who advise or inform their patients about prognosis of illness. On a whole, synthesis of ancient beliefs and Islam has influenced the form of traditional medicine.

## 1.2. Methods and remedies

Difficult climate conditions might have been a crucial reason for Kazakhs to strive for good health. Many customs and dietary prescriptions in particular were maintained to strengthen human body and to adapt to difficulties arising from the harsh climate.

Nomads, exposed to travelling during four seasons, have gained knowledge of illnesses of human body and evolved proper methods of treatment. This kind of treatment is named “Kazakh’s sacred medicine”<sup>5</sup> (Almahanbetulı 2004: 219).

Although since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century one may hardly meet nomadic Kazakhs, most of the therapeutic practices and remedies developed in the past are still applicable today. This peculiar caring of health is expressed with saying: Денсаулық—зор байлық (*densawlıq—zor baylıq*) ‘health is a great wealth’. Methods of folk medicine are familiar not only to healers, but they are used for prevention.

There are many traditional milk drinks used in the methods of prophylaxis. Kumiss (ҚЫМЫЗ, *qımız*), fermented mare’s milk, is considered to strengthen immunity and purify human body of toxic substances. A similar intoxicant, шұбат (*şubat*), camel’s fermented milk of slightly sweetish taste, is recommended as a remedy for insomnia.<sup>6</sup> *Ayran* (айран), creamy yoghurt drink prepared of heifer’s milk, is prescribed when suffering from hypertension, insomnia or lack of appetite. Goat’s milk is served to weak, anaemic children (мешел бала, *meşel bala* literally a rachitic child). I have repeatedly met an opinion that donkey’s milk is helpful in case of mental disorders such as neurosis. Yuldaş Qurayış suggests to use it as a medicine for whooping-cough (1994: 133).

<sup>5</sup> Қазақтың қара емі, *Qazaqtıñ qara emi*. Қара, *qara*, literally ‘black’, here ‘sacred, special’. The term қара әруақ (*qara ärwaq*) is often used to define the remarkable spirit of a saint.

<sup>6</sup> Both *qımız* and *şubat* are used in treatment of lung diseases.

Such magical and religious methods as reading the prayers (дұға оқу, *duġa oquw*), preparing amulets (*tumar*), and divination practices which are supposed to warn of the danger of illness, can be classified as preventing actions. There are prayers (шипалы дұға, *şıpalı duġa*) and magic formulas which ensure protection from bad thoughts (бұзық ой, *buzıq oy*), evil spirits (жын, перілерден сақтайтын дұға, *jin, perilerden saqtaytın duġa*), or even protecting from stupidity (ақылсыздық, *aqılsızdıq*). Reading those prayers is supposed to shelter from widely understood evil forces and bad luck (жамандық, *jamandıq*). According to Kazakh beliefs, one of jinns' (evil spirits) favourite places are toilets. To avoid confrontation with jinns it is recommended to manage physiological needs quickly, without unnecessary thinking of any subject. It is also possible to provide protection by reading proper prayer after entering the lavatory (Abdallah 2000: 23).

For the purpose of prophylaxis prayers can be read individually, although their healing power is stronger when recited by a healer or a mullah. Healers use especially those prayers which protect from an evil eye (көз тию, *köz tiyüw*), often cast unintentionally, for example by blue-eyed persons, rarely met among Kazakhs, as well as *til tiyüw* (тіл тию), a spell cast by anybody who praises overly a child.

A different method mentioned above used for protective purposes is wearing amulets. In order to keep children safe from the spells and evil eye, a mullah writes a special prayer which is put afterwards into a small triangular bag of leather or cloth. The amulets of this kind are often decorated with gems, turquoise or coral. Similar features are assigned to owl's (үкі, *iiki*) feathers which fastened to the sticks of a yurt were believed to drive off the 'powers of evil'. Wolf claws were put into child's cradle with hope that it will bring good health to the child (Qojalımov 2008a: 3).

An important domain of traditional Kazakh medicine is phytotherapy and the use of animal remedies. According to Qanapiyaulı (1995), most of medicines used in Kazakh healing are of vegetal origin. Various parts of plants, such as root, stem, leaves, flowers and fruits, have healing properties. Herbs are picked up during a proper season of the year and day time so as to have the highest quality. Qanapiyaulı (1995: 7-9) distinguishes five most frequent manners of processing, storage and consumption of herbs:

- (i) Brew (қайнатпа, *qaynatpa*)— a most often used method; herbs are assimilated easily;
- (ii) Powder (ұнтақ, *untaq*)—common form of herbs storage, very helpful in preparation of herbal tablets or to dissolve in water;
- (iii) Pill (оқ, *oq*)—suitable for long-term storage;
- (iv) Gruel (балшық, *balşıq*)—medicaments of semi-liquid consistence used both as drink and rubbing ointment;
- (v) Drops (тамшы, *tamşı*)—instilled into eyes, nose, ears, throat etc.

Poisonous plants, such as *qara qorġasın* (қара қорғасын), mezereon (усойқы, *uwoyqı* or қасқыр жидек, *qasqır jıydek*, *Daphne mezereum* L.) or harmal (адыраспан, *adraspan*, *Peganum harmala*), are used in traditional medicine as well. Harmal twigs are often smoked in order to drive evil spirits away through intense smell. Harmal leaves and stems are helpful in blood dilution and can be used as

a relaxant. Herbs are used to purify the body. Rhubarb (payғаш, *rawğaş*, *Rheum* L.) brew purifies the stomach and intestines, while Siberian bellflower (сібір қоңырау гүл, *sibir qoñıraw gül*, *Campanula sibirica* L.) tea is helpful in removing toxic substances from lungs. Common cocklebur (ошаған, *oşağan*, *Xanthium strumarium* L.) is used in dermatological problems (Särsenbayeva 1997: 27). Usually, all plants have more than one application. For instance, elecampane, also called horse-heal (қарандыз, *qarandız*, *Inula helenium* L.) improves digestion but it is also very effective in treatment of skin diseases. Powdered root of this plant is mixed with butter and used as an ointment on rash and irritation (Qalqambay 2003: 85).

According to one of my informants, one of most frequently used herbs, star anise, also called star aniseed, badiane or Chinese star anise (сегізбұрыш бедиян/бәден, *segizburış bediyan/bäden*, *Illicium verum*), recommended for curing cough, is also used in case of strong headaches or kidney problems. Ground-ivy, commonly known as creeping Charlie (шырмауық, *şırmawıq*, *Glechoma hederacea* L.), has a similar application. In order to remove kidney stones (renal calculus) drinking brewed mayweed flowers (түймедағы гүл, *tüymedağı gül*, *Matricaria* L.) is recommended. In case of flu (тұмау, *tumaw*) or angina (баспа, *baspa*), while having fever, a species of wormwood (бермен, *bermen*, *Artemisia absinthium* L.) and coltsfoot (өгейшөп, *ögeyşöp*, *Tussilago farfara* L.) is commonly used. For anaemia or a general exhaustion of the organism, black elder (мойыл, *moıyl*, жаужұмыр, *jawjumır*, *Sambucus nigra* L.) or crown imperial, known as Kaiser's crown (сепкілгүл, *sepkilgül*, күшәла, *küşäla*, *Fritillaria imperialis* L.) is considered to be helpful.

Kazakh herbalists have developed a variety of methods to blend herbs in order to cure even such serious illnesses as cancer. It is believed that mixture of common stork's-bill (құтан шоп, *qutan şöp*, *Erodium cicutarium* L.) and white bryony (итжүзім, *ıytjüzim*, *Bryonia alba* L.) is effective for stomach cancer. Immunology system can be strengthened by forest fruit (жидек, *jiydek*) which are very important components of Kazakh diet. When bitten by lethal snake or spider, people— after bloodletting—were treated with the essence of henbane, also known as stinking nightshade or black henbane (меңдуана, *meñduwana*, *Hyoscyamus Niger* L.), or bidens, also called beggarticks, bur-marigolds, stickseeds, tickseeds and tickseed sunflowers (итошаған, *ıytoşağan*, *Bidens* L.), or garlic (сарымсақ, *sarımсаq*) juice (Qalqambay 2003: 39-40; Qanariyaulı 1995: 138).

It is worth mentioning that remedies for gynaecological disorders take an important place in phytotherapy. Special medicines are composed to treat menstrual disorders and infertility. Such plants as field mint (дала жалбыз, *dala jalbız*, *Mentha arvensis* L.), guelder rose (бүрген, *bürgen*, *Viburnum opulus* L.), known also as *şäñkiş* (шәңкіш), and common plantain (бақажарырақ, *baqajarıraq*, *Plantago maior* L.), known also as *joljelken* (жолжелкен), are strongly recommended. Similarly to the usage in different parts of the world, rheumatic conditions are cured with compress of brewed nettle (қалақай, *qalaqay*). There are specially separated plants which Kazakhs use to cure haemorrhoids. One of the most popular is greater celandine (сүйелшөп, *süyelşöp*, усарғалдақ, *uwsarğaldaq*, *Chelidonium maius* L.) (Qalqambay 2003: 44).

Plenty of various diseases and disorders, from headache through asthma (демiкпе, *demikpe*) and skin diseases up to bronchitis were cured by means of herbal medicine. Remedies of animal origin are often combined with those derived from plant sources. Urinary incontinence (шыжың, *şijñ*) is often treated by drinking special soup consisting of beef as a main ingredient and raspberry root skin (Dawitbayev 2003: 25).

An extensive use of animal medicines, mostly fats, is characteristic for traditional Kazakh medicine. They are considered to have warming and purifying properties and this is why they are used in many different kinds of massage (сылау, *sılaw*), rubbing (ысқылау, *ısqılaw*) and as medicines to be taken orally. Lard is treated as a panacea, especially fat of sheep's tail is believed to have special healing properties.<sup>7</sup> It is mostly used in such cases as cough, pneumonia, bronchitis and other respiratory diseases. This fat, a delicacy of Kazakh cuisine, is also employed as a medicine. Two of my informants reported that stomach ulcers (іріңді ісік, *iriñdi isik*) were cured with a piece of sheep's tail which was swallowed on a string to which it was tied. It is supposed to absorb all unnecessary substances. After this procedure, ended with taking the string out of a gullet, ulcers are supposed to disappear. Lard of ram is used for massage given to a child during the first forty days after birth. It is believed to protect a child from catching cold (Şıntayev 2006: 50).

Another frequently used animal fat is fat of a bear which is strengthening the liver and improving the functioning of intestines (Qanapiyaulı 1995: 12). Also popular is fat of a bagger, dog or a hedgehog (hedgehog's meat is eaten when having pneumonia, see Qurayış 1994: 139) and rabbit's fat which is rubbed in child's gums while toothing in order to intensify this process and as a painkiller as well (Qurayış 1994: 132).

The meat of wild and domestic animals has got various medical applications. Curing shivers (қатылдақ, *qatıldaq*) by eating boiled brain of a rabbit is a well known method. Medicines of animal origin do not include meat, fats or bone brew only, faeces and urine are also applied. According to Qurayış (1994: 133) dandruff (бастың қайызғағы, *bastıñ qayızğaqı*) can be removed with compresses made of boiled urine of a camel and nosebleed can be successfully stopped with a blend of ground dung of a camel and apple juice. "Formerly healers used to give goat droppings wrapped in camel's skin to an infertile woman and tied it near her bladder. The effect was surprisingly excellent"<sup>8</sup> (Qurayış 1994: 133).

One method of dealing with different kinds of health problems is a therapy which uses healing properties of honey. Honey is used mainly in massage and additionally in curing skin diseases. An old method of reducing blood pressure is putting leeches on the skin; hirudotherapy is very popular in Kazakhstan nowadays as well. Other old methods which Kazakhs still apply is bath in hot sand or in salt water.

<sup>7</sup> This fat has to be taken from the Kazakh fat-tailed sheep.

<sup>8</sup> "Бұрынғы емшілер бала көтермеген әйелге түйенің жүніне ешкінің құмалағын орап, қуығының басына байлап жүруге кеңес берген. Бір ғажайыбы — нәтижесі керемет болған".

Dealing with injuries lies in putting the bone or joint into its correct place which could be done by a specialist called *sınıqşı* (сынықшы), that is a bonesetter. They often prescribe a medicament widely known throughout Central Asia, *muwmiye* (мумие),<sup>9</sup> picked up in the high mountains.

In the case of snake, spider or scorpion biting, herbal treatment was preceded by bloodletting performed by a folk surgeon called *otaşı* (оташы).<sup>10</sup>

Special health care is provided for pregnant women and infants. Women have always received spiritual support, they could also expect help in childbirth from a healer or a midwife. S.A. Yarotskiy wrote:

*Baqşı* came to the yurt of a pregnant woman, playing *qobız*, screaming “Go away, get out!”, and he shook his hands towards the skylight. Doing so he drove away evil spirits which could have disturbed childbirth (on the basis of Orazaqov 1989: 41).

Herbs were given before and after the delivery. A mixture which was supposed to calm down a child in mother’s womb was made of glycyrrhiza (мия, *miya*), nettle-leaved bellflower, plum tree seeds and birch tree juice. In order to provide good health for the child and woman after childbirth, the custom of prohibition of removing ashes from the house after the sunset during the day in which umbilical cord (кіндік, *kindik*) was cut off, was obeyed (Şıntayev 2006: 68).

Many healing methods known in traditional Kazakh medicine are related to religion and magic. A method characteristic of Kazakh healers, although used very rarely nowadays, is wrapping an ill person in a skin of freshly butchered animal (теріге түсу, *terige tüsiw*). The patient lies for a few hours (sometimes even two days and nights) motionless, intensively sweating. S. A. Yarotskiy wrote:

The patient is wrapped in the skin of freshly butchered ram. Some healers place him in front of a pot with boiled water and cover with felt that the illness could pass on to this felt. At the end of this procedure the patient drinks heifer broth and sweats intensively (after Orazaqov 1989: 25).

Illness could be transmitted to felt as described by Yarotskiy, but also to a sacrificial animal. In this case faith in healing power of a healer and Islam as a factor which increases effectiveness of the therapy is very important. Spiritual healers believe that illness is caused by forces pertaining to the ‘invisible world’, therefore it is necessary to purify both the body and the soul. A common method for many healers is beating an ill person with a whip (қамшы, *qamşı*) or reading prayers (дұға оқу, *duğa oquw*), whispering them above the patient (дем салу, *dem saluw*), puffing (үшкіру, *üşkirüw*) or spitting

<sup>9</sup> *Muwmiye* is supposed to be helpful not only in treating fractures, but also for nervous system disabilities. It is applied as a mixture of *muwmiye* with milk, water, juice or tea (Qalqambay 2003: 69-70).

<sup>10</sup> For more on folk surgeons see Orazaqov (1989), Qurayış (1994), Äbilqasimov (1993), and Argynbayev (1995).

(түкіру, *tükiriüw*). The amulets mentioned above are often used for healing purposes. Different prayers are ascribed to heal those diseases which—as Kazakhs believe—are caused by witchcraft and spells (сиқыр, *siyqır*).<sup>11</sup> In Muslim tradition *siyqır* is recognized as a heavy sin (Abdussalam 2005: 9).

Visiting mausoleums and tombs of saints is important part of traditional Kazakh healing. Praying for health and worshipping ancestors is for many Kazakhs an indispensable element of the process of recovery. Travelling to the shrines of saints is considered to have good impact on health of a human being as a result of establishing contact with healing power of the spirit of a saint.

Traditional Kazakh medicine has developed methods of preventing diseases and curing many of them. Diet and knowledge of the use of medicinal plants and medicines of animal origin as well as the rich sphere of religious and spiritual life has affected the rise of a whole system of healing to serve the needs of nomadic people. Its elements are used nowadays as well.

### 1.3. The impact of East Asian traditional medicines and new healing systems

It is hard to demonstrate those methods in medical tradition of Kazakhs which could be considered as indigenous for this community. The Kazakh people have had numerous cultural contacts with neighbouring countries which influenced mutual exchange of experience in the field of traditional medicine. The present-day accessibility of information and the processes of globalization enable Kazakh medicine to borrow from other traditions and new non-orthodox healing systems in an almost unlimited way.

As for the old tradition, it was Arabo-Persian, but also Indian, Chinese and Tibetan medicine that affected Kazakh healing. Arabo-Persian medicine, although it reached the Kazakhs with Islamic expansion, is strongly connected with magic.

It is enough to remember that the word which in Modern Arabic designates a doctor (*ṭabīb*) [Kaz. *täwip*, Z.G.] in the pre-Islamic period was used in the same way as *sāḥir*, that is a magician, whereas *ṭibb*, i.e. medicine, had the same meaning as *siḥr* which denotes sorcery and magic (Dziekan 1993: 113).

Thus the role of a healer was often to liberate the patient from ‘evil forces’. As Dziekan (1993) claims the more disgusting and repulsive the medicinal treatment was, the more effective it was considered (Dziekan 1993: 15). A similar conviction has functioned among Kazakhs in relation to the use of poisonous plants. As Kazakhs did later, Arabs had healed through spitting and puffing which was accompanied by saying a formula or bloodletting. As *yijing* evidences, Arabic divinatory techniques have its source in Chinese art of fortune-telling (Dziekan 1993: 63). However, it is Greek tradition that influ-

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<sup>11</sup> The term *siyqır* is understood as ‘black magic’, an action that is supposed to harm one’s health or cause any other unfavourable changes.

enced Arabic medicine more than Chinese. We know the translations from Hippocrates into Arabic from as early as the 8<sup>th</sup> century. The main conception of Greek medicine, developed by Hippocrates was the principle of four elements to which four properties were ascribed: cold, heat, moisture and dryness (Penkala-Gawęcka 2006: 57). All of these properties refer to human body which needs to be kept in balance in relation to these four elements in order to maintain health. This idea has pervaded Arabic medicine and its traces were noticeable in traditional Kazakh medicine as well. One of the remnants of the principle of four elements is probably naming different kinds of ailments by Kazakhs as ‘cold’, for example ‘cold kidneys’ (бүйрек суықтаған, *büyrek suwıqtağan*).

What has strongly affected the shape of Arabo-Persian medicine and in consequence some elements of traditional Kazakh medicine is so-called ‘heavenly medicine’ or ‘prophetic medicine’ (*aṭ-ṭibb an-nabawī*), i.e. medical recommendations fixed in the hadiths and selected fragments of the Quran (Dziekan 1993: 21). We may mention some distinguished physicians such as Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khwarizmi, Abu Nasr al-Farabi and Abu Bakr ar-Razi who had presumably opened the first medical school and hospital in Bagdad in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, as well as Abu Ali ibn Sina, in Europe known as Avicenna,<sup>12</sup> who were significant for Kazakh healing tradition. Ibn Sina, who was born in Bukhara, lived in the 11<sup>th</sup> century in Persia where he carried out his medical practice. He used to say that the most effective tool of a physician is the knife, the word and the herb (Xabieva 1997: 19). In the opinion of Penkala-Gawęcka (2006: 58-59), it is not known what was the impact of Arabo-Persian medicine on nomadic peoples exactly, especially on the peoples of the northern steppes. Arabo-Persian medicine had stronger influence on sedentary population which spreads to the southern parts of Kazakhstan.

Rich Kazakh herbalism has undoubtedly been inspired by Chinese medicine. Plants of Xinjiang were well known in Kazakh phytotherapy, nowadays they are brought to Kazakhstan mostly by Uyghurs. Techniques of acupuncture and acupressure have become widely accessible and widespread, and establishing such institutions as the Centre of Eastern Medicine in Almaty or plenty of courses which teach Chinese healing methods demonstrate the popularity of these methods. Lots of healers base their therapy on the principle of five phases (*wu xing*).

Some are interested in Indian Āyurveda ‘knowledge of life’, law which inspired Chinese doctors as early as the ancient times. Āyurveda is looking for understanding what causes illnesses and disorders in human body, it concentrates on psychological analysis and examination of patient’s lifestyle. Its rules are implemented to diet and prophylaxis, patients often like to use popular methods of aromatherapy. Tibetan medicine is also gaining ground in Kazakhstan, in particular Tibetan herbal medicine, healing with gems and diagnosis taken from patient’s pulse.<sup>13</sup> During Tibetan medicine courses *Rgyud-bzhi* treatise, first translated into Russian in 1903 by P. A. Badmayev (Sahabat 1999: 38), then

<sup>12</sup> Penkala-Gawęcka (2006) and Ābilqasimov (1993) discuss the scholars mentioned above in a more detailed way.

<sup>13</sup> Tibetan medicine distinguishes six kinds of pulse: three of them being measured with shallow pressure and three with deep pressure. A doctor who makes diagnosis examines twelve pulses: six in the left and six in the right hand.

to Kazakh by Seyitqamza Kaliyev, is discussed. *Rgyud-bzhi* consists of medicinal recommendations of Tibetan healers, detailed explanations of examining various kinds of pulse (Kaliyev 1997: 171) and an outline of basic mistakes which should be avoided when making diagnosis (Kaliyev 1997: 181).

Next to the above-mentioned 'great medical traditions' is Korean medicine which is related to Chinese. Influences of Korean *sujok* (acupuncture of feet and palms) and *suji* (acupuncture of palms) do not have a long history in Kazakhstan, although popularity of these practices is observable.

Many healers consider themselves traditional, despite incorporating the methods discussed above to their therapy. It is common to meet 'traditional' healers, who practice *reiki*, a system invented in Japan at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. *Rei* means spiritual force, divine consciousness, and *ki* (Chinese *qi*) is life energy, primordial substance of the universe. Some terms like 'energy' i.e. *qi*, or 'cosmic consciousness' which were alien to Kazakhs until recently, become broadly known and used.

When outlining the impact of different medical traditions on traditional Kazakh medicine, we cannot disregard esoteric and other new healing systems, New Age movement or bioenergotherapy. Bioenergotherapy has gained popularity and favourable reception among the healers already in the Soviet period. Because of an alleged ability of extrasensory perception, bioenergotherapists were called 'extrasense'. Many healers refer to occultism, numerology, diagnosis based on the aura of a human being or different astrological systems. Interestingly, these influences reach Kazakhstan through Moscow which is the home of many schools of alternative medicine, parareligious New Age groups, and other esoteric centres.



## 2. Traditional Kazakh healers in the past and today

### 2.1. Traditional Kazakh healers

Among Kazakh practitioners of traditional medicine it is difficult to distinguish those who would specialize in only one branch. Competences of folk doctors have always intertwined with each other which is also seen in terminology. Nowadays, the most general term of a healer is *emşi* (емши), a word derived from *em* ‘1. therapy, cure. 2. drug, medicine’, whereas a doctor (physician) is called *däriger* (дәрігер), from Persian *däri* ‘medicine’ and *-ger*, a suffix denoting the agent.

Although it is not easy to differentiate the activities and abilities of certain types of healers, three main categories can be distinguished: spiritual healers, body healers<sup>14</sup> and a category indirectly related to medicine which includes fortune-tellers (палшы, балгер, *palşı, balger*).

The activity of spiritual healers is connected with Islam, yet it encloses elements of pre-Islamic beliefs and customs. A key figure in this category, and for traditional Kazakh medicine in general, is *baqsı* (бақсы) who can be defined as Central Asian shaman.<sup>15</sup> As a person of special insight into spiritual sphere, *baqsı* used formerly to help the tribesmen in making important decisions. Healers who were related to religion or spirituality were usually called *täwip* (тәуіп). One of the methods most frequently applied at present is reciting prayers or other ‘magical’ formulas above a patient. This action is named ‘putting the breath’ (дем салу, *dem saluw*). *Täwip* who ‘specializes’ in spitting after reading healing formulas is a *tükirüwşi* (түкіруші), whereas the one who heals through ‘puffing and blowing’ prayer onto the patient is called *üşkirüwşi* (үшкіруші). Thus the healing force is transmitted to a patient. It is worth adding that patients who come to this kind of healers are usually diagnosed with an evil eye or evil word spell (тіл, көз тию, *til, köz tiyüw*) or other spells and misdeeds caused by evil spirits—jinnс (жын, *jin*).

It is believed that religious people are gifted with special power. Special trust in the matter of religious healing was put in representatives of the *qoja* (қожа)<sup>16</sup> class, presumed descendants of Arabs who spread Islam among Kazakhs and assimilated then to them. Said to be affiliated with the family of the Prophet Muhammad (пайғамбар тұқымы, *paуғambar tuqımı*), they are predestined to fulfil spiritual functions and to heal. Muslim priests or mullahs (молда, *molda*) heal through reciting fragments of the Quran and prepare amulets (тұмар, *tumar*) which protect children from evil eye and bad luck. Amulets with written prayers, put into a small triangular bag of leather or cloth fastened to a necklace, are also worn by adults. They are also hung on the walls at home. Beyond the protection from ‘black

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<sup>14</sup> By body healers I mean those healers who use more „mechanical” healing methods such as massage or the examining of the pulse as their basic procedures; it does not exclude the use of other auxiliary methods which are characteristic of spiritual healers.

<sup>15</sup> I devote a separate paragraph to the *baqsı* further in this chapter.

<sup>16</sup> The *qoja*, although fully integrated into the Kazakh society, stay outside the its tribal structure.

magic' (сиқыр, *siyqır*), amulets are supposed to protect from accidents and illnesses. Mullahs, as other spiritual healers, ask the spirits of ancestors (әруак, *ärwaq*) or guardian spirits for help when healing (Privratsky 2001: 195-216).

As Privratsky claims, and what my interlocutors confirm, spiritual healers and other types of healers share the belief that healing is a gift from God (Алладан, Тәңірден берген қасиет, *Alladan, Täñirden bergen qasiyet*), given directly or with mediation of spirits. Spiritual healers are a link that unites people with God. By strengthening the faith and giving hope of improvement of current state they function in society as therapists.

I have termed the next category of healers body healers. A *tamırşı* (тамыршы) learns a patient's condition from his or her pulse (тамыр, *tamır*). On the basis of heart-beating of an ill person a *tamırşı* is able to interpret the condition of his or her health and recommends a suitable treatment. As said above, competences of certain healers often overlap, for example a bonesetter may also attend to divination, and a *tamırşı* in purpose of 'purification' of a patient's body may use the whip. Examining the pulse is an old diagnostic method which is known in Chinese, Arabo-Persian, Tibetan and Indian medicine as well.

Traditional masseurs (уқалаушы, сылаушы, ысқылаушы, *uwqalaşı, sılawşı, ısqılawşı*) have mainly used fats of animal origin in order to warm the body or relieve the tension of muscles which triggers off many ailments. A unique role, both for nomadic people and today as well, is ascribed to bonesetters, the *simqısı* (сынықшы). Frequent bone fractures, resulting from the lifestyle, were cured through setting the bone, putting it 'into its right place'. Initially the *simqısı* gained their experience through setting broken bones of domestic animals, then they started to treat people (Äbilqasimov 1993: 13). The *simqısı* made diagnosis, estimated fractures, ruptures, dislocations or other ailments and bone or joint dysfunctions. Some bonesetters have really deep anatomical knowledge. Reportedly, traditional bonesetters inherited their skills from the ancestors and the spirits; nowadays though, most of *simqısı* gain knowledge during various medical courses. Formerly, in order to stiffen broken legs and hands, a *simqısı* employed lamb, sheep or camel wool soaked with hot salty water to make the cloth hard (Äbilqasimov 1993: 14). Apart from the *simqısı*, there were also folk surgeons among Kazakhs. If an operation was necessary, they called a folk surgeon, i.e. *otaşı* (оташы). These surgeons made incision in the body of patients bitten by venomous animals and they even performed caesarean sections (Äbilqasimov 1993: 13).

Divinatory techniques have also been well known among Kazakhs for centuries. Not everybody could be a seer or a clairvoyant, just as not everybody could become a healer, as the gift of clairvoyance was transmitted from generation to generation. *Balger* (from Ar. *fāl* + Per. *-ger*) warned people of diseases, advised them and forecast the course of a disease. Su Bihay explains: "Fortune-tellers are as a matter of fact healers. Wandering around the country they have been examining the pulse, recommending proper herbs, and above all they have been reading ayahs of the Quran, so their relation to religion was very clear" (Bihay 2001: 369). The *boljawşı* (болжаушы, болжа-, *bolja-* 'to foretell, to

predict') often dealt with matters of social and political nature, they forecast the weather, but first of all they advised what sort of therapy is needed and how to avoid a disease. Supposedly, aptitudes like this occurred among representatives of the upper class of the society, for example among such remarkable fortune-tellers like Мөңке Біу (Мөңке би), Майқы Біу (Майқы би) or Пір Бекет (Пір Бекет), see Qojalimov (2008c: 3). Another characteristic figure among Kazakh healers was *jawırınşı* (жауырыншы) who used ram or deer shoulder blades (жауырын, *jawırın*) to foretell. Formerly, they predicted the future by putting a shoulder blade into the fire and watching carefully cracks that appeared on its surface. Depending on the depth of cracks, their direction and number, a *jawırınşı* found out the fate and predicted how the illness will evolve. Qojalimov (2008c: 3) writes that the process of the transmission of the knowledge of fortune-telling and predicting the future used to take place when a child was growing up, but it had begun much earlier. After the birth of a child who was supposed to be a *jawırınşı*, a shoulder blade as a tool of divination in the future was chosen and kept hidden until the child reached maturity.

Forecasting the weather and predicting dangerous situations related to the weather came within the duties of a *juldızşı* (жұлдызшы) who was foretelling from the stars. It may be said that they took care of the whole community by observing natural processes and predicting weather changes. In the past they were called *sanaqşı* (санакшы) or *boljağıш* (болжағыш, Qojalimov 2008c: 3). The location of the stars like Polar Star (темірқазық, *temirqazıq*), the Great Bear constellation (жетіқарақшы, *jetiqaraqşı*) and Venus (шолпан, *şolpan*) was particularly important for the prediction.

Those who are ill, undecided, hesitant or being in a difficult life situation can ask for help a clairvoyant, i.e. a *körіpkel* (көріпкел) and nowadays rarely a *жорушы* (жорушы). The term *жорушы*, sometimes also *tuspaldawşı* (тұспалдаушы), designates a person who predicts the future and who has got the 'key' to past events. The knowledge of a *жорушы* was helpful in determining illnesses that one went through before, and in the assessment of their influence on a patient's condition. The *жорушы* distinguished themselves from other clairvoyants due to the ability of interpreting dreams, causing dreams to appear, and entering the 'dream space'. It can be assumed that *жорушы* were healing in the dream.

The most widespread method of fortune-telling is definitely *qumalaq saluw, aşuw* (құмалақ салу, ашу), that is laying (lit. opening) forty-one bean seeds, stones or plastic balls. The word *qumalaq* denotes sheep droppings. This technique has been used by clairvoyants since a long time. It is known among Kazakhs and other Turkic peoples.

## 2.2. Early shamans: the *baqsı*

The majority of scholars agree with Barthold that the term *baqsı* probably derives from Sanskrit *bhikṣu* which denotes a Buddhist monk.<sup>17</sup> It arrived to Central Asia in the 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> century and was

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<sup>17</sup> In fact most researchers derive this word from Chinese (editor's note).

transformed into the form *baqsı*<sup>18</sup>, gaining a new meaning ‘shaman’. In the past female shamans were called *elti* (елті), see Orynbekov (2005: 31) and Basilov (1992: 49, 78).

The Kazakh vision of the universe assumed the existence of three worlds. The first one—the underground world—was inhabited by evil spirits. The world of humans was called the middle world, and the one which was home to good spirits and angels was called the upper world. Sometimes the structure of the world was divided not into three, but seven or—as Radloff claims—into seventeen storeys (after Bihay 2001: 368).

The most important aspect of *baqsılıq*, that is Kazakh shamanism, is the relation of the shaman to the spirits and the part of ritual that focuses on driving evil spirits away from the body of a patient or even when they harm people without ‘getting into’ the body. In the beliefs of Kazakhs there are good and evil spirits. Good spirits are the spirits of ancestors (әрыак, *ärwaq*). They were called for assistance by a *baqsı* during the healing ceremony. The shaman asked them to bestow their unusual power upon him and to show how he can help the ill person. Kazakhs do also believe in help of angels (Періште, *perište*) and forty spirits *şilten* (шілтен) which take care of children, whereas— according to the beliefs—evil spirits (жын-шайтан, *jin-şaytan*) are the main reason for illnesses, most of all mental illnesses and bad luck. Favourite places of jinns are forests, abandoned houses and cemeteries. The most dangerous one especially for women is *albastı* (албасты) whose acting could be withheld only by a *baqsı*. However, help of a mullah who can read healing prayers was frequently necessary (Mustafina 1992: 128). As it was believed, the *albastı* was a female ghost who could strangle a child, pull out his lungs or kidnap it and escape running toward a river. If she let the baby fall into the water, she caused his death (Basilov 1995: 246). Some other spirits like *peri* (пері) and *däw* (дәу), originating from Iranian tradition,<sup>19</sup> could act in both ways, i.e. harm and help. The *däw* spirits are described as the inhabitants of caves and underworlds, often one-eyed, emitting fishy odour. They can have three or seven legs; they kidnap girls (Şärip 2009). Mustafina (1992: 130) claims that it often appeared that a *däw* was a guardian spirit of the *baqsı*.<sup>20</sup> Among the *peri*, as Basilov (1995: 246) argues, there were representatives of different religions, e.g. Muslims or Hindu believers, even *peri*-pagans could also be met. According to Basilov, the *peri* were essential spirits helping the *baqsı* in healing, similar to Uyghur, Uzbek and Tajik shamans (Basilov 1992: 11). Kazakhs sometimes call the guardian spirits *qara ärwaq* (қара әрыак). The word *qara* ‘black’ has got special meaning in Kazakh, here it designates uniqueness and ‘holiness’ of a spirit.<sup>21</sup>

The most crucial thing in the process of becoming a *baqsı* was the time when the spirits called on the future shaman to enter the path of the healer. As it is evidenced by the researchers of Central Asian

<sup>18</sup> I use this term as it occurs in Kazakh (бақсы); it also occurs in other Turkic languages (e.g. Kirghiz *baqsı*, Uzbek *baqsı*, Uyghur *bahşi*).

<sup>19</sup> Persian *pari* and *dev*.

<sup>20</sup> According to Basilov (1995: 248), not only *däw*, but also *albastı* can be the guardian spirit of a shaman.

<sup>21</sup> In Uyghur tradition, by contrast, *qara arwah* is an evil spirit (Bellér-Hann 2001: 84).

shamanism, the spirits often appeared in the dream,<sup>22</sup> commanding to accept the gift of healing. Kazakhs used to say that *baqsılıq* ‘haunts’ the descendants of a *baqsı*,<sup>23</sup> it is a gift transmitted from generation to generation. After the spirits’ call a *baqsı* falls ill and he can recover only if he approves his destiny and accepts the shamanistic gift. The most typical illness was temporary paralysis, loss of vision, speech (anarthria) or epilepsy attacks. In consequence, a future *baqsı* isolated from the society struggles alone with disturbing spirits, and the illness does not recede before he agrees to become a healer. Consequences of the refusal could be very severe and unpleasant not only for the ‘chosen’ candidate, but also for his family. If the spirits call a candidate in his childhood, he can pass the gift to another *baqsı* and accept a ‘calling’ later (Penkala-Gawęcka 2006: 237). Recovery and the whole process of becoming a *baqsı* can be compared to the resurrection which strongly exists in classical shamanism.<sup>24</sup> A serious illness and ‘miraculous’ recovery makes a *baqsı* a very special person blessed with supernatural powers in the eyes of his community. It was believed that people whose cervical vertebra was sticking out were protected by a guardian spirit and they were especially destined to become a shaman. Such a person is described as ‘one who has got support’ (арқасы бар адам, *arqası bar adam*).<sup>25</sup>

It rarely happened that a more experienced shaman taught a beginner. The beginners acquired their knowledge through the contact with the spirits who instructed them (Mustafina 1992: 131). Then they were given blessing (бара, *bata*) as a sign of acceptance from the elder *baqsı* (Penkala-Gawęcka 2006: 75). Only a person living in ritual purity could become a respectable shaman.<sup>26</sup>

In Kazakh literature the term *baqsı* rarely appears independently. It mostly occurs in the compound form as *baqsı-balger* (бақсы-балгер) ‘shaman-fortune-teller’. Kazakh historian of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Şokan Wälihanov, wrote: “All *baqsı* are also fortune-tellers. When a *baqsı* foretells the future, he holds a whip in two fingers balancing it and he talks during the seance. Each *baqsı* is a fortune-teller”<sup>27</sup> (Qojalımov 2008: 3). The word ‘talks’ means predicting the future.<sup>28</sup> Healing seance, called play<sup>29</sup> (ойын, *oyn*), has always been an important event in the life of Kazakh community. It was in the yurt of an ill person or near the tomb of a saint or an ancestor as in southern Kazakhstan that *baqsı* performed his ritual (Basilov 1995: 251) and where the local community gathered in order to help the shaman with prayers and shouts, when he was falling into a trance.

<sup>22</sup> The dream in which healers are called to heal is termed *ayan* (аян) ‘revelation’.

<sup>23</sup> Бақсының қасиеті тұқым қуалайды.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Szyjewski (2005: 104).

<sup>25</sup> *Arqa* designates ‘back’; here it refers to the intercession of the spirits.

<sup>26</sup> “Таза ұстаған адам ғана сыйлы бақсы бола алады” (Qojalımov 2008: 3).

<sup>27</sup> “Барлық бақсылар да бал ашушылар. Бақсы бал ашарда қамшыны екі саусағының арасында, тепетеңдікте ұстап, ойын көрсете жүріп сөйлейді. Бақсылардың бәрі де балгер”.

<sup>28</sup> Basilov (1992: 13) also points to the fact that predicting the future is one of the basic functions of the shaman next to healing.

<sup>29</sup> It is a specific kind of a shaman’s “play” with the spirits. In Kazakhstan it is said: *baqsı oynaydı* (бақсы ойнайды), that is ‘the shaman plays’; similar phrases were used in Kyrgyzstan: *baqsı oynop atat*, in Turkmenistan: *porhan oynayar*, and in Uzbekistan: *parhon uynaydi* (Basilov 1992: 12).

Trance or transgression of everyday perception was necessary for a shaman to engage in contact with guardian spirits and the spirits who have caused the illness. Through violent movements, shouting and playing the ritual stringed instrument *qobız* (қобыз) a *baqsı* reached the state in which he supposedly could contact the spirits. Many times he made terrible faces, he lost control over his body and ceded it to the spirits (Tursunov 1999: 73). As for *qobız*, we know that special properties were attributed to it. From the reports of Zhirmunskiy we know that *qobız* which belonged to Qorqıt Ata, reportedly used to emit various sounds after his death, “as if it was mourning his owner” (after Basilov 1992: 71).

Su Bihay claims that the traditional headgear made of swan skin, decorated with owl feathers, wore by a shaman, made him feel distinguished in his community what reinforced his high status (Bihay 2001: 164, 368). Another attribute of the *baqsı* was his ritual stick (асағаяқ, *asatayaq*) which was wrapped with cloth scraps, bells and pieces of metal.<sup>30</sup> The main function of *asatayaq* was casting out evil spirits. The whip (*qamşı*, қамшы) and the knife (*pısaq*, пышақ) had a similar function.

The act of burning incense at the patient, the yurt or any other place where healing took place with the smoke of a plant called *adıraspan* (адыраспан ‘harmal, *Peganum harmala*’) was a very important element of the ‘play’. The smoke was considered to have protecting and healing properties. At the same time ceremonial candles *şıraq* (шырақ) were lit. When guardian spirits were already summoned, the *baqsı* could start driving away those who have caused the illness. It was believed that evil spirits caused illnesses like infertility and all mental illnesses. The *baqsı* roared as beast and ordered jinns to go away. Sometimes, ‘bribing’ them with a sacrificial animal turned out successful. Usually they sacrificed a black sheep or a goat as evil spirits supposedly were afraid of them (Basilov 1992: 147). During the casting out of evil spirits, the *baqsı* beat the patient (or the walls of the yurt) with a whip (Basilov 1995: 249). It also happened that an illness was transferred onto an object or a sacrificial animal (ауруды көшіру, *awruwdı köşirüw*). The bones of such animal were carried away to the crossroads or some other place in order to ‘take the illness away’ together with them (Basilov 1992: 147). It is very possible that in the past the whole ritual was called transferring (көшіру, *köşirüw*, Basilov 1992: 152). In purpose of proving the presence of the spirits, the *baqsı* showed his unusual skills. It was supposed to give evidence of gaining extra power from guardian spirits. The *baqsı* stabbed the blade of the knife (*pısaq*) in his body<sup>31</sup> or licked metal objects heated in the fire<sup>32</sup> (Basilov 1995: 249). In Kazakhstan, just as in the other countries of Central Asia, the use of drugs by shamans have not been witnessed (Basilov 1995: 251).

A shaman after finishing the healing used to recommend that every patient should go to a mullah to ask him to recite special prayers or to make an amulet. Thus the relation of *baqsılıq* to Islam is evi-

<sup>30</sup> Basilov (1992: 77) says that it is difficult to differentiate between the sticks used by the *baqsı* and those used by *duwana* dervishes.

<sup>31</sup> Tursunov (1999: 91) describes how a *baqsı* stabbed a dagger in his stomach.

<sup>32</sup> Basilov (1992: 151) also points to other shamanic “tricks”, such as e.g. “dispelling” a chest or stomach of a patient [similarly to modern “bare hand surgery”, Z.G.], although he emphasizes that there are few reports on it, and none of modern authors have been a witness of such an event.

dent. Levshin reported that sometimes the ill Kazakhs had called the mullah and the shaman to their house at the same time in order to double healing power (quoted after Basilov 1995: 252). At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century some *baqsı* ordered amulets from the mullahs and attached them to their ritual instruments (Basilov 1992: 283-284).

In literature we do often come across the term *zikir* (зипір), from Arabic *ḍikr* which refers to the healing seance led by a *baqsı*. The aim of *zikir* ceremony, performed by the Sufi in the past, was to show respect to Allah and to remind the visitors of religious commandments (Ataev 2000). As a result of the entwining of old beliefs of Kazakhs with Islam and because of some similarities between Sufi healing ceremonies and the ‘play’ of the *baqsı*, the name *zikir* began to be used when referring to the shamanistic healing seance. The shouts of a shaman during *oyın* were probably associated with the shouting of the leaders of Sufi groupings and their worshippers, e.g. *Huw, Lā ilāhā illalla; hay!* (Ху, Лә иләһә иллалла; һай!)<sup>33</sup> and they were included into shamanistic seances. Contrary to the ‘silent *zikir*’ of other Sufi traditions, Sufi of Yasawiyya brotherhood performed so-called loud *zikir* (*ḍikr-i jahr*) which had clear connection with the healing ceremony (Privratsky 2001: 228). Thus we can presume that this kind of rite had strong impact on the Kazakh people, especially in the southern part of the country, mostly because of the proximity to the mausoleum of Qoja Akhmet Yasawi. In Privratsky’s view (2001: 228) the shamanistic seance adopted the name *zikir* in order to ‘hide’ under the ‘holy aura of practices of Sufi which were parallel with shamanistic’. During the *zikir*, a *baqsı* together with other participants of the seance encircled the patient and treated him with smoke (Bihay 2001: 187). The element of turning and encircling is common to both Sufism and old shamanism. Similarities between *baqsılıq* and Sufism appear also in the figure of the ‘wandering dervish’, *duwana* (дуана), who:

had a headgear made of swan skin, (...) wandered across the country on a white horse, holding a wooden cane in his hand. Usually he focused on healing, asked Allah for help or predicted the future. Such people were considered to be saint among Kazakhs (Bihay 2001: 369).

*Duwana*, just as *baqsı*, had a capacity of fortune-telling, healing, contacting spirits and reverse bad fortune (Basilov 1995: 253), but his relation to Islam (Sufism) was deeper. One of the dervishes described by Basilov (1995: 253-254) was ‘called’ and chosen by the spirits to become *duwana* and to heal people in a way similar to *baqsı*. He suffered from a serious illness and only when he “took the whip”<sup>34</sup> and visited 21 shrines according to the recommendations of the spirits the condition of his health improved.

<sup>33</sup> See <http://yasawi.kz/?p=82> (August 2010).

<sup>34</sup> This phrase means accepting the gift of healing. In the past it was also called “to take the *qobız*”.

As Bihay says the shaman was an “ambassador, connecting people with God” (Bihay 2001: 163). His main role was to heal people. Being rich of experience of fighting his own illness, he was a ‘person in authority’ of helping the others. Because of their high social status, the *baqsı* were advisers to the rulers and khans. From among famous shamans it is worthy to mention semi-legendary Qorqıt Ata (Қорқыт ата, considered to be the first Kazakh shaman and the founder of *qobız* (Qojalımov 2008b: 3),<sup>35</sup> Äjibay *baqsı* (Әжібай бақсы), Кеңжебай *baqsı* (Кеңжебай бақсы), Däwlet *baqsı* (Дәулет бақсы), Omar *baqsı* (Омар бақсы) and Ноғайбай *baqsı* (Ноғайбай бақсы), see Maqsutbayeva (2004: 140) and Qojalımov (2008c: 3).

Old *baqsılıq* has correlated with Islam, especially with the elements of Sufism, but it has retained its root, i.e. a special relation of *baqsı* to the spirits. For many centuries the *baqsı* were very important figures in Kazakh society, they were responsible for the community to which they belonged. Nowadays *baqsılıq* has got lots of common features with traditional shamanism, although it consists of different elements as well. Garrone (1999: 15, 2000: 90-91) calls *baqsılıq* an Islamized version of the shamanism. Indeed, even though the relation of *baqsılıq* to Muslim religion is very strong today, we can demonstrate pre-Islamic roots of Central Asian shamanism.

### 2.3. Kazakh healers today

From the beginning of the 1990s after Kazakhstan had proclaimed the independence, the healers obtained legal space for their practices. It is not possible to determine an exact starting point which would mark the moment when the activity of the healers was no longer condemned nor considered to be a symbol of backwardness. The new political rulers no longer attempted to repress local traditions. On the contrary, they tried to rebuild the national identity of Kazakhs by indicating the cultural richness of Kazakhs, including traditional medicine.

At the same time, traditional healers began to employ healing methods from different East Asian healing systems which reach Kazakhstan mainly through Moscow (through the medium of New Age ideology) and emigrants from China, especially Uyghurs of Xinjiang. After the appearance of these new methods in Kazakhstan traditional Kazakh medicine has reshaped itself by integrating old traditions with elements of foreign healing systems which very often tend to gain new meaning. In this way the traditional Chinese martial arts, for instance *taiji quan*, became downgraded to the position of ‘gymnastics for health’ and stripped of its main aspects essential for correct practicing.<sup>36</sup> As a result, healers often combine methods and techniques of Indian (*Āyurveda*), Chinese or Japanese origin with traditional Kazakh methods of healing, bringing in their own, individual interpretation. Indian tradition inspires Kazakh healers who recommend their patients meditative techniques, concentration on human energy centres (*cakra*) and healing through using a *mudrā*, symbolic or ritual gesture of Hinduism and

<sup>35</sup> In fact common to many Turkic peoples from the pre-Kazakh period.

<sup>36</sup> Similarly to Europe and North America.



Buddhism performed by the hands and fingers (Şintaev 2005: 59). Unusual attention is paid to Korean version of reflexology, devised by Park Jae Woo (Penkala-Gawęcka 2001: 155). Great importance is attached to commercial aims; the more skills a healer has, the bigger probability of procuring new patients he gains.

In modern Kazakhstan we no longer meet so-called folk surgeons *otaşı* or fortune-tellers *juldızşı*, although many healing and divination methods of old tradition are used today. Healing procedures are not limited to traditional Kazakh methods of healing. From among plenty of innovations in complementary medicine especially Kazakh healers like devices which measure human ‘energy fields’ and take photographs of human aura. Most of my interlocutors have employed bioenergotherapy, including spiritual healers. Similarly to Japanese *reiki* art of healing, healers often claim to ‘connect’ themselves to a source of energy which gives them healing power. ‘Theopsychobioenergotherapists’<sup>37</sup> supposedly gain their power directly from the Creator.

Fortune-teller and a clairvoyant Aysuluw Ämzeyeva has perfectly mastered techniques of predicting the future from shoulder blades (*jawırım*) of a ram. She pronounces the ‘incantations’ (*ұшықтау, уşıқтау*) over the fat of a sheep tail which should be consumed by the patient afterwards. Furthermore, Ämzeyeva tries to convince her patients of the effectiveness of ‘bio-current’ healing<sup>38</sup> (Photo 7). This healer attracts many patients because of her gift of clairvoyance. During my first appointment with her, she answered my questions before I managed to ask them.

Healing sessions usually consist of a few parts. First healers make a diagnosis in a traditional way, for example through examination of the pulse (*тамыр ұстау, tamır ustaw*) or—as *sınıqşı* in case of an injury—by seeing and touching the limbs; sometimes they use more innovative methods like ‘seeing’ the aura and energy field of the patient. A diagnosis is also made by examining the appearance of the iris of an eye (iridology). Healers also use such methods of verifying the reasons for the illness like fortune-telling (traditional Kazakh *qumalaq saluw*, but also tarot). The next stage is the choice of a proper method which will help to ‘purify’ the soul and the body of the patient. I evidenced the simultaneous use of the whip (*qamşı*), reciting the prayers, and purifying the aura by ‘bio-current’ (*биоөріс, bioöris*), that is the non-touching massage. The aim of combining different methods is to gain better effect of the healing. Phytotherapists supplement herbal healing with methods of manual therapy (e.g. A. Särsenbayeva). Especially in the last few years the massage of acupuncture points with the usage of animal fat is commonly practiced. This kind of therapy is offered by Erlan Qaziyzulu of the Centre of East Asian Medicine in Almaty who unites traditional Chinese and Kazakh medicine.

As it was mentioned, healers who heal through reading special prayers or magic formulas also very often tend to use different methods like, for example, herbal medicine. A healer who has been working

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<sup>37</sup> This is a term referring to the healers who use techniques of bioenergotherapy in conjunction with spiritual healing methods as used in the terminology functioning at the Centre of Folk Medicine and the Association of Traditional Kazakh Healers in Almaty.

<sup>38</sup> Qojalimov works similarly by encouraging the patients to use healing properties of a cat. He penned an article in which this subject was described in detail (Qojalimov 2008a: 3).

in the Centre of Folk Medicine in Almaty for many years, Aynajan Isqaqova claims that reading the Quran and healing through ‘bio-current’ are most effective and frequently used methods due to a strong relation of traditional Kazakh medicine to religion (дiнге өте жақын, *dinge öte jaqın*). Another healer, Beybit Mırjıqbayulı, applies a well-known, traditional method of healing, i.e. reading the prayer over a glass of water which should be drunk by the patient afterwards. Patients often request the method over a bottle of mineral water which they wish to take home. This ‘holy’ water is also used to wash the eyelids of a patient and of a healer in order to ‘see’ the reason for an illness.<sup>39</sup> Healers are fond of using sound and colour therapy, many are interested in psychology. For instance, in the Centre of Folk Medicine it is possible to take part in so-called session of psycho-emotional correction.

Äset Muqaşbekov, an employee of the Centre of Healing with Hunger (АШТЫҚПЕН ЕМДЕУ ОРТАЛЫҒЫ, *Aştıqpen emdew ortalıǵı*) in Shymkent, created his own healing system in which strong will and faith are very important elements of the therapy (Muqaşbekov 2007). Muqaşbekov, who is a professional doctor, co-worked with American healers during his stay in California. These facts are intended to authenticate the effectiveness of his healing system. Other healers also eagerly participate in traditional medicine courses, they learn telepathy or clairvoyance, for instance at schools for healers abroad. Studies in Moscow, India or Korea are considered to be very prestigious. Among her competences, Raygül Tilewova boasts the ability of healing with the application of the Korean *sujok* method, as well as the massage which she learned during the courses in India.

Despite creating individual healing methods inspired by practices originated in places so distant from each other geographically and culturally as Scandinavia and Japan<sup>40</sup> or centres in the world of Islam and Buddhism,<sup>41</sup> Kazakh healers have retained many features of traditional *emşi*, especially ‘healer’s illness’ and inheriting healing knowledge from ancestors who healed or were related to religion. Generally, a common element of a visit at healer’s consulting-room is the end of the session when blessing (*bata*, бата) is given. The healer ‘speaks’ to God whom he names *Allah*, *Quday* or *Täñür*, or to the spirits of ancestors. The healer asks for helping and taking care of the ill person, he wishes health and accomplishment of the goals. All healers stress that trust in force majeure or the spirits *är-waq* is a condition of recovery.<sup>42</sup>

The ‘gift’ of healing is often inherited from parents. Äsemgül Idrısova, a healer who owns a private consulting-room at the centre of Almaty, told me that her grandmother who healed people died just after her birth. Her mother has not inherited this kind of ability from her mother, but she claims that her daughter reminds her of her grandmother.<sup>43</sup> Another healer, Suwlışaş Ordabayeva, emphasized that her maternal and paternal grandfathers as well as her mother herself had a gift of healing, although

<sup>39</sup> “Адамдардың көздерін жұмып, өзім солармен қатар жұмып, Құран оқимын. Сонда көремін, қай жері ауырса көремін. Сосын оқытып берем, олар ішеді” (В. Мırjıqbayulı).

<sup>40</sup> I have met a healer who used “magical” Scandinavian runes and the *reiki* technique at the same time.

<sup>41</sup> Some Muslims go on a pilgrimage to holy Buddhist places, e.g. the rock engravings that depict the image of Buddha from the 8<sup>th</sup> century near the Ili river.

<sup>42</sup> “Сенім—жарты ем” (А. Isqaqova).

<sup>43</sup> “Апам емші болған, бірақ мен туылғанда ол қайтыс болды. Ал анамда ондай қасиет жоқ. Маманың айтуы бойынша, мен апамға өте қатты ұқсаймын”.

a lot of her relatives died young or suffered from mental illnesses. Ordabayeva and her two brothers are the only ones who have survived out of thirteen siblings. Some healers assume that their healing abilities may be owed to the forefathers, mullahs or remarkably talented ancestors, for example poets.<sup>44</sup> A phytotherapist Aysolpan Särsenbayeva boasted that she could originate herself from a healers' family as far as the thirteenth generation. Some healers mention Muslim priests or *baqsı* as their ancestors (e.g. Iygilikova, Photo 9, and Dospayeva). Only one of my healer informants was not able to show if there was any healer among her ancestors.

Each healer, before he understands his destiny and enters on the 'path' of the healer, suffers from a serious unexpected illness which emerges without any reasons, or he passes through some traumatic experience. Very often it is a clinical death or paralysis, in case of Siberian shamans loss of consciousness. "Medical examinations does not evidence any organic changes. Doctors usually define such symptoms as a mental illness. The patient is sometimes isolated in a mental hospital" (Penkala-Gawęcka 2001: 179). Mirjiqbayulı, mentioned above, could not get up from his bed for one year and only after 'miraculous' recovery his 'third eye' has opened and he understood that he has to heal people.<sup>45</sup> Ordabayeva, since she was thirteen, suffered from shiver attacks and strong kidney pains lasting for a few years which no doctor could cure. Only when she began to discover her healing talents the illness receded. Moreover, she stressed that she 'did not believe herself' and some time had to pass before she noticed that she could see illnesses of other people through, as she explained, 'internal television'. Toqtaş Mahambetova has been seriously ill for most of her childhood (Mahambetova 1997: 3-15). Understanding and accepting the gift is necessary to recover and it means the acceptance of the will of ancestor spirits and the Creator. A future healer can be called on to fulfil his duty through a dream or revelation (*ayan*, аян). Bahitjamal Iygilikova, a respectable healer working at the Centre in Almaty, reported how she suddenly started reading *namaz* with help of God, and the words 'came to ears by themselves', although she did not know Arabic.<sup>46</sup> Similar experiences were described by all healers I have talked to.

*Baqsı* seems to be the most unusual figure among all healers. Despite numerous resemblances between spiritual healers and *baqsı*, the latter is easily recognized because of his charisma, unusual skills, and very often impulsive, violent temper. In modern Kazakhstan it is very difficult to meet a 'real', traditional *baqsı*. Jessa (2001: 193-208) describes the history of Aytqurman *baqsı* whose acting is an example of the impact of Islam on traditional Kazakh shamanism. Aytqurman went through the traditional path. He was called by the spirits, he accepted the healing gift and began to heal people. He mainly uses the whip and a musical instrument called *dombıra* (домбыра),<sup>47</sup> yet he also reads prayers and uses the beads *täspi* (тәспі). Guardian spirits, appearing in the form of a black camel, an adder and

<sup>44</sup> "Арғы атам молда. Нағашы атам ақын. Мүмкін содан шығар" "My paternal great-grandfather was a mullah. My maternal grandfather is a poet. Maybe it came out of this [about the gift of healing, Z.G.]" (Beybit Mirjiqbayulı).

<sup>45</sup> "Көлік апатынан кейін, бір жыл төсектен тұра алмай жаттым. Содан кейін, аман қалғаннан кейін үшінші көзім ашылды".

<sup>46</sup> "Алланың аянымен келді. Аянымен намаз оқыдым. Сөздері құлағыма өздері келеді".

<sup>47</sup> Another musical instrument used in the seance of a *baqsı* is a jew-harp (шаң қобыз, *şay qobız*).

an eagle help him to heal<sup>48</sup> (Jessa 2001: 196). Some different reports on modern healers confirm that their guardian spirits can have diverse forms, for example materialized as a snake, a human being or a camel<sup>49</sup> (Privrastky 2001: 222).

The modern *baqsı* often claim that they are healer-psychologists and they prefer this name rather than calling them “the exorcists” (Bellér-Hann 2001: 79), although driving evil spirits away is still the main element of the shamanistic seance.

Biyfatima Däwletova, a shaman living in Üñgirtas (‘stone cave’) village, located 100 kilometres of Almaty, became a popular figure. Her house is situated in the periphery of the village, nearby the cemetery. At the hilltop which is in front of the house there is a stone in memory of Aydahar Ata. According to the legend, Aydahar Ata was one of the disciples of Akhmet Yasawi, who supposedly spent last few years of his life in the underground cave in Üñgirtas. One of the stages of the healing is climbing this holy mountain where once there was a dervish lodge, as well as being together with the ancestors to whom Biyfatima devoted a stone with her hand prints stamped in red colour (Photo 3). The stone slab dedicated to the spirits with the inscribed name of God ‘Allah’ (الله) and the symbol *yin-yang* under it is an interesting element of the surroundings.<sup>50</sup> Biyfatima put wooden sticks wrapped with cloths in the ground which are supposed to keep the surroundings of her house in ‘purity’ and to frighten evil spirits away. On the gate outside her house there is a sizeable animal skull, most probably the skull of a sheep.

Since many people come and see her, her assistant Berik Tastanov constructed a shed where the ill can wait and have a glass of tea. A place defined as the ‘temple’ is located in the underground cave (Photo 1). A small part of a porch is intended for the patients who have to stay in Üñgirtas longer than one day. I have seen a patient, wrapped in sheepskin and covered with blankets, lying there for a day and a night. Further part of the temple is decorated with paintings done by Biyfatima, photographs of mausoleums she visited, Muslim attributes, and slips of paper with newspaper articles about her. The paintings resemble South American images of shamanic visions, e.g. Pablo Amaringo. Paintings with astrological symbols present the world divided into three levels. Animals are a frequent pattern. There is a cardboard box with an inscription *sadaqa* (садақа) ‘alms’ close to the exit. Despite the legal ban, Biyfatima performs collective healing seances. She purifies ritually everyone who comes to her through pouring or splashing water at them. She beats her patients frequently, shouts and makes an impression of a very impulsive, unpredictable person, yet she also jokes a lot. Her methods of healing remind us of above-mentioned Aytqurman *baqsı* practices.

<sup>48</sup> Mahira, a young Uyghur shaman, presented by Penkala-Gawęcka (2001: 162, 2006: 244), was also gifted with the ability of seeing her guardian spirits.

<sup>49</sup> “Кейбіреудің жыны жылан болады, кейбіреудің жыны адам болады, кейбіреудің жыны түйе болады”.

<sup>50</sup> It suggests an association with Uyghur shaman Rachilyam, studied by Penkala-Gawęcka (2001: 153-191, 2006: photo 21.), who placed an image of Christ and a drawing with the *Om* syllable next to Muslim symbols in the room for her patients.

When the reason for the illness is already established, *baqsı* asks for a bucket of hot boiling water; he soaks the towel, with which he hits the body of a sick woman (...). Hot water is needed to rid the body of illness. Aytqurman claims that the illness is transferred to an animal which dies shortly afterwards (Jessa 2001: 205-206).

A very important element in the process of healing is receiving blessing (*bata*) from a shaman which completes each stage of healing. The popularity of Biyfatima additionally grew after the release of the film *Baqsı* (directed by Omarova in 2008) where the main character—the shaman—was played by an actress of a delusively similar appearance to her. The film character was inspired by the life of Biyf-fatima who approved the screen-play and agreed to be featured.<sup>51</sup> Biyf-fatima also agreed to have the crew staying for some time in Üñgirtas and observing her healing methods. Unfortunately, I have been only once to Üñgirtas, so I do not have more detailed information about Biyf-fatima. Nevertheless, much information can be found on the Internet, such as relations of her ‘fans’ and people who were healed by her.<sup>52</sup>

Spiritual healers who run their own private business often have stands at the markets, near mosques, shrines and tombs of pious people where they sell healing accessories, herbs, amulets (*tumar*) and booklets with healing prayers (шипалы дұғалар, *şıypalı duğalar*).

If a healer wishes to strengthen his hitherto abilities or acquire new ones, he goes on a pilgrimage to a mausoleum or a tomb of a saint. Sometimes an experienced and renowned healer or a *baqsı* takes his pupils to a holy place (Penkala-Gawęcka 2001: 179) where they pray together and ask for blessing. Healers often organize common group pilgrimages, mostly to the Akhmet Yasawi mausoleum in Turk-istan where they can procure new patients (Bellér-Hann 2001: 334).

Popularity of traditional medicine and state regulations have led to the formation of two categories of healers. The first group consists of healers who act in compliance with the law and have a license. The second group is composed of those who heal illegally.<sup>53</sup> Licensed healers have a possibility to be employed at the institutions of traditional medicine or run their private business activities. They do not risk being fined or prosecuted administratively in contrast to those who do not have any license. If they are employed by an institution, they pay for the rent of a consulting-room and pay taxes. On the other hand, the license and extra diplomas build reliance and trust of the patients. Those who do not have a license (e.g. Saylawbekqızı) are afraid of an inspection, they complain about too high costs of the application for the license which hinders a legal job. Healers who see patients in private apartments or at Green Bazaar in Almaty, visited by many patients every day, often do not take any payment for their services from pregnant women or poor people. However, giving presents in return for healing has

<sup>51</sup> In March 2009 a project (a documentary film and an exhibition of photographs) called “The Last Dervish of Kazakhstan” about Biyf-fatima was completed. The authors (Olesya Bondareva and Mauri Pasanen) claim that Biyf-fatima shared some Sufi lore with them and revealed some secrets of shamanistic knowledge during their long stays in Kazakhstan (<http://www.kazakhdervish.com>).

<sup>52</sup> See <http://www.vecher.kz/?S=9-200711080640> (August 2010).

<sup>53</sup> See Chapter 4.

become a custom. Sometimes though, healers “from the bazaar” (e.g. S. Ordabayeva, M. Qurmanqarimuli) earn more money by working outside of centres of traditional medicine than average employees of the centre.

Although there are many legal restraints and obtaining the license is not an easy task, most healers assess the approach of the authorities to traditional medicine favourably. Especially the staff of the centre recognizes the fact of establishing this institution on the governmental initiative as an evidence of the commitment of the state. According to the healers the authorities actively support and help traditional medicine, finance and organize courses, conferences and congresses.

We can still meet some healers who heal traditionally, but very rarely those who do not combine the therapy with some innovations from the West. Healers are open to different healing methods and traditions which enables traditional medicine to develop dynamically and to retain many elements of their traditional character.

#### 2.4. Healers and Islam

Within the last few years the position of Islam in Kazakhstan became stronger. It is worth mentioning, though, that:

Islamization of Central Asia proceeded slowly and almost always softly, giving time to the local people to be acquainted with the essence of the religion and its principles. It was the Muslim missionaries representing non-orthodox ideas of Sufism that spread their religion among the nomads of the peripheries of Central Asia. They have not fought with ‘fire and sword’ the traditional beliefs and customs that could not be accepted in orthodox Islam (Gawęcki 2003: 192).

Since Islam has partly absorbed old beliefs of Kazakhs, some customs forbidden in the official religion have survived until today in ‘everyday’ Islam, so-called folk Islam. In this way the unpermitted cult of saints and remembering them has become an essence of ‘Muslimness’ (мұсылманшылық, *musulmanshılıq*) for the Kazakh people. Presumably, Sufism widely spread in current southern Kazakhstan played a very important role in this process. As was mentioned, mystical elements of Sufism resembled shamanistic rites. Islam became a common religion, not—as it was before—the one accessible only for upper classes of the society. Kazakhs have always esteemed people related to religion and spirituality, hence *qoja* are considered to be predestined to fulfil religious functions, including healing. Besides, special healing skills were ascribed to those people who went on a pilgrimage to Mecca as well as to objects and cloths taken by a pilgrim on his pilgrimage (Mustafina 1992: 16-17). Nowadays *qaji*, that

is a person who performed the duty of the pilgrimage, is being highly esteemed. Acquiring the title of *qaji* raises the rang of spiritual healers, though it is not an obligatory condition of being successful.

Publishing houses newly created by religious circles print and distribute books popularising religious literature for children and adults. President Nursultan Nazarbayev repeatedly appeal to the Kazakh nation for obeying the religious rules. He says: “We, Kazakh nation, are Muslims, and Islam is our religion”.<sup>54</sup> To meet more and more clear and direct pro-Islamic tendencies, new mosques and Islamic centres for religious people are being built. People can study the Quran and the principles of Islam there. One of such centres, opened in 2005 in Almaty, is called Spiritual Institute (Рухани институт, *Ruwhaniy institut*). The main aim of this institute is to teach Islam. The curriculum includes such subjects as Arabic script, understanding hadiths and Quran, or the history of prophets. The study lasts four years and the participants are awarded a diploma after the completion. After finishing every one-year (ten-months, to be more exact) course they are given a certificate, so students who are not interested in the programme of upper grades can finish studying with a document confirming abilities and knowledge hitherto gained. The first two years include the study of Arabic alphabet, phonetics, reading and understanding the Quran. Less people are interested in the third and the fourth courses which are dedicated to the history of prophets. First undergraduates of the institute received diplomas in the summer of 2008. It gives them the possibility of teaching in Muslim schools, madrasah, and at mosques where religion classes are offered. Many participants of this courses are healers who want to widen their knowledge.

In 2008 the number of staff and students of the institute amounted to over 170 persons. According to the chairman and the main lecturer of the institute, Amangeldi Erenğayıpұlı, the increasing number of students is an evidence of the development of the institute, although there are only two lecturers employed in it. Costs of a ten-months course is 700 tenge.<sup>55</sup> It is a price affordable for everyone and everyone who has completed a secondary school is eligible to begin the study at the institute.

The students and the staff of the Spiritual Institute take care of the Central Mosque in Almaty. The chief imam (найб имам, *nayb imam*) assists the organization of common pilgrimages to Mecca. Pilgrimage to Mecca is one of five fundamental duties, so-called pillars of Islam.<sup>56</sup> The organization *Nur-Qazaqstan Association of Pilgrimage* (Нұр-Қазақстан қажылық компаниясы, *Nur-Qazaqstan qajılıq kompaniyası*) existing at the institute assists people in the preparations to the journey do Mecca. Healers often apply to the association for a permission to perform the pilgrimage, for they believe it will give them more healing power. The candidates are registered and each future pilgrim is obliged to write a short curriculum vitae which will be attached to the Book of the Pilgrimage (Қажылық кітабы, *Qajılıq kitabı*). They should also deliver medical certificate from a psychiatrist who confirms lack of disorders of personality and cognitive processes etc. The participants are granted certificates

<sup>54</sup> “Қазақ халқы, біз мұсылманбыз, дініміз ислам” (<http://www.turkistan.kz>, August 2010).

<sup>55</sup> 1 €= 190 KZT, exchange rate of April 2008.

<sup>56</sup> The other four duties of a Muslim is confession of faith, prayer, alms and fast.

confirming the fulfilment of this duty of Islam which is important for healers who can show the certificates to the patients as an attestation of their increased competence.

During my research I have met three kinds of approach towards healing among the healers who consider themselves Muslims. The first one is characterized by the total acceptance of the practices of *emşi* healers, *baqsı* shamans and other spiritual healers. The second attitude rests on partial acceptance of some methods of traditional medicine, like herbal medicine or healing with a prayer, and negative attitude to *baqsılıq*. The last one is a complete disapproval of such aspects of old customs of Kazakh traditional medicine like visiting tombs of saints or wearing amulets, asking for help fortune-tellers, along with the method of healing through reading prayers, i.e. *dem salıw*.

The chairman of the Centre of Folk Medicine in Almaty, Şäken Şıntayev, keeps the precepts of Islam, he prays five times a day, attends Friday prayer (*namaz*, намаз) in a mosque, but he does not refuse shamanistic practices at the same time. Healers who heal through contacting with the spirits work at his institution. It seems that most Kazakhs have similar attitude towards traditional medicine. Old beliefs, customs and being a Muslim does not exclude each other, and their coexistence is something natural.

Two remaining attitudes appear in conjunction with strong tendencies aiming at the revival of 'pure' Islam, especially noticeable within the last few years. Some spiritual (religious) healers respect herbalism and healing prayers and treat them as the methods which are in accordance with Islamic rules, but they deny *baqsılıq* and consider the contact of a shaman with jinns as a formal sin. I have also met a few people unambiguously opposing many traditional healing methods (except phytotherapy), even those methods which are very deeply rooted in preventing illnesses as wearing the amulets. They only regard reading prayers as proper, without any additional aspect of 'puffing' (*үшкіру*, *üşkiriw*), 'spitting' (*түкіру*, *tükiriw*) or invoking the spirits of ancestors. They say that according to Muslim law asking the dead for help is forbidden. Such authors as Paltöre (2006: 16) confirm it and indicate that worshipping ancestors is a *şirk* (ширк).<sup>57</sup> Some very religious women with whom I had an accidental conversation on the train even claimed that *baqsılıq* had never existed and it is an invention of healer-swindlers which appeared after Kazakhstan had proclaimed independence.

All healers I met denounced 'black magic' (*сиқыр*, *siqır*)<sup>58</sup> and defined it as inconsistent with moral and ethical rules and definitely forbidden (*арам*, *aram*). The name 'black magician' (*сиқыршы*, *siqırşı*) is ascribed to a person who goes into 'partnership' with spirits and works with them in a place hidden from other people (Abdallah 2000: 10). I received many booklets with prayers and advices helpful in protection from magic from spiritual healers, although their contents seemed to be exactly 'magical'. For example, among the methods recommended there was reading of a prayer seven times in the evening over a glass of water and drinking its content (Abdussalam 2005: 43) or praying over a dish filled with water in which a cedar-tree leaf is placed between two stones (Abdussalam 2005: 61).

<sup>57</sup> *Şirk* is an Arabic loanword. It denotes 'polytheism'.

<sup>58</sup> From Arabic *sihr*.



Sometimes spiritual healers use the method of healing with written ‘spells’ compiled from words written in Arabic script. This method is well-known in the whole Muslim world, since it is believed that Arabic script has a special, sacred value. Some healers oppose such practices.

Those healers who heal with the help of prayers refer to the Quran and sunnah and claim that God showed how to heal people. They say that instructions are given in various surahs (Qahtani 2006: 4-8). If an ill man wishes to heal himself on his own, it is recommended to read prayers in the Arabic language. Healers publish books and distribute them at the mosques and bazaars among other healing accessories (amulets, rosary beads, Kaz. *täspi*, тәспі, and whips). These books contain prayers transcribed into Kazakh script. The reading of the prayers must be preceded by correct, clear intention (шын ниет, *şın niyet*), so it is better to entrust this to a person who is ‘close to God’, e.g. imam or mullah. It is interesting that “the purpose of reciting the Quran is to honor the ancestors” for many healers (Privratsky 2001: 127).

Most Kazakhs consider themselves Muslims. Among numerous friends, healers and patients of Kazakh nationality I met only two persons who claimed that they are not Muslims. It is natural for the Kazakh people to unite old traditions with Islamic rules which only recently has begun to take different ‘official’ forms. For instance, Ziyat S. Jetpisbayeva admits that she found her life path of the healer thanks to many pilgrimages to mausoleums and tombs of Kazakh saints (Jetpisbayeva 1997: 114-116).

Religious healers claim that they received the gift of healing from God. It is worth to pay attention to the fact that they refer to the creator calling him *Täñir* (Тәңір), *Quday* (Құдай) or *Allah* (Алла, *Alla*). The first name comes from pre-Islamic times and despite its connection with the god of heaven, *Täñir* is used today in the same meaning as *Allah*. Healers who practice fortune-telling, telepathy or clairvoyance also believe that their abilities and talents are ‘given’ from God (Nazarova 2004: 157). That is why the category of sin does not appear. Many modern healers, for example Raya Nawrızbayeva, claim that healing has to begin with ‘purifying’ the soul and only changes on the subtle, spiritual levels can help to heal the body. For this purpose faith in God who sends down an illness but can also make it retreat, is indispensable (Nawrızbayeva 2008: 6).

The functioning of a religious group called *Aq jol* (Ақ жол), studied in detail by Jessa (2006) seems to be an interesting subject. The group has many of members, including healers, who apart from group pilgrimages to the tombs of ancestors (saints and national heroes, the *batır*) organize regular meetings in the form of praying and healing seances. Jessa (2006: 369) regards these sessions as a synthesis of Islam with local non-Islamic elements. As is seen from the description, this kind of meeting resembles occult practices, mostly because of invoking ancestor spirits; it also includes important Muslim practices, such as reciting the Quran. “The members of the group also study Islam in a way which is a kind of individual interpretation of the leaders of *Aq jol*” (Jessa 2006: 369).

In conclusion we can maintain that an increasing number of healers who are the followers of ‘official’ Islam in Kazakhstan negate many methods of traditional medicine and consider them to be against the principles of Islam. However, the majority of *emşi* do not view their activities as contradic-

tory to Islam. On the contrary, they cultivate old Kazakh customs, 'adjusting' them to Islam and regard them as a manifestation of 'Muslimness'.

### 3. Institutions, associations and training of healers

When in 1991 Kazakhstan, as the last republic of the Soviet Union, proclaimed independence, the Kazakh market opened for healers. New associations and centres of traditional medicine were established. Among them the most important is the Centre of Folk Medicine in Almaty. Public and private schools of healing were created across the country and due to the foundation of the Institute of East Asian Medicine at Akhmet Yasawi Kazakh-Turkish International University in Turkistan and later the Department of East Asian Medicine at Kazakh National Medical University the possibility of gaining higher medical education has appeared. Private courses of both traditional healing methods and spiritual healing are organized, for example prayer assisted healing, taught at the School of Spiritual Healing in Almaty. In the following, I shall outline the activities of some institutions and associations of traditional medicine to show their diversity.

#### 3.1. Centre of Folk Medicine

An institution working today under the name Centre of Folk Medicine (Халық медицинасының республикалық ғылыми-тәжірибелік орталығы, *Halıq meditsinasınıñ respubliykalıq ǵılimiy-täjiribelik ortalıǵı*) was opened on 6 July 1990 on the initiative of the Ministry of Health. Initially its staff was recruited only from folk healers with no medical education. In 1991 they started employing professional doctors. The current structure of this institution is a result of many transformations and reforms that took place in the Ministry of Health and changes in post-Soviet Kazakh society. The first name of this institution was Centre of East Asian and Modern Medicine. It was later divided into two smaller centres. In 1998, as a result of partial privatization, a Centre of Traditional and Folk Medicine has separated from the former institution. The name and the structure of this centre changed many times. Unfortunately, chaotic and unsystematic documentation makes the writing of the history of this centre quite difficult. Nowadays there are two separate institutions working in the same building, Centre of Folk Medicine and Centre of Modern Medicine (Қазіргі медицина орталығы, *Qazirǵı meditsina ortalıǵı*). At present, just as formerly, there is a possibility of healing according to the methods of traditional Kazakh medicine and other methods of alternative medicine, as well as an opportunity of acquiring education necessary for obtaining a healer license. In 1992 a School of Folk Medicine (Халық медицинасының мектебі, *Halıq meditsinasınıñ mektebi*) with various courses offered was set up at the centre where healers can be trained and educated. The participants can prepare themselves for public examination which gives them right to legal medical practice.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> More for professionalization see the next chapter.

In the first years of the existence of the Centre healers often disobeyed the rules which is only rarely the case now.

Centre of East Asian and Modern Medicine was trying to adapt its activity to the requirements of the Ministry of Health, and on the other hand, to the needs of the market. Therefore, the rules of attestation were softened, restrictions and requirements limiting the practices of healers were frequently not observed. In contrast, in the first years of the activity of the Centre the healers who disobeyed the rules were more often admonished by a commission and the certificates were taken away; until 1996, 12 % of qualified folk healers lost their licence (Penkala-Gawęcka 2006: 211).

The healers working at the centre continuously seek to get new patients. They pin advertisements, fragments of newspaper articles up on the doors of their consulting-rooms in hope to attract new patients. Because the staff of the centre is composed of the representatives of 17 different nationalities (e.g. Kazakh, Russian, Chinese, Korean, Kirghiz, Tatar, Uzbek and Turkish), a wide range of methods and therapies is offered. A strong competition between the healers may have its reasons in settling the prices of healing by the management. Patients pay at the cash-desk depending on the type of the service, and not directly to the healer they chose. Prices are unified and this is why healers try to attract patients on their own. Healing sessions such as phytotherapy, ‘settlement of the bio-field’, reflexotherapy, apitherapy (using various kinds of honey and pollen), manual therapy, so-called psychoemotional correction, and consultation with a healer cost from 750 to 2,000 tenge (approximately 5-12 EUR).

People addicted to alcohol, drugs and nicotine as well as those who were diagnosed with the hex ‘evil eye’ or ‘evil word’ (көз тию, тіл тию, *köz tiyüw, til tiyüw*) can also go and see a healer at the centre. Methods pertaining to different traditions are frequently combined, as in the case of believing in hexes. Despite its roots much older than Islam, prayers and reciting fragments of the Quran are applied. ‘Bare hand’ surgeries, that is operations without using a scalpel (пышаксыз, *pişaqsız*), aiming to remove tumours, pyogenic inflammations and ulcerations from the body through alleged opening the skin tissue by hand are performed at the centre as well. The majority of the healers from the centre share an opinion that the complex treatment is the most effective, as opposed to using only one healing method. On the other hand, there are healers like Aşolpan Särsenbayeva, qualified phytotherapist devoted to herbalism, who claim that one good method of healing is better than many. However, in addition to phytotherapy, she also applies manual techniques.

Financial conditions offered to the healers by the centre are not very favourable, but patients often express their gratefulness by giving gifts to them. The cost of renting a consulting-room is nearly 20 thousand tenge per month, approximately 100 EUR. On the corridors of the centre we can often meet healers who try to get patients to choose their services. The consulting-rooms look rather modestly, but each one is full of photographs of mausoleums and newspaper articles about the activities and

skills of a particular healer. Photographs with other well-known healers, healing accessories, for example the whip (*qamşı*, қамшы), amulets with prayers (*tumar*, тұмар) or shoulder blades of sheep (*jawırın*, жауырын) used for fortune-telling are supposed to help in proving the spiritual power and experience of a healer. The centre is the main institution providing training for healers and also an institution participating in issuing licenses. We can definitely state that its current director, Şäken qajı Şıntayev, is an authority in his profession and among the staff of the centre. His successive practice in the field of folk medicine and higher medical education are a strong and important argument for potential patients in making decision of beginning the treatment at the centre. Şıntayev warns that the patient should be a believer, though religion is not essential.

Even on the basis of scarce information it is not difficult to see a high degree of bureaucracy and formalization in the activities of the centre which tries to meet the requirements imposed on them by the authorities. Before seeing a healer, one must go through a few formalities such as an introductory conversation with a receptionist or the director, examination for presence of venereal diseases (according to the act № 695 of the Ministry of Health from 27<sup>th</sup> July 2001), paying the price at the cash-desk and receiving a form which authorizes to be served. This fact does not hinder the access to a healer, at least for those who due to their skills and advertisements have their working hours filled. The demand for healing through traditional methods among Kazakhs and the representatives of other nationalities of Kazakhstan is big enough to assure the development of the centre which is visited by many customers.

### 3.2. Association of Traditional Kazakh Healers

Association of Traditional Kazakh Healers (Қазақстан Халық Емшілері Қауымдастығы, *Qazaqstan Halıq Emşileri Qawımdastığı*) was created on 31 September 1991, when a special committee gathered in order to establish this organisation. It was Ziyadan Qojalımov who became its unofficial chairman, an internationally recognized healer. E. Zarekeşev, a doctor of medicine, became his deputy. A few months later the First Congress of Folk Healers was convened in Almaty at which healers from fifteen provinces elected the president of the association and settled the regulations. Ziyadan Qojalımov, Professor of Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, was elected unanimously due to his charisma and many titles and diplomas achieved in the field of folk medicine. Qojalımov is currently also the president of International Association of Psychologists, Doctors, Spiritual and Folk Healers (Бүкіләлемдік психологтар, дәрігерлер және рухани-халық емшілері қауымдастығы, *Bükilälemdik psihologtar, dāriğerler jäne ruwhaniy-halıq emşileri qawımdastığı*). He is an alumnus of the International Academy of Ecology, the Academy of Spiritual and Folk Healing in Moscow, editor-in-chief of the periodical *Bulletin of Healers* (Шипагерлік баян, *Şıypagerlik bayan*), published by the association since 2002), and member of the Federation of Journalists and Psychologists of the Republic of Kazakh-

stan.<sup>60</sup> He completed many courses, was awarded such titles as The Best Healer of the Third Millennium, World Spiritual Healer, Professional Meritorious Folk Healer of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Since the very beginning of its activity, the association has quickly developed and the number of the members increased. Seventeen branches were opened (fourteen in provinces and three in cities) by 1993, and the number of people officially involved in the activity of the association amounted to approximately 3,000. Since 2008, there have been thirty-two branches (ten in provinces and twenty-two in cities), and the membership has increased to 5,000 people, over one hundred of them being citizens of the Commonwealth of Independent States and other countries of the world. A hundred and thirty-two persons obtained the title of Meritorious Member of the Association, twenty-one of them are members of an academy of sciences, mainly Kazakh and Russian Academies (thirteen members of the former, two of the latter), also other ‘academies’ such as M. Nostradamus Academy of Prophetic Sciences or Academy of Ecology and Spiritual Healing. Many of them are bearers of the title of World Spiritual Healer, Master of East Asian Folk Medicine, and forty-three are Professional Meritorious Folk Healer of the Republic of Kazakhstan. More than three hundred prominent healers were rewarded such prizes as Hippocrates, Qorqıt Ata, Öteyboydaq, baqsı Qoyılбай. The association is intensively developing and new and new schools for healers at which its member work are being opened.

In 2006, on the occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of the foundation of the association, Eleventh Congress of Folk Healers was organized at which Prof. Qojalimov was re-elected the president with three deputies. There is a research centre at the association directed by Prof. Qojalimov. It focuses on the study of methods and remedies of traditional medicine as well as new methods of spiritual healing. Qojalimov co-organized a First International Congress of Folk Medicine “The Past, the Present, the Future” in Almaty in 2004. The next one took place one year later. In 2006 a First International Forum on “The craft of *baqsı* in Kazakh folk medicine”, and in 2007 a First International Congress “The development Central Asian and Kazakh folk medicine” were convened in the city of Almaty. The association obtained the state license<sup>61</sup> of the Ministry of Health which authorizes it to put its activity into the legal practice. The members of the association sit on a committee which awards licenses to healers.

The main aim of the association is to create an organization for healers and encourage them to join their efforts, share experience and cooperate in research and practice. The members review literature of folk medicine and evaluate particular methods and devices used by healers. They also co-operate with other cultural and healing centres. Their second, but very important aim, is providing the opportunities of self-development for healers by establishing and supporting new institutes and schools, seminars, conferences, and congresses. Healers can apply for certificates, awards, medals and other diploma. A candidate who wishes to become a member of the association must be of full age and be a specialist in traditional medicine or/and be a graduate in medicine. The rules of accepting new mem-

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<sup>60</sup> We have to bear in mind that many organisations and associations in Kazakhstan wish to upgrade their status by pretending that they are international.

<sup>61</sup> LP №004531.

bers clearly specify that people complying with the two above-mentioned conditions can candidate regardless of race, nationality and religion. In case of positive decision of the board of the association taken on the basis of a form and questionnaire submitted and assessed, a new member is obliged to pay a fee annually. The membership gives the members a possibility to advertize their services and spread information on their healing activities. The members can also control other healers, check the licenses and their validity. Apart from the board, there are the following important units in the structure of the association: Committee of Organising Professional Training for Folk Healers and Research and Advising Centre.

The association, despite its modestly looking head office (it is located in a private flat adapted to the needs of an office with one room serving as the cabinet of the president and another one as reception), is working very actively which is evident from its activities. They organize trips for healers to holy places of Kazakhstan, connected with various religious traditions, e.g. by the Ili river, where depictions of Buddha from the 8<sup>th</sup> century are engraved on the rocks (Photo 6) or to mausoleums of saints and ancestors (e.g. Photo 4). Due to the foundation and the development of the association many healers can hope to gain new patients and, even more important, get new qualifications and knowledge of traditional medicine and spiritual healing.

### 3.3. Department of East Asian Medicine at Kazakh National Medical University

Department of East Asian Medicine at S. D. Asfendiyarov Kazakh National Medical University in Almaty was established in 2004. To the students specializing in East Asian Medicine mostly methods of Tibetan, Chinese and Kazakh medicine are taught. The department faces many organization problems, lack of qualified lecturers, competent in the field of traditional medicine. They have a small number of students which also hinders stabilization. In the academic year 2006/2007 the specialization of East Asian medicine was chosen by thirty-two students, a year earlier by thirty-four, and two years earlier by seventeen students. In 2008 there were only the third, fourth and fifth year-courses. The last admission was carried out in 2006 and the rector of the university is considering the closing of the department. On the other hand cooperation with other universities is being established, e.g. with the University of Chinese Traditional Medicine in Shandong, Eastern China province, and with the Department of Traditional Medicine of Medical University in Ürümqi. Student mobility also works. Exchange students coming from China can study at the university and can also participate in the courses at the Centre of Folk Medicine. Just as at any other medical study programme, the curriculum provides for a six-year period of study, but since 2010 the specialization of East Asian medicine will exist only as a postgraduate course. Apart from obligatory subjects, common to all future doctors, there are such subjects as reflexology, acupuncture, manual therapy or apitherapy in the syllabus. The lecturers are usually staff members of other university institutes and graduated healers. Students and

staff take part in many conferences and congresses dedicated to traditional medicine, yet due to the unsettled situation the future of the department is uncertain.

### 3.4. Centre of East Asian Medicine

After the proclamation of independence of Kazakhstan, many Kazakhs from China and Mongolia have returned to their native land. Those who repatriated are called *oralman* (оралман),<sup>62</sup> they receive nationality, civil and citizen rights. *Oralmans* cultivate Kazakh traditions, they know Kazakh language and culture perfectly and quite often they also know very well the culture of the country they lived in for years in foreign lands. This kind of synthesis can be interesting especially in the field of traditional medicine.

The Centre of East Asian Medicine (ШЫҒЫС емдеу орталығы, *Şığıs emdew ortalığı*) is situated in Almaty in the basement of a residential building in the central part of the city. It is founded by Erlan Qazizulı who repatriated from China. He got higher medical education in China and inherited the knowledge of traditional Kazakh methods from his family and other Kazakhs from China. A characteristic feature of the Centre of East Asian Medicine that differentiates it from other institutions of traditional medicine is combination of methods of Chinese and Kazakh medicine. A variety of fats of animal origin and ointments (e.g. fat of a badger/bear/camel or a sheep) used in Kazakh medicine are used in massage with focusing on acupuncture points, meridians and the overall energy system of a human being which is the essence of Chinese medicine. Most of healing methods like massage, acupuncture or phytotherapy have its roots in Chinese medicine. The diagnosis methods which refer to the holistic approach to the patient with special reference to diet and its influence on particular organs and obeying the rules of five elements principle<sup>63</sup> are characteristic of the medical system of China. The chairman of the Centre of East Asian Medicine claims that because of long contacts between Kazakh and Chinese medicine it is very difficult to distinguish which methods are Kazakh and which are Chinese. He says that a combination of Chinese and Kazakh herbal medicine and rubbing points employed in acupuncture with warming animal fats is extremely effective. Doctor Erlan Qazizulı referred to fortune-tellers, spiritual healers and *baqsı* with aversion and stressed that all his staff in the centre are people with diplomas in medicine and not quacks. By rejecting *baqsılıq*, he wants to be modern and respond to the needs of patients. According to Qazizulı, *baqsılıq* is the past and it lost its social function. Therefore we have an example of an institution strictly related to Kazakh tradition on one hand and strongly negating some of its aspects, especially those which cannot be recognized by modern medicine.

The above-mentioned institutions are only 'a drop in the ocean' of centres functioning in Kazakhstan. There are a lot of smaller centres and private consulting-rooms offering traditional methods and

<sup>62</sup> From Kazakh *oral-* 'to return, to come back'.

<sup>63</sup> *Wu xing*, the five interacting elements, are wood, fire, earth, metal, and water.



remedies. The authorities support the development of traditional medicine, at least their official approach shows an interest in this issue. Because the situation of public health care system is far from satisfying, citizens of Kazakhstan are willing to find alternative healing methods. Especially interested in Kazakh medicine are those Kazakhs for whom the possibility of having access to such services after the independence has a meaning of strengthening the feeling of 'Kazakhness' (қазақилық, *qazaqilyq*). The tendency of supporting the movements related to Islam is also noticeable, therefore we can assume that in the next few years there will be more centres similar to the School of Spiritual Healing. On the other hand, it is possible that the number of centres without any strong religious aspect and their level will grow.

Healers and potential healers have a great choice of courses and schools where they can upgrade their knowledge and gain new skills. Although most Kazakhs think that healing predispositions are an 'ancestors' gift' and not everyone can heal, contemporary new-created institutions, associations and places where traditional medicine is taught are an evidence of acquiring the skills of healing through studies and courses. It is an interesting fact, because Kazakhs strongly believe that the healing gift is 'chasing the descendants' (тұқым қуалайды, *tuqim quwalaydi*). According to this belief only having a healer ancestor can guarantee the success. The number of places of education and training of healers where they can work after graduation increases the risk of leaving behind the traditional way of 'becoming' a healer, but it can also assure the improvement of qualification and widening the extent of the activity of the healers.

#### **4. The attitude of Kazakh authorities to traditional medicine**

##### **4.1. Policy towards traditional Kazakh healing in Russia, the Soviet Union and independent Kazakhstan**

As it is known, the Kazakh people throughout the years of dependence on the Soviet Union struggled against Russian domination, attempts of denationalizing Kazakh nation and the destruction of their traditional everyday life, customs and traditions. Because healers always occupied a unique place in Kazakh society, Russian authorities denounced their activities trying to prove its social noxiousness through revealing folk medicine as a synonym of backwardness.

Progressive evolution of the policy of Russian authorities to local people can also be observed in the field of health care which was provided to natives peoples only after the total annexation of Central Asia to Russia. The contacts of Kazakhs with western, that is Russian medicine, was for a long period of time very limited and superficial. It was biomedicine that was especially slowly introduced (Penkala-Gawęcka 2006: 104).

It was only after the outbreaks of the epidemics and dangerous diseases like plague or cholera (оба, тырысқак, *oba, trısqaq*) that the authorities became interested in health situation of the nomads (Penkala-Gawęcka 2006: 105). However, the authorities were rather concerned about the spreading of diseases than the health of the people and their actions taken up can barely be classified medicinal. As Orazqov (1989: 55) writes, since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century until 1917 the plague broke out once and sometimes even two or three times a year. Russians begun to organize inoculation actions and they managed to stop many dangerous diseases like the plague, cholera and smallpox (Penkala-Gawęcka 2006: 130). In the course of time the public health service was introduced and hospitals were built. The authorities propagated biomedicine and traditional medicine was strongly negated as a symbol of backwardness. Nevertheless, Russian influences have undoubtedly contributed to a co-existence of various medical traditions in contemporary Kazakhstan.

By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the position of Islam among the Kazakh people was strengthened on account of thinking that religious inhabitants of the steppe would be more obedient to the authorities than non-religious. Penkala-Gawęcka (2006: 102-103) claims that the policy of Russia towards Islam totally changed after the influences of Muslim clergy had become stronger.

The consequences of these conceptions were experienced by Kazakhs in the times of the Soviet Union.

The propaganda against religion and the spread of health services were parts of a large scale Soviet programme of reshaping the culture and social life of the citizens of Central Asia which was aimed at the 'rooting out of the superstitions' and forming an ideal,

happy Soviet man, free of the burdens of the past and striving for communism (Penkala-Gawęcka 2006: 117).

Repressions were carried out against *baqsi* and religious leaders who were imprisoned or even sentenced to death. The mosques were closed as well (Privratsky 2001: 50). As a result, Kazakhs started practising their spiritual and religious life at home and continued to observe their traditions in concealment.<sup>64</sup>

We can speak of the existence of different medical traditions already in the tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union, but “it was not a developed medical pluralism [...]. This situation could be described rather as «forced tolerance» for traditional ways of dealing with diseases after the conviction that biomedicine would completely take their place had failed” (Penkala-Gawęcka 2006: 133).

In the final period of the existence of the Soviet state, various healing traditions, especially bioenergotherapy called ‘the extrasensory therapy’, were widespread. After the independence healers did not have to hide their practices any longer. At the beginning of the existence of the Republic of Kazakhstan traditional medicine was legalized and proper bills<sup>65</sup> regulating the activity of the healers were enacted. As I maintained above, the Centre of Folk Medicine was opened in Almaty before the independence. Later new centres and institutions where traditional healing methods were also taught were created.

Policy towards traditional medicine is expressed in Strategy 2030, initiated by the president Nursultan Nazarbayev in 1996, and in a governmental programme Health for the Nation. “Health of the nation is a condition of safety of the country”, says president Nazarbayev (Şıntayev 2006: 5). Traditional medicine can play an alternative role for those who cannot afford paying for medicines.

Healers, in order to practise legally, should attain a license. Because of the increasing number of healers and also ‘swindlers’ and ‘charlatans’ among them, healers are now subject to inspection, both those licensed and those who work without permission. In Äbilqasimov’s view the health of the nation is the wealth of the Republic and good health of each citizen can improve demographic situation (Äbilqasimov 1993: 6). Healing without a permit is subject to three years of imprisonment. Private courses of traditional medicine are also banned.

A special place of traditional medicine gives an opportunity of acquiring new skills to its practitioners. Association of Kazakh Folk Healers boasts cooperation with doctors, psychologists, researchers and university professors (philosophers and ethnographers), as well as the press. It is often said that traditional Kazakh medicine is a ‘national treasure’ of Kazakhs. Government makes efforts to take care of this ‘treasure’ and gets involved into the development of traditional medicine. It is almost as important in health policy as biomedicine is. Healers in contemporary Kazakhstan have many possibilities of self-development, partly created by the state.

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<sup>64</sup> For instance, Privratsky (2001: 2) demonstrates that *zikir* was performed at home instead of Akhmet Yasawi shrine as it was before.

<sup>65</sup> For more details see the further part of this chapter.

#### 4.2. Career possibilities for traditional healers

Since healers market in independent Kazakhstan developed rapidly, there was a need for some legal regulations. In the first years of the Republic of Kazakhstan the Centre of Folk Medicine was the first and only institution entitled to enrol healers, to examine them and to license. Each candidate was obliged to deliver necessary documents such as medical certificate from psychiatrist to the head office and to go through preliminary selection by a board at the centre. They examined a future healer for mental health, checked his 'bio-field' and supernatural skills, and assess his predispositions on the basis of numerology, horoscope or 'photography' of an aura. If the candidate passed, he had to practise two months at the centre or its local branches. After this period of trial the candidate could take a public exam, needed for the purpose of obtaining the license (Abylkasymov 1997: 5-9). This system looked very similar in 2008. Only the period of so-called repeated attestation has changed. Initially it was two, later three, and from 2008 onwards five years. The examination board is composed of the representatives of centre staff, the Ministry of Health and sometimes members of the Association of Kazakh Folk Healers.

The first directives of the Ministry of Health on traditional medicine of 1992 defined that their aim is protection of health of the citizens, decreasing the number of 'healers' without medical knowledge (медициналық білімі жоқ 'шипaгерлер', *meditsinalıq bilimi joq 'şıypagerler'*) and improvement of the situation of the healers. The directives read that "a healer who receives a license should work only at a medical institution and if he decides to see patients at home, his work will be inspected by a local organ liable to the Ministry of Health. The salaries of healers were to be settled by this organ or by the Centre of Folk Medicine"<sup>66</sup> (Äbilqasimov 1993: 128). It was also asserted that healers have the same right to practise their profession as doctors. Later the regulations changed and the rights of healers were gradually restricted because of the protests by doctors, mainly oncologists, 'terrified' of the effects brought by alternative medicine (Penkala-Gawęcka 2006: 193).

At present there are two laws enacted by the parliament on the protection of health for the citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan, one of 1997, and the other of 2003. At the beginning (according to article 64 of the 1997 law) anyone who completed the courses on traditional medicine and got a license could become a healer, even if he was not a professional doctor. Since 2003 the healing activity has been banned for those who did not completed a medical education (exceptions are allowed). The word 'exception' is ambiguous and this is why many healers do not obey this interdiction.

The age limit for the candidates was gradually lowered. According to the statute of the centre of 1 April 2008, only people who come of age (i.e. over 18 years old) can participate in the courses, while initially the age limit was 25 years, and since 1999 it was 23 years (Penkala-Gawęcka 2006: 188).

<sup>66</sup> "Қуәлік алған соң халық емшісі тек медицина мекемесінде қызмет етуге тиіс, ал науқастарды үйінде қабылдайтын болса, оның жұмысын жергілікті денсаулық сақтау мекемесі ұдайы бақылап отырады. Емшіге қанша еңбек ақы төленетін Республикалық ғылымипрактикалық шығыс және қазіргі медицина орталығы, не жергілікті денсаулық сақтау мекемесі шешеді".

According to the statute, 35% of a course fee goes to the healer-lecturer and the remaining goes to the centre.

Before taking an exam one must participate in courses of phytotherapy, bioenergotherapy or anatomy which are organized by the centre. After the successful finishing of the whole process of application for the license, a healer acquires the title of Professional Folk Healer (Кәсіби халық емшісі, *Käsibiy halıq emşisi*). Because of the rapid growth of the number of 'healers' in 1997 an inspection department was brought into existence. Experts controlled the healers and checked if their activities comply with law (Abylkasymov 1997: 8). Article 64 of the 1997 law on the protection of health for the citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan also restricted the range of healing and the following activities were banned: performing collective healing sessions,<sup>67</sup> spreading the information about such sessions through mass media, healing contagious diseases (жұқпалы аурулар), mental illnesses (жүйке-рухи аурулар, *jüyke-ruhiy awruwlar*), venereal diseases (жыныстық қатынастық аурулар, *jinistiq qatınastıq awruwlar*), diseases demanding an urgent intervention of a doctor (жедел емдік шара керек ететін аурулар, *jedel emdik şara kerek etetin awruwlar*), contagious skin diseases (жұқпалы тері аурулары, *juqpalı teri awruwları*), and oncological illnesses (онкологиялық аурулар, *onkologiyalıq awruwlar*). In case of benign neoplasm (онкологиялық қатерсіз ісік аурулары, *onkologiyalıq qatersiz isik awruwları*) healing with help of a healer after consultation with an oncologist is allowed. In spite of creating the inspection department, legal obligations are not always obeyed (also by the staff of the centre), especially diagnosing and healing the ailments of oncogenic nature.

If a healer decides to work in private practice, he has to declare the price list of his services and make it approved by the centre and other medical organs. Rates for healing of the centre employees are determined by the centre which leads to the rivalry between the healers who try to get patients for themselves. There is a deep conviction that the more diplomas, certificates and medals a healer has, the bigger his chance to find new clients is. The healer Gülşat Keldibekova has ten diplomas confirming her abilities. Although she claims that each patient should decide on his own how much his health is worth, she adds that "the more you lose on the physical level, the more you gain on the spiritual one".<sup>68</sup> Since 1997, in accordance with directive № 470 of the Ministry of Health, outstanding healers can contest for the prestigious title of Meritorious Professional Folk Healer of the Republic of Kazakhstan. In the last few years the number of courses of traditional and Eastern medicine has considerably increased, healers have much more possibilities of upgrading their education and gaining new titles which is desired by patients. They can place advertisements in such magazines as *The Healer* (Емші) or *Bulletin of Healers* (Шипагерлік баян). More and more advertisements appear on the Internet. Some healers boast in their adds that they are able to cure 'over 300 diseases' or they guarantee about '100% of effectiveness'. Sceptical users of the Internet sarcastically joke that soon we will be able to order an SMS with a healing prayer or pay in for files containing electronic amulets e-

<sup>67</sup> As a consequence, those who do not abide by this law are liable for punishment, although *baqsı* seances are still organised.

<sup>68</sup> See <http://www.gulshat.kz/index.htm> (August 2010).

*tumar.tum* or *awruwǵa.em* (a drug for a disease) which will protect our computers from viruses and spam (спамнан сақтайтын дұға, *spamnan saqtaytin duǵa*).<sup>69</sup>

Some healers who wish to widen their field of activity claim that they heal ‘at a distance’ and photography of an ill man is enough to take proper steps. Saylawhan Äwelbayeva, a respected healer at the centre, is convinced about her unusual healing power. She has prepared a poster showing her which she distributes to patients. In the photograph Äwelbayeva is shown with a blue-green aura which is supposed to demonstrate her spiritual power. Earrings are the amulets with a healing prayer inside, and tinted spectacles symbolize the capacity of seeing ‘subtle energies’. Patients who place this poster at home will be in continuous contact with her. Äwelbayeva also prepares containers with ‘electrified’ healing water (емдік су, *emdik suw*) which can be taken home by the patients. It is a special convenience for those who came from far away. ‘Electrifying’ water lies mainly in reading the prayer above water, transmitting its healing power through a look or holding hand over the container.

It is the Association of Kazakh Folk Healers that plays a significant role in the process of professionalization of the healers. Its cooperation with the centre resulted in the organisation of numerous conferences, congresses and the foundation of the schools of traditional medicine which are an important addition to the training offered by the School of Folk Medicine and Upgrading Qualification created at the centre in 1992 and by Qojalımov. By 2008 the number of graduates of this school equalled 2,700 students. The school provides such subjects as history of academic and folk medicine, anatomy and physiology, bioenergotherapy, astrology, clairvoyance, telepathy and parapsychology. Qojalımov’s lectures are based on the *Treatise of Healing*.<sup>70</sup> Other teachers are also fully qualified healers, members of the association.

Another school established by the association in 1998 is the School of Spiritual Healing. It is mostly oriented at healing through reciting prayers, singing religious chants and movement therapy related to spirituality.<sup>71</sup> Other schools led by the members of the association mainly concentrate on teaching how to see the aura of a human being, fortune-telling with tarot cards and teaching elements of Tibetan medicine. Graduating from the schools like these can guarantee a diploma or a certificate.

Among the courses most preferably taken are Tibetan medicine, meditation based on Indian system of energy centres of human being (*chakra*), or telepathy courses. Those who dream of the career of a healer apart from the centre and the association have a possibility to study and gaining medical education at two other public centres, one being the Department of East Asian Medicine at S. D. Asfendiyarov Kazakh National Medical University in Almaty, the other being the Institute of East Asian-Medicine at Akhmet Yasawi International Kazakh-Turkish University in Turkestan. Patients better trust in healers who are professional doctors and at the same time are trained in traditional medicine.

<sup>69</sup> See <http://www.arshat.kz/?p=135> (August 2010).

<sup>70</sup> See section 1.1.

<sup>71</sup> For example, a dervish dance is taught.

This is probably why doctor Qazizulı, director of the Centre of East Asian Medicine, is so successful. As a holder of the title of traditional doctor in China, Erlan Qazizulı can feel confident about his future career.

Healers without the license convince patients to have the use of their services in a traditional way. They gain trust by telling stories about their ancestors, healers, *baqsı* or renowned mullahs. Their healing activity can be additionally proved by showing a certificate of participation in a pilgrimage to Mecca and obtaining the title of *qaji* (қажы). Shaman called Biyfatiıa Dawletova, even though she does not obey the well-defined ban on organising collective healing sessions, has gained unusual popularity; she is visited by people not only from Kazakhstan but also from other countries of the world. According to numerous relations placed on the Internet Biyfatiıa *baqsı* is visited by as many as several hundred patients a day. This information seems to be reliable, since during a few hours I spent in Ungirtas village I could evidence many visitors. Healers who do not submit to regulations of the state must reckon with the intervention of inspection organs and a fine.

Nowadays there are many possibilities of additional training for healers. Demand for services of healers seems to increase. The main trend of present-day traditional Kazakh medicine is to combine its methods with the methods of other healing systems which brings about the growth of healing specialisations and results in giving new perspectives to healers.

## 5. Patients

While surveying people who were clients of the institutions of traditional medicine, I came to a conclusion that apart from a short questionnaire, interviews carried out with patients at the Centre of Folk Medicine, Centre of East Asian Medicine, as well as patients of 'bazaar healers' and conversations with my Kazakh friends brought the most information for me. Irrespective of informal conversations, I polled a short questionnaire with thirty respondents of Kazakh nationality, nineteen of whom were female and eleven male. With regard to the character of this study, I mainly focused on Kazakh patients, yet for the whole depiction of the issue I also interviewed some representatives of other nationalities, such as Turkish, Kyrgyz, Uyghurs and Russians. The informants were of different age and education. My questions concerned such matters as opinions on the number of the institutions of traditional medicine, the quality of services offered, the current state and development of traditional medicine and the approach of government towards this problem. These questions were the starting point to further discussions. During an interview I asked why and how patients chose and visited a particular healer. I also asked them about their health problems and attempts at healing them at home if any.

Patients who resort to the methods of traditional medicine, despite complaining about the conditions of public health service, usually are the clients of both alternative and mainstream medicine. Patients who rely only on the help of healers are a minority. Nine interviewees were continuously treated by a single healer whom they deeply trust. They responded that they "would not go to any other one". Some patients claim that the help of more than one healer brings better effects. Therefore, most people visit various healers, because they are looking for the most effective one. The interlocutors usually indicated that traditional medicine is a natural method for Kazakhs of dealing with an illness, used for many generations. Methods used by healers are also frequently employed at home, but significant part of patients claimed that a healer, mainly due to the power of his faith and unique skills, is able to provide a more effective help.

Patients may be subdivided into a few categories. A classification suggested by Ursula Sharma appears to be most suitable. One category is what we can call 'stable user', that is a patient who is satisfied with his choice of the therapy and is using continuously one method of healing. 'Eclectic users' are those patients who are not able to choose a single method of treatment and are still trying different methods. A third category, the 'earnest seeker', refers to people who search for an effective healer, in spite of their disappointment with first visits (after Penkala-Gawęcka 2006: 216-217). A group of 'one-off patients' who were disappointed with alternative medicine after the first meeting with a healer can also be added. In Kazakhstan, as it is evident from Penkala-Gawęcka's study, 'stable users' are the most numerous category. Patients of this group change their healer often, but they are 'faithful' to a



chosen method of treatment. The cases of becoming one of ‘stable users’ among patients who previously belonged to the second or the third category can also happen when a proper therapy is found (Penkala-Gawęcka 2006: 216-217). This conclusion was also confirmed by my research. The less numerous is the category of people who used services of traditional medicine once only. Only one of interviewees declared after his first visit that he will not take a use of such services ever again.

The health problems of the clients of traditional medicine are very diverse. Healers are visited by patients with chronic cold, allergy, cough, various kind of muscle tensions, rheumatic pains, spine pain, headaches, throat diseases (such as earache or nosebleed), problems with peristaltic of intestines, lack of appetite, and also people addicted to alcohol and habitual tobacco smokers. Women coming for *tumar*, a talisman of triangular shape containing a protective prayer, usually for their children, and also patients diagnosed with a ‘hex’ called *köz, til tiyüw* (көз, тіл тию) are frequent patients of spiritual healers. Although depression and neurosis can be classified as mental illnesses which healers should not treat, healers from the Centre of Folk Medicine and other healers as well make an attempt at curing them. According to some patients methods of healers are more effective than pills prescribed by doctors. Women planning to give birth to a child or pregnant women who wish to take care of healthy route of pregnancy and to select an appropriate diet are also frequent patients of healers.

Patients make the decision of choosing a healer so that they try to find the most effective healer. It is often a person recommended by a family member or a friend. The decision of having recourse to healing with alternative methods is often motivated by the poor condition of public health service. It also happens that healers are visited by patients who were disappointed with all other methods and they believe that the help of a healer is a last chance for them to fight with the illness. It appears, though, that ill people are motivated mainly by the trust to traditional healing. Their worldview and beliefs about the aetiology of an illness have a big impact on a decision of choosing a healer. If they believe that an illness was caused by evil spirits or magic, the most frequently chosen healers are mullahs or other spiritual healers (Penkala-Gawęcka 2006: 219-220). The costs of treatment are also very important, few patients who resort to healers can afford therapy at private doctors. Therefore, the financial aspect also influences the choice of a healer and the type of therapy.

Some patients, before they begin therapy at a healer, try self-healing at home. A young patient, suffering from chronic pneumonia and bronchitis is an interesting example. His mother helped him in healing, giving him warming herbal teas, rubbing his body with lards bought at a pharmacy and wrapping her son in blankets and quilts in purpose of ‘ridding the body of toxic substances’. The patient who even after drinking fat of a dog of strongly warming effect was not fully cured, went to a healer to ‘complete’ the therapy and to read a few healing prayers. After this visit the patient fully recovered. Some patients buy herbal teas for themselves and simultaneously go and see a spiritual healer in order to strengthen their faith and help self-healing. “I go to a prayer reciting session and when I return home I feel that the medicines work with double power, you know what I mean, don’t you?”, said one patient. Another patient used the phrase: “strengthening home healing” in a similar context. Similar

declarations can be heard from other patients whose home healing methods failed. Kazakhs use traditional remedies, but a healer as a respected person gifted with special abilities is considered to be very helpful in therapy and—according to most interviewees—even indispensable in the treatment process. The need for help of a healer in treating cold or other ‘mild’ ailments is not perceived that important.

In order to have an illness diagnosed, patients often go to a fortune-teller or clairvoyant who regardless of their main profession usually also have an ability of making a diagnosis and ‘purify’ the body, or to a *tamırşı*, a person who reads information about health condition of a patient from his pulse. The patient receives instructions what kind of therapy he shall apply. Ill people sometimes go to a healer to confirm the diagnosis made by another healer and then they begin recommended therapy.

Among patients who turn to fortune-tellers or clairvoyants for help there are quite often young people; although being usually healthy, they go and see a fortune-teller to know if any illness or bad luck awaits them or to have their health examined. Other clients ask about the course of their illness or request instructions for a healthy lifestyle. For instance, I have interviewed a group of seven men between the age of 23-31 who regularly come from Shymkent to the Centre in Almaty in order to see fortune-tellers and healers and to get known about possible illnesses, weaknesses or other problems. Four of them are regular clients of a particular fortune-teller or clairvoyant.

Future clients of traditional medicine often learn about healers through a chain of acquaintances and relatives. In some cases we can speak of ‘family healers’ who similarly to family doctors look after health of a few related men. When a potential patient learns about a healer from a source other than family and relatives, he usually goes directly to a centre of traditional medicine where he can consult and ask for help a recommended healer. It is very different from a bazaar where the choice lies in approaching a healer and sharing the problem with him. Advertisements in newspapers, sometimes also on the Internet, are another source of information about healers. It also happens that a patient looking for help goes to the Association of Kazakh Folk Healers where he can gain more detailed information and ask for an advice a consultant at the association.

Obviously, it is not difficult to meet patients interested only in traditional therapy; some of them are even afraid of any innovations in the field of folk medicine. There are also patients recognizing faith as the only truly effective remedy and they rely exclusively on the help of spiritual healers. It is the aged people who choose methods which are considered to be traditional much more often than innovative ones. These patients prefer massage, herbal medicine as well as going and seeing a *baqsi*. One of interviewees claims: “Traditional medicine has strayed away from tradition too much and begun to mix with some suspicious things from the West. We have our own effective healers and our religion which helps us in healing” (male, 63). However, in the opinions of other patients, it is beneficial that “healers are open to new healing methods” (female, 41). So-called ‘bio-current’ (биоэриц, *biyoöris*), that is non-touching massage (bioenergotherapy), manual therapy, Chinese acupressure and acupuncture, *sujok* (Korean acupuncture of palms and feet) or traditional healing with prayers, are frequently preferred kinds of therapy.

The opinion about the quality of traditional medical services often depends on a conviction of its effectiveness. A significant part of patients appreciate the effectiveness of the healing, especially healing massage or herbs, and also eagerly participate in sessions of bioenergotherapists. Patients appreciate the individual approach of a healer which cannot be expected from an institutions of public health care. However, some patients are not sure if the healers at some institutions are properly controlled and if the quality of their services is good. For example, the majority of clients of the Centre of East Asian Medicine in Almaty, similarly to its director Qazizulı, do not have a good opinion about healers working at the Centre directed by Şıntayev. In general, patients highly appreciate the effectiveness of healing with traditional methods in comparison with public health service. Folk medicine is also highly evaluated because of affordable prices. Low costs of healing are the reason why the activity of healers is often considered as disinterested or even charitable. Phytotherapists, acupuncturists and masseurs were considered to be most effective. The approach towards *baqsı* can be defined as diversified. For some patients the *baqsı* are individuals of unusual abilities, great authority, and what is the most important, those who act in accordance with nowadays largely forgotten Kazakh traditions and customs. It seems that the level of education does not influence the opinions about *baqsılıq*, since affirmative opinions were expressed by both people who graduated from a university and who did not. However, patients of spiritual healers and religious people often regard *baqsılıq* as contradictory to the rules of Islam and assess the activities of *baqsı* as superstitious, ineffective and sinful because of the contact with spirits established by *baqsı* during healing sessions. Despite this the director of the Centre of Folk Medicine, Şäken Şıntayev who is a religious man, does employ *baqsı* in his institution. He argues that he does so because *baqsılıq* is rooted in the culture of Kazakhs and the healing of *baqsı* is very effective. Therefore, the approach toward *baqsılıq* not always follows the path of ‘official’ Islam, though a tendency to negate this practise is increasing among religious people.

The interviews show that patients are not satisfied with the number of institutions offering services of traditional medicine. The government is held responsible for this and some patients assess its approach towards traditional medicine negatively. The respondents also say that the government supports only one institution (the Centre of Folk Medicine), thus creating a monopoly and restricting the development of other similar centres. One patient regarded governmental attitude as “strange, officially it helps, on the other hand it does not finance other institutions; it only contributed to the creation of the Centre of Folk Medicine” (female, 35). However, most patients consider the approach of the government to alternative medicine positively and they appreciate the fact of creating the Centre of Folk Medicine. It appears that knowledge about policy of the state towards traditional medicine is scarce and the mere interest of public organs in this problem is considered satisfying.

It is important to notice the openness of the Kazakh people to various healing methods and their willingness to experimenting and becoming acquainted with all novelties in the field of complementary medicine. Chinese, Tibetan and Korean medicine, *reiki* and eclectic methods combining various traditions with esoteric, religious and philosophical ideas like New Age are very fashionable.

The existing and emerging institutions of traditional medicine as well as the number of their clients are an evidence of considerable interest of the Kazakh people in complementary medicine. It appears that Kazakhs rely on their tradition and because of this they put their confidence in healers when they begin therapy. One of the reasons for their trust is the belief that traditional medicine is a specific 'treasure' of the Kazakh nation. At the same time healers do not limit themselves to traditionally established methods and are fond of accepting new ones from different medical and esoteric traditions which makes folk medicine attractive also for the young generation.

## 6. Traditional Kazakh healing as reflected in language

When we talk, when we have a dialogue, we experience that we unintentionally become participants of a process which proceeds according to its own rules. Words which ‘come to our mind’, words which we ‘associate’ put us in a context that exceeds the range of meanings which we used to connect with these words. Determination of the meaning of a particular word, creation and dissemination of neologisms in a language, is not in hands of our will. Heidegger’s tautology ‘the speech speaks’ gains here another meaning (Lang 2005: 65).

Culture is expressed in language, and language forms culture. The unusual richness of the Kazakh language can cause a lot of difficulties for researchers. A considerable amount of synonyms, dialectological differences and borrowings (mostly from Persian and Arabic) make the analysis of the vocabulary related to medicine difficult.

What we call an illness in English has a few equivalents in Kazakh. These terms can be grouped with regard to the kind of ailment. The terms *awruw* (ауруу) and *sırqat* (сырқат, from Persian) are used the most frequently, but the latter refers to a mild illness. Another word *dert* (дерт, from Persian) refers to a dangerous illnesses caused by disorders of nervous and mental systems. According to the traditional beliefs, an evil spirit can be the reason for an illness of this kind and people say that the ‘jinn has stroke’ (*jin soqqan*, ЖЫН СОҚҚАН or *jin urğan*, ЖЫН ҰРҒАН). The term *nawqas* (науқас, from Persian) is used in reference to a patient and an illness. A The term *dimkäs* (дімкәс, from Persian) designates a ‘patient’ and *dimkästik* or *dimkästiq* (дімкәстік, дімкәстық) which is derived from it denotes an ‘illness’. A term used less frequently is *kesel* (кесел, from Arabic). In colloquial speech the word *kesel* is used in the meaning of an ‘obstacle’, for example *kesel jasadı* (кесел жасады) ‘he disturbed’ (Januzaqov 1999: 308).

The word ‘medicine, drug’ has a lot of synonyms, for instance *em* (ем), *dawa* (дауа, from Arabic), *däri* (дәрі, from Persian), *şıpa* (шиппа, from Arabic). Compounds like *däri-dermek* or *em-şıpa* are also commonly employed by Kazakhs. Subtle differences between these terms are well described by the saying *janğa dawa, dertke şıpa* (жанға дауа, дертке шиппа) which means ‘a medicine for the soul is a medicine for the illness’. In the process of healing *em* and *dawa* refer not only to the body, but also to the soul.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> As it was explained by Januzaqov (1999: 145).

In the anatomical terminology we come across many composite words, such as *asqazan* (асқазан) ‘stomach’, lit. ‘pot of food’, *мойын омыртқа* (мойын омыртқа) ‘cervical vertebra’ or *тоқ ішек* (тоқ ішек) ‘large intestine’.

Compounds are also frequent in plants terminology. One of the components is often derived from the name of an animal, e.g. *iytmurin* (итмұрын) ‘briar’ (lit. ‘dog’s nose’), *tiiye şırmawıq* (түйе шырмауық) ‘*Vincetoxicum hirundinaria*’ (lit. ‘camel ivy’), *tiiye tiken* (түйе тікен) ‘Cotton Thistle’ (lit. ‘camel thorn’) or *tiiyeyaban* (түйе табан) ‘*zygophyllum*’ (lit. camel’s paw), *Sparganium erectum kirpibas* (кірпібас), lit. ‘hedgehog’s head’. Many names contain the names of colours, e.g. *sarı tiken* (сары тікен, a plant from the family of flowering plants, *Horaninovia Fisch.*) lit. ‘yellow thorn’. Various species of *glycyrrhiza* (*miya*, мия), are distinguished by a colour name, e.g. ‘yellow *glycyrrhiza*’ (*sarı miya*, сары мия) and ‘red *glycyrrhiza*’ (*qızıl miya*, қызыл мия), see also Black False Hellebore (*qara tamurdäri*, қара тамыр дәрі), lit. ‘black spicy medicine’.

Many plant names vary depending on the region. Sometimes a plant has two or more names which is quite problematic in their correct identification. A plant name may also occur in different forms, e.g. *rawğaş* (рауғаш) and *rawağaş* (рауағаш) ‘rhubarb’; *küşälä* (күшәлә), *küşala* (күшала) and *küşäla* (күшәлә) ‘the Crown imperial’; *şäñkiş* (шәңкіш) and *şäñgiş* (шәңгіш) ‘Guelder Rose’. The form *rawağaş* occurs in Eastern Kazakhstan, whereas in the South the form *rawğaş* is used more frequently. If the names of herbs consist of two parts, the first one describing the second part is often different, e.g. *aşıttı şırmawıq* (ашытқы шырмауық) and *jalanaş şırmawıq* (жаланаш шырмауық) lit. ‘sour’ and ‘bare’ ivy, even though they refer to the same species. Among popular plants which are used in two different names we should mention ‘Redstem filaree’ *qutanşöp* (құтаншөп) which is also called *küntuwdı* (күнтуды), lit. ‘the sun rose’; and ‘cockleburs’ *oşağan* (ошаған), also called *şoñayna* (шоңайна), lit. ‘great mirror’. Another case is when an identical name is used to denote a few different entities, e.g. *qızılşa* (қызылша) designates ‘measles’, ‘chicken pox’ or the disease called ‘gid’ or ‘scrapie’, a degenerative disease that affects the nervous system of sheep and goats, aside from this being also the word for ‘beet’.

Some names were derived with the suffix *-ma*, *-me*, *-ba*, *-be*, *-pa*, *-pe*, e.g. ‘asthma’ (*demikpe*, демікпе), ‘angina’ (*baspa*, баспа), ‘epilepsy’ (*talma*, талма) and ‘itching’ (*qışıma*, қышыма). ‘Dysentery’ is called *qantışqaq* (қантышқақ) and ‘cholera’ *tırısqaq* (тырысқақ), both being derived with the suffix *-qaq* (-қақ) which forms adjectives and nouns.

Cold is most often called a ‘touch of a coldness’ or ‘chillness’, i.e. *suwıq tiyüw* (суық тию), *salqın tiyüw* (салқын тию). The verbal noun *tiyüw* is also used in reference to other ailments, e.g. *ıqlıq tiyüw* (ықпылық тию) ‘to have hiccups’.

Argynbayev describes four categories of diseases<sup>73</sup> distinguished by Kazakhs: external (*сыртқы*, *sırtqı*) and internal (*ішкі*, *işki*) diseases as well as diseases that are contagious (*жұқпалы*, *juqpalı*) and

<sup>73</sup> In 2005 Terminology Commission compiled a list of medical terms; the last version of it was approved by the government on 27<sup>th</sup> October 2006 ([http://kk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Медицина\\_саласының\\_терминдері](http://kk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Медицина_саласының_терминдері) (September 2010)).

non-contagious (жұқпайтын, *juqpaytın*). External diseases are e.g. fracture, injury, wound, rash etc. and internal diseases are those with no external symptoms (quoted after Penkala-Gawęcka 2006: 67).

Most Persian and Arabic loanwords are found in the terminology related to the spiritual world. For example, Kazakh *peri* (пери) or *däw* (дәу) come from Persian *pari* and *dev*. The *şilten* spirits were also called *ğayıperen* (ғайыперен), the first component being from Arabic *ğayb* ‘secret, invisible’ (Mustafina 1992: 152). Some borrowings from Arabic are used in plural, e.g. *ärwaq* ‘spirit’ which is the plural *arwāḥ* of the Arabic *rūḥ*, or *äwliye* ‘saint’ which comes from the Arabic plural *awliyā* of *walī*.

Different terms are used in reference to worshipping the ancestors and God. The verb *tabınuw* (табыну) ‘to worship’<sup>74</sup> and *şıynuw* (сыйыну) ‘to profess’, ‘to believe’ refer only to the saints and ancestors (әулиеге барып табынады, *äwliyege barıp tabınadı*) and it cannot be used in relation to God (Privratsky 2001: 161). Privratsky indicates that in relation to God Kazakhs use the term *ğıybadat* (ғибадат), from Arabic *ibāda* which means ‘serving God’. A literal translation of this Arabic word to Kazakh would be *qulşılıq* (құлшылық) ‘service, serfdom’. This term however, can refer to ‘serving’ the spirits (Privratsky 2001: 161). The meaning of the word *şıynuw* is perfectly explained in the poem dedicated to Akhmet Yasawi by Sawranbayev: “Пір тұтқан Қожа Ахмет Ясауим, Сыйынып әруағына бас иемін”, that is ‘Qoja Akhmet Yasawi, you are my master, I worship and bow my head to your spirit’ (quoted after Privratsky 2001: 30).

Many religious terms were adapted to the rules of Kazakh phonetics, e.g. *ğulama* (ғұлама) from Arabic ‘*ulamā*’ ‘scholars’ which designates a society of religious scholars, or *qajı* (қажы) from Arabic *ḥāğğ* ‘who went on a pilgrimage to Mecca’.

The names of agent and the names of professions are created by adding such Persian suffixes as *-ger*, *-ker*, *-paz*. This is why fortune-tellers are called *boljampaz* (болжампаз) from *bolja-* ‘to forecast’, *balger* (балгер) from Arabic *fā’l* ‘a good omen’. Another form is *palşı* (палшы), where Kazakh suffix *-şı*, which has the same meaning as *-ger*, *-ker*, *-paz*, was attached to Arabic *fā’l*. The suffix *-şl* forms the following terms: *tamurşı* (тамыршы), from *tamir* ‘pulse’, *qumalaqşı* (құмалақшы), from *qumalaq* ‘sheep droppings’ (used to tell the fortune), and *juldızşı* (жұлдызшы), from *juldız* ‘a star’, were created in a similar way.

The Persian word *hana* (*xāna*) ‘house, lodge, room’ is used to form such compounds as *därihana* (дәріхана) ‘pharmacy’, *awruwhana* (аурухана) ‘hospital’ and *emhana* (емхана) ‘clinic’.

During the last few years a lot of booklets with Arabic healing prayers (шипалы дұғалар, *şıypalı duğalar*) transcribed into Kazakh letters were published. In most cases the reader only know the approximate pronunciation of a prayer and its healing usage. The transcription sometimes reflects long vowels, the difference between ‘q’ (ق) and ‘k’ (ك), transcribed ‘қ’ and ‘к’, and also ‘h’ (ه) and ‘һ’ (ح),

<sup>74</sup> For example, the pagans are called “gods worshipers”, i.e. *putqa tabınuwşılar* (пұтқа табынушылар). The expression *täw etiüw* (тәу ету) which means ‘to honour somebody’ has a similar meaning.

transcribed ‘h’ and ‘x’, respectively. In the following there is a sample of a prayer protecting from evil spirits (жын, перілерден сақтайтын дұға, *jın, perilerden saqtaytın duǵa*):

*Бисмиллаһи рахман рахим!*

Иә ман һууа ғилмуһу сабиқун иә ман һууа уағдуһу садиқун

Иә ман һууа қазаһу кәинун иә ман һууа китабуһу мухкамун

Иә ман һууа қур ануһу мажидун иә ман һууа фазлуһу муқимун

Иә ман һууа ғаршуһу ғазимин

Иә ман һууа лутфуһу закирун иә ман һууа раббун қадимун!<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Särsenbay (2000: 22).



## Conclusion

Despite the difficult situation of the Kazakh people who have bitter experience of the attempts at uprooting their culture for so many years in the period of tsarist colonisation and the Soviet times, many Kazakh traditions and customs have been preserved. Traditional Kazakh medicine, being part of Kazakh culture, is inseparably related to the beliefs and mentality of the people. Spiritual healing and related customs are a very important component of traditional medicine. With strengthening of the position of Islam it becomes an element of Kazakh 'Muslimness' (мұсылманшылық, *musılmanşılıq*). On the other hand, we observe a strong radical trend to the purity of Islam in modern Kazakhstan. Representatives of this trend negate traditional pilgrimages to the tombs of saints and insist that only God should be worshipped. They are against using amulets and healing practices, especially *baqsılıq*. However, folk medicine has always been present at homes and this is where it has survived. Healing abilities were transmitted from generation to generation. Healing gift, as it is believed, is inherited from the ancestors through the spirits. This conviction contributes to the strengthening of the social prestige of *emşi*.

Cultural exchange has strongly influenced the shape of traditional Kazakh medicine. Multiethnic Kazakhstan and globalization are the reasons for coexisting of many different medical traditions that are continually developing and changing. A clear presence of the elements of foreign origin does not mean that Kazakh medicine has lost its genuine features. Kazakhs appear to be aware of the richness of their traditional medical practices. The authorities support the activities of healers, yet they try to make necessary regulations and impose some restrictions. A reason for the spread of traditional medicine is the unsatisfying condition of public health care, but an attempt to strengthen Kazakh national identity (қазақилық, *qazaqıylıq*) is also important.

Further development of traditional Kazakh medicine depends on many factors. One of them is the direction in which Islam will proceed in Kazakhstan. It is a fact though, that currently most of Kazakhs, calling themselves Muslims, do not negate old beliefs and traditions. If the authorities will further favour national traditions, including traditional medicine, we can assume that the areas where traditional healing is taught will increase and the number of healers will grow according to demand.

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### List of healer informants

1. Alpısbayeva Gülnar born on 24 September 1958 in Bozanbay awılı (Ulan Awdanı, Şıǵıs Qazaqstan Oblısı)

Education: higher economical

Occupation: accountant

Work place: private flat, Öskemen

2. Ämzeyeva Aysuluw born on 2 January 1947 in Turar Rısqulov Awdanı (Jambıl Oblısı)

Education: higher pedagogical

Occupation: Centre of Folk Medicine in Almaty

3. Äwelbayeva Saylawhan Sultanǵaziyqızı

Education: higher medical

Work place: Centre of Folk Medicine in Almaty

4. Bakeyeva Ulbolsın Nurbayqızı born on 3 April 1976 in Almaty (Almatı Oblısı)

Education: secondary medical

Occupation: nurse

Work place: Centre of Folk Medicine in Almaty

5. Barambayeva Muhabbat Älimjanqızı

Education: secondary medical

Work place: Centre of Folk Medicine in Almaty

6. Däwletova Biyfatiya, a *baqsı* from Üñgirtas

Work place: private house

7. Dospayeva Alwa born on 6 July 1977 in Tarbaǵatay Awdanı (Şıǵıs Qazaqstan Oblısı)

Education: secondary

Work place: private consulting-room in Öskemen

8. Erenǵayıpılı Amangeldi, director of Spiritual Institute in Almaty

Education: higher, Arabic studies (University of Cairo)

Work place: private apartment, Spiritual Institute in Almaty

9. Ğabiydenqızı Gülnar Zeynet born on 15 March 1961 in Kürşim Awdanı (Şıǵıs Qazaqstan Oblısı)

Education: higher economical

Occupation: accountant

Work place: private flat in Öskemen

10. Idirisova Äsemgöl born on 3 March 1970 in Bayqoñır (Qızılorda Oblısı)  
 Education: higher pedgogical  
 Occupation: teacher  
 Work place: private consulting-room near the “Green Bazaar” in Almaty
11. Iygilikova Bahıťjamal Amangeldiqızı born on 25 June 1952 in Kirov awılı (Taldıqorğan awdanı, Almatı Oblısı)  
 Education: higher pedagogical  
 Work place: Centre of Folk Medicine in Almaty
12. Isqaqova Aynajan Sağınbayqızı  
 Work place: Centre of Folk Medicine in Almaty
13. Mırjıqbayulı Beybit born on 28 February 1940 in Şımkent (Öñtüstik Qazaqstan Oblısı)  
 Education: secondary  
 Occupation: farmer  
 Work place: stand at the “Green Bazaar” in Almaty
14. Naymtayeva Janar born on 20 June 1975 in Maqanşı awılı (Semey Oblısı)  
 Education: secondary  
 Work place: private flat in Öskemen
15. Ordabayeva Suwlışaş Tätbekqızı born on 5 July 1956 in Şımkent (Öñtüstik Qazaqstan Oblısı)  
 Education: secondary medical  
 Occupation: nurse  
 Work place: stand at the “Green Bazaar” in Almaty
16. Qazızulı Erlan born in Xingjiang  
 Education: higher medical  
 Occupation: doctor of traditional Chinese medicine  
 Work place: Centre of East Asian Medicine in Almaty
17. Qızaybayev Muratjan Qurmanqariymulı born in 1943 in Almatı Oblısı  
 Education: primary  
 Work place: stand at the “Green Bazaar” in Almaty
18. Qojalımov Ziyadan  
 Education: higher  
 Work place: Association of Kazakh Folk Healers in Almaty
19. Saylawbekqızı Marjan born on 13 May 1964 in May awılı (Aqmola Oblısı)  
 Educaion: higher agricultural  
 Work place: stand at the “Green Bazaar” in Almaty
20. Sırlıbekova Diyna born 3 October 1969 in Qarqaralı Awdanı (Qarağandı Oblısı)  
 Education: higher

Occupation: psychologist

Work place: Centre of Folk Medicine in Almaty

21. Särsenbayeva Ayşolpan born on 21 May 1949 in Qızılorda (Qızılorda Oblısı)

Education: higher pharmaceutical

Occupation: phytotherapist

Work place: Centre of Folk Medicine in Almaty

22. Şıntayev Şäken Muqanulı born on 25 July 1939 in Jarkent (Almatı Oblısı)

Education: higher medical

Occupation: surgeon

Work place: Centre of Folk Medicine in Almaty

23. Tastanov Berik, the assistant of the *baqsı* from Üñgirtas

Work place: private house

24. Tilewova Raygül born on 7 November 1956 in Taldıqorğan (Almatı Oblısı)

Education: higher

Work place: Centre of Folk Medicine in Almaty

25. Toqtarbekqızı Bahıtgül born on 11 April 1963 in Öskemen (Şıǵıs Qazaqstan Oblısı)

Education: higher pedagogical and law studies

Occupation: prosecutor

Work place: private flat in Öskemen



## Questionnaire for healers

АТЫ-ЖӨНІ

*Full name*

Туған күні

*Date of birth*

Туған жері

*Birthplace*

Мамандығы

*Occupation*

Білімі

*Education*

1.Қай уақыттан бері емші болып жұмыс істейсіз/емшілікпен әуестенесіз?

*Since when are you working as a healer?*

2.Сіздің отбасыңызда емшілік қасиеті бар адам болды ма? Болса, қай тамырдан, кім болып келеді?

*Were there people with healing abilities in your family? If yes, please specify in which line.*

3.Емдеуді немесе бал ашуды қалай үйрендіңіз?

*How did you learn healing or Fortune-telling?*

4.Қандай емдеу әдістерін қолданасыз?

*What kind of healing techniques do you use?*

5.Сізге емделушілердің келу себебі неде?

*Why do the patients visit you, what is their purpose and reason for the visit?*

6.Емшілік үшін қанша ақша аласыз? Жалақыңыз өмірге жетеді ме?

*What is your salary, is it enough for living?*

7.Қазақ халық медицинасында көбінесе қолданылатын әдістер қандай?

*What are the most of ten used methods of Kazakh medicine?*

8.Емші-балгерлер білім тәжірибесін қалай және қайда тереңдете алады?

*Where healers and Fortune-tellers can deepen their knowledge and abilities?*

9.Қазақ халық медицинасының болашағы туралы не ойлайсыз?

*What is your opinion on the future of Traditional Kazakh medicine?*

10.Қазақстан үкіметінің халық медицинасына көзқарасы қандай? Қалай әсер етеді?

*What is the approach and influence of the government on traditional medicine?*

## **Questionnaire for patients**

1.Қазақ халық медицинасын жалпы қалай бағалайсыз?

*What is your general opinion on Traditional Kazakh medicine?*

2.Қазақ халық медицинасы қалай дамып келе жатыр деп ойлайсыз?

*How is Traditional Kazakh medicine developing?*

3.Қазақстан үкіметінің халық медицинасына көзқарасы қандай? Оны қалай бағалайсыз?

*What is the approach of the government towards traditional medicine, how do you judge it?*

4.Халық медицинасы орталықтарының санына көзқарасыңыз қандай?

*What is your opinion on the number of centres of traditional medicine?*

5.Халық медицинасы орталықтарының қызмет сапасын қалай бағалайсыз?

*What is your opinion on the quality of the service of traditional medicine centres?*

Қосымша:

*Additional comment:*

№/sex/age	OPINION				
	Traditional medicine	Development of traditional medicine	The approach of the government towards traditional medicine	Number of centres of traditional medicine	Quality of the service of traditional healers
<b>1.</b> m. 26	4	3	3	2	4
<b>2.</b> m. 25	3	4	4	3	3
<b>3.</b> m. 29	3	4	4	3	3
<b>4.</b> m. 30	1	3	3	3	2
<b>5.</b> m. 38	4	5	3	3	5
<b>6.</b> m. 63	4	3	5	4	4
<b>7.</b> m. 48	5	5	4	4	5
<b>8.</b> m. 21	4	5	3	2	5
<b>9.</b> m. 31	4	5	4	2	5
<b>10.</b> m. 28	4	4	5	3	5
<b>11.</b> m. 25	5	3	4	3	5
<b>12.</b> f. 56	3	3	4	4	4
<b>13.</b> f. 32	3	5	4	3	4
<b>14.</b> f. 41	5	4	4	4	5
<b>15.</b> f. 23	4	4	3	5	4
<b>16.</b> f. 44	5	4	4	3	4
<b>17.</b> f. 49	5	4	5	4	5
<b>18.</b> f. 56	3	4	2	3	3
<b>19.</b> f. 35	4	3	3	3	4
<b>20.</b> f. 60	4	3	4	3	4
<b>21.</b> f. 61	4	4	4	2	4
<b>22.</b> f. 58	5	4	4	2	4
<b>23.</b> f. 55	4	5	4	2	4
<b>24.</b> f. 67	5	5	4	3	5
<b>25.</b> f. 46	4	4	4	3	4
<b>26.</b> f. 48	3	4	5	3	5

<b>27. f. 40</b>	2	3	3	1	1
<b>28. f. 64</b>	4	4	4	3	5
<b>29. f. 52</b>	5	4	3	2	4
<b>30. f. 48</b>	5	5	4	3	5

Opinion:

- 1—Fully negative;
- 2—Negative;
- 3—Medium;
- 4—Affirmative;
- 5—Fully affirmative.

Result of the survey:

Opinion	on tradi- tional medicine	on the devel- opment of traditional medicine	on approach of the gov- ernment to traditional medicine	on the number of traditional medicine cen- tres	on the quality and effective- ness of the services fo healers
Fully negative	1	0	0	1	1
Negative	1	0	1	7	1
Medium	6	8	8	16	3
Affirmative	13	14	17	5	13
Fully affirmative	9	8	4	1	12

**Table 1.** Opinions of the patients about the development of traditional Kazakh medicine, quality of the service of healers, number of centres, and official approach towards traditional medicine

## Photographs



Photo 1. Underground cave of the Biyfatima *baqsi*, Üngirtas.



Photo 2. Biyfatima *baqsi*, Üngirtas.



Photo 3. A stone dedicated to ancestor spirits by Biyfatima *baqsi*, Üngirtas.



Photo 4. Botbay Ata mausoleum, Sayram.



5. The guardian of Botbay Ata mausoleum with Luiza Banach and the author.



Photo 6. Engravings on the rocks depicting the image of Buddha from the 8<sup>th</sup> century, near the Ili river.





Photo 7. Aysuluw Ämzeyeva, from the Centre of Folk Medicine in Almaty while healing with “bio-current”.



Photo 8. Scraps of cloths tied up to a tree supposed to help in fulfilling the wish, Almaty.



Photo 9. Bahitjamal Iygilikova in her consulting-room at the Centre of Folk Medicine, Almaty.